WRITINGS OF HERMAN BAVINCK

by Herman Bavinck

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Herman Bavinck, compiled for study and devotional reading.

53 Chapters

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Chapter 1

00.00. Bavinck, Herman - Library

Bavinck, Herman - Library Bavinck, Herman - Magnalia Die Bavinck, Herman - Meditations Before and after Communion S. Creation or Development

S. Death S. Development of the Doctrine of Predestination S. Divine and Human Nature of Christ

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Chapter 2

01.00. MAGNALIA DEI

1.MAGNALIA DEI Instruction in the Christian Religion := after Reformed Confession =: BY

Dr. H. BAVINCK Professor at Amsterdam.

KAMPEN - J. H. KOK - 1909.

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Chapter 3

01.0000. PREDICTION.

PREDICTION.

Under the title of Magnalia Dei, the great works of God, I wish in a book of modest dimensions to give a simple explanation of the Christian faith, as it has been professed by the Reformed Churches of all countries and times. The name is taken from Acts 2:11. There it is told that the disciples of Jesus, as soon as the Holy Spirit had been poured out on them, began to proclaim the great works of God in languages understood by all. These great works of God certainly do not refer, as is sometimes the case elsewhere, to one specific event, such as, for example, the resurrection of Christ, but to the entire household of salvation which God had brought about through Christ. And the Holy Spirit was poured out precisely in order that the congregation might learn to know these works of God, glorify them, and thank and praise God for them.

Therein lies the idea that the Christian religion does not exist merely in words, in a doctrine, but that it is, in word and fact, a work of God, which was brought about in the past, is being worked out in the present, and will only be completed in the future. The content of the Christian faith is not a scientific theory, nor a philosophical formula for explaining the world, but a recognition and confession of the great works of God, which are being created through the ages, encompass the entire world, and will only be completed in the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. This is no longer generally or sufficiently understood. The knowledge of the truth, which is according to godliness, is steadily declining. The interest in the mysteries of the kingdom of God is diminishing day by day, not only outside but also within Christian circles. And the number of those who live by the truth with their whole heart and soul and who feed upon it day by day is steadily diminishing. Those who still accept it often see in it

Those who still accept it often see in it only a set of teachings, which may be worthy of belief, but which are out of touch with life and have little or nothing to do with the present.

There are several reasons for this sad state of affairs.

All those who are preparing for or working in one or another profession are nowadays subjected to such heavy demands that there is no pleasure or time left for other work. Life has become so rich and so broad on all sides that an overview of it can only be obtained with great effort. Political, social and philanthropic interests demand more and more of our time and strength. The reading of daily and weekly newspapers, magazines and brochures consumes our free time. There is neither the desire nor the opportunity to study the Scriptures or old works of theology.

Besides, those old works are no longer of our time. The difference in language and style, in thought and expression, makes them alien to us. The issues that were once considered the most important have lost all or most of their significance for us. Other interests, not mentioned by them, are now pushing their way into the foreground. Enemies whom they fought no longer exist, have been replaced by others, or at any rate are acting against us in a completely different armor.

We are children of a new era and live in a different century. And it is a waste of time to want to maintain the old forms and to persist with the old, just because it is old. But not only would this be useless, it would also contradict our own confession. Precisely because the Christian faith is the recognition of a work of God that began in the beginning of time and is continued in this century, its essence is the fruit of time, but its form is contemporary. No matter how much good Franks's Kern, Marck's Merg and Brakel's Redeemer's Religion may have done in earlier days, they can no longer be revived today, they no longer appeal to the younger generation, and they involuntarily awaken the thought that Christianity is no longer appropriate for this century. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a work that can take the place of the work of the fathers and present the old truth in a form that satisfies the demands of our time.

Much good has already been done in this direction. Since the Reformed religion and theology came to revival and new growth in the last century, there has been no lack of attempts to adapt the old confession to modern consciousness. What Dr. Kuyper, in particular, has contributed through his many works, especially his rich Catechism statement, is hardly to be overestimated. But still a work is lacking that explains the contents of the Christian faith in the usual way to the wider circles of the people and remains within their reach through its modest size and price. The instruction in the Christian religion, which is offered to the congregation in this book, tries to fill this gap. The attempt will certainly not reach the ideal that the author of this handbook on Reformed religious doctrine has in mind. But an awareness of weakness must not lead to despondency and worklessness, but rather must stimulate one to exert all one's strength and compel one to trust in the help of Him who accomplishes His strength in weakness. As readers of this work, I do not imagine those men of learning who can acquaint themselves with the rich and profound thoughts of Scripture, which have been formulated in Reformed theology. But in compiling this work I have had in mind the ordinary members of the congregation, who prepare themselves by means of catechism for admission to Holy Communion or who continue to have an interest in the knowledge of the truth. And among them I have thought especially of all those young men and women, who at a relatively early age are often already being trained for their future profession in a workplace or factory, in a store or office, in schools of higher education or in grammar schools, and there often come into contact with the many objections to which the Christian religion is exposed at present.

There are many among them who are still eager to believe, but to whom it is made extremely difficult by the environment in which they live and by the objections and contradictions they hear. In any case, their confession is devoid of cheerfulness and enthusiasm. And yet, it must come to that again, and it will again, if the truth is rightly understood. When the works of God are considered in their own light, they naturally give rise to admiration and worship. Then we see that the Christian faith not only has much to recommend it, but that it also boasts an internal beauty, and that it is a product of its inner truth and glory, and that it recommends itself to the consciences of mankind. Then we thank God, not that we must, but that we may believe. Then we realize to some extent what our faith has to do with our thinking and our life. And each in his or her own language we then begin again to proclaim the great works of God.

H. BAVINCK.

AMSTERDAM, May 1907.

MAGNALIA DEI.

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Chapter 5

01.01. The highest good.

1. The highest good.

Man’s highest good is God, and God alone.

Taken in a broad sense, we may say that God is the highest good for all creatures. For God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, the origin of all being and life, the abundant fountain of all good. All creatures owe their existence from moment to moment solely to Him, who is the one, eternal and omnipresent Being. But the concept of the highest good usually includes the idea that it is also known and enjoyed as such by the creatures. And this, of course, is not the case with the lifeless and the senseless creatures. Sometimes, like the lifeless creatures, they only have an existence without being partakers of life; or, like the plants, they have a life, but one which is deprived of all light; or, like the animals, they have also received, with existence and life, a consciousness, but one which is only aware of the visible and sensible things around them. They then know about earthly things, but not about heavenly ones; they know about the real, the pleasant and the useful, but they have no awareness of the true, the good and the beautiful; they have a sensual consciousness and a sensual desire, but for that reason they have enough of the sensual and do not penetrate to the spiritual.

It is quite different with mankind. In the beginning he is created in God’s image and likeness and can never erase or nullify his divine origin and his divine kinship. Even if he has lost the glorious qualities of knowledge, righteousness and holiness, which are inherent in the image of God, through sin, there are still "little remnants" of the gifts bestowed on him, which are not only sufficient to rob him of all innocence, but which also bear witness to his former greatness and are a constant reminder of his divine calling and heavenly destiny. In all the thinking and working, in the whole life and striving of mankind, it shows that he is not satisfied with the earth, that he is not satisfied with the whole world. He is a citizen of a sensual order of things, but from this order he also raises himself to a supernatural order. With his feet planted on the earth, he raises his head and looks up to heaven. He has knowledge of things that are visible and temporary, but also has awareness of things that are unseen and eternal. His desire is for earthly, sensual, perishable goods, but also for heavenly, spiritual, imperishable goods.

Man has in common with the animals sensory perception and consciousness. But above that he has been equipped with a mind and a reason, which enable him to think and to rise from the world of sensory perceptions to the world of immaterial concepts and to the realm of imperishable ideas. Man’s thinking and knowing, although bound to the brain, is itself in its essence entirely a spiritual activity, rising above the things he sees with his eye and feels with his hand. Through this thinking he places himself in relation to a world which he cannot see or touch, but which nevertheless exists as well as and possesses more true reality than earthly physicality. What he seeks is not tangible reality, but spiritual truth, a truth that is one, eternal and imperishable. His mind finds rest only in such an absolute divine truth. In the same way, mankind shares with animals the sensual desire. He therefore needs food and drink, light and air, work and rest,’and is dependent on the

whole earth for his physical existence. But above this desire he has received a will which, guided by reason and conscience, reaches out to other and higher goods. Pleasant and useful things, although of value in their place and time, do not satisfy him; he seeks a good that is not good because of circumstances, but that is good in and through and for itself, an unchanging, spiritual, eternal good. And again his will finds rest only in such supreme, absolute divine goodness.

Both, mind and will, are rooted in the heart of man, according to the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. The Proverbs says of the heart that it must be preserved before all things, because out of it are the outlets of life, Proverbs 4:23. Just as the heart is, in a natural sense, the starting point and driving force of the blood circulation and therefore the main organ of physical life, so it is also, spiritually and morally, the source of the higher life in man, the seat of our self-awareness, of our relationship to God, of the bondage to His law, of our entire spiritual and moral nature. And thus our whole rational and willing life derives its origin from that and is determined by it in its direction. In that heart God has now, according to Ecclesiastes 3:11, placed the century. God creates everything at its time, He allows everything to take place at the right time, determined by Him, so that history as a whole and in all its parts corresponds to God’s counsel and brings to light the glory of His counsel. God has placed man in that worldly whole and has placed the century in his heart, so that he may not remain absorbed in external, visible phenomena, but may detect and know God’s eternal thoughts in the temporary course of nature and history. This "desiderium aeternitatis", this longing for eternity, which God has planted in man’s heart, in the innermost part of his being, in the core of his personality, is the cause of the undeniable fact that he is not satisfied by anything temporary. He is a sensible, earthly, limited, finite being and yet he is prepared for eternity and destined for it. It is of no use to man whether he gains wife and children, houses and fields, treasures and goods, yes the whole world, if his soul suffers damage, Matthew 16:26. For the whole world is of no value to a man. There is not a rich man who can offer God a peace money for his brother with his treasures and save him from death; the ransom of the soul is too heavy for any creature to bear, Psalms 49:8-9.

Now there are many who will agree with all this, as long as there is talk of sensual pleasures and earthly treasures. They fully acknowledge that these things are not able to satisfy mankind and are not in accordance with his high destiny. But they judge differently, if the so-called ideal goods, science, art and civilization, the service of the true, good and beautiful, life for others and the pursuit of humanity are considered. But all these things also belong to the world, of which Scripture testifies that it passes away with all its desires, John 2:17.

Science is most certainly a good gift, coming down from the Father of lights, and as such is to be highly esteemed. When Paul calls the wisdom of the world foolishness with God, 1 Corinthians 3:19, verg. 2: 18 f. and elsewhere warns against the philosophic or philosophy, Colossians 3:8, he has in mind that false, imaginary wisdom, which the wisdom of God in His general and special revelation did not know, 1 Corinthians 1:21 and was thwarted in all its deliberations, Romans 1:21. But for the rest, through Paul and throughout the Scriptures, knowledge and wisdom are held in very high esteem. And that could not be otherwise. For all Scripture assumes that God alone is wise, knows himself completely and all things, that he founded the world through wisdom and reveals his manifold wisdom in the church, that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are secured in Christ, and that the Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, who searches the depths of God, Proverbs 3:19. Romans 11:33, 1 Corinthians 2:10, Ephesians 3:10, Colossians

2:3. A book, which proceeds from such thoughts, cannot slight knowledge nor despise science. On the contrary, wisdom is better than rubies, and all that one can desire cannot be compared with it, Proverbs 8:11; it is a gift from Him who is the God of science, Proverbs 2:6, 1 Samuel 2:3. But the Scriptures demand such a science, which has the fear of the Lord as its principle, Proverbs 1:7. If it is separated from that, it may still bear the false name of science, but it gradually degenerates into a worldly wisdom, which is foolishness in the sight of God. A science that thinks it has enough for itself and can do without God turns into its opposite and disappoints everyone who builds up their expectations on it. And this is also easy to understand. For in the first place, science always has a special character and can only be the share of a few; these select few, who can devote their whole lives to its pursuit, only conquer a small part of its territory and always remain strangers and outcasts; and whatever satisfaction it may give, it can never, because of this very special character, satisfy those general, profound needs which are innate to human nature and therefore present in every human being. In the other place, whenever science revives after a period of decline, it begins with an extraordinary, exaggerated expectation; it lives in the hope that through continued serious research it will solve the riddles of the world and life. But just as surely disappointment sets in after the youthful exuberance; with the continuation of the research the problems do not diminish but increase; what seemed self-evident turns out to be a new mystery, and the end of all science is again the woeful, sometimes even desperate confession that man walks the earth in riddles, and that life and fate are both mystery. And thirdly, one may still consider, that science, even if it could come to know much more with certainty than it actually achieves, would still always leave mankind’s heart unsatisfied. For knowledge without virtue, without a moral basis, becomes an instrument in the hand of sin for the contemplation and execution of finer evils, and the head filled with science enters into the service of the depravity of the heart. Therefore, says the Apostle, even if I had the gift of prophecy and knew all the mysteries and all the knowledge, and did not have love, I would be nothing, 1 Corinthians 13:2.

It is no different with art. This too is a gift of God. Just as the Lord Himself is not only truth and holiness but also glory, and extends the glory of His name over all His works, so it is also He who, through His Spirit, equips artists with wisdom and understanding and knowledge in all their work Exodus 31:3, Exodus 35:31. So art is first and foremost proof of man’s ability, his spiritual ability, a revelation of his deep desires, his lofty ideals, his burning thirst for harmony. But moreover, in all her works she presents us with an ideal world, in which the discord of this earthly existence is resolved into a full chord and a beauty comes to light, which in this fallen world was hidden from the intelligent, but which the simple eye of the artist has discovered. And because art paints such a different, higher reality before our eyes, it is a comfort to us in life, it lifts our souls from their torpor and fills our hearts with hope and joy. But whatever it may do, it only makes us enjoy its beauty in pictures; it cannot close the gap between the ideal and reality, it never makes the "over there" into a "here", it shows us the glory of the land of Canaan from afar, but it does not bring us in and make us citizens of it. She is many things, but she is not everything; she is not, although a man of renown in her field called her that, she is not the most holy, not the most noble, not the only religion and the only salvation of mankind. It does not atone for our guilt, it does not cleanse us from our wickedness, it is not even capable of drying our tears in the sorrows of life.

Finally, humanity, civilization, the service of mankind, life for the community, or whatever one may call it, cannot be considered the highest good for mankind. There is no doubt that we can speak of

a progression of humanitarian ideas, of a development of philanthropy. If we compare how the poor and the sick, the miserable and the needy, the widows and orphans, the insane and the prisoners were treated many times in former centuries and how they are generally treated and cared for today, then there is reason to rejoice and be grateful. A spirit of compassion and mercy has been awakened that seeks the lost and takes care of the oppressed. But this same present time shows us so many dreadful iniquities of womanism, prostitution, alcoholism, and other abominations that we are shy of an answer to the question of whether we are moving forwards or backwards, and sometimes we are inclined to optimism and sometimes to pessimism. But however this may be, if life for the community, if love for one's neighbor has no basis in the commandment of God, it will lose its substance and stability. Love for one's neighbor is not something that comes naturally and spontaneously from the human heart. It is a feeling, an act, an activity, which requires immense willpower and must be constantly maintained against the tremendous powers of selfishness and self-interest. Moreover, it often finds no support at all in the person next door. People are not usually so lovable that we can and want to love them as ourselves without any effort or struggle. Love for one's neighbor can only be sustained if, on the one hand, it is founded in and imposed on us by God's commandment, and if, on the other hand, that same God gives us the desire in our hearts to walk in sincerity according to all His commandments.

Thus it remains true to the word of Augustine that the heart of man was created for God and that it finds no rest until it is at rest in his father's heart. All people actually seek God, the same Church Father testified, but they do not seek Him in the right way, not in the right place. They seek Him below, and He is above. They seek Him on earth, and He is in heaven. They seek Him far away, and He is near. They seek him in money, in goods, in glory, in power, in lust: and he dwells on high, and in the holy place, and with him that is of a lowly and lowly spirit, Isaiah 57:15. But still they seek Him, if they may seek Him and find Him, Acts 17:27. They seek him and at the same time they flee from him. They have no desire to know His ways, and yet they cannot miss Him. They feel attracted to God and at the same time repelled by Him.

Herein lies, as Pascal so profoundly developed, the greatness and at the same time the misery of mankind. He thirsts for truth and is a liar by nature. He thirsts for peace and throws himself from one scattering into another. He hungers for lasting, eternal happiness, and seizes the pleasures of the moment. He seeks God, and he loses himself in the creature. He is a born son of the house, and feeds on boar's troth in a strange land. He is like a hungry man who dreams that he eats, but when he wakes up his soul is empty; or like a thirsty man who dreams that he drinks, but when he wakes up, behold, he is still stale and his soul is hungry, Isaiah 29:8.

Science cannot explain this contradiction in man. It only reckons with his greatness and not with his misery, or only with his misery and not with his greatness. It exalts him too high, or it depresses him too low, because it does not know of his divine origin, nor of his deep fall. But Scripture knows both, it lets its light shine on man and mankind; and the contradictions are reconciled, the mists are cleared up, the hidden things are discovered. Man is a riddle, which only finds its solution in God.

01.02. The knowledge of God.

2. The knowledge of God.

God the highest good for mankind - that is the testimony of the whole of Scripture.

It begins with the account that God created man in His image and likeness, so that he might know God his Creator, love Him wholeheartedly and live with Him in eternal bliss. And it ends with the description of the New Jerusalem, whose inhabitants will see God's face, and His name will be on their foreheads. In between lies the revelation of God in all its length and breadth, which has as its content the one, great, all-embracing promise of the covenant of grace: I will be your God and you will be my people, and which in Emmanuel, God-with-us, receives its middle and culmination. For promise and fulfillment go hand in hand; the word of God is the concept, the seed, the germ of action and is fully realized in action. Just as God in the beginning brought things into being out of nothing through the word, so through the word of promise He will bring about, in the course of the centuries, the new heaven and the new earth, in which the tabernacle of God will be with mankind.

Therefore Christ, in whom the Word became flesh, is called by John, John 1:14, also full of grace and truth.

He is the Word, who in the beginning was with God and God Himself, and as such was the life and light of mankind. Because the Father communicates His life in Him and expresses His thoughts in Him, the full essence of God is revealed in Him. He not only declares to us the Father and not only reveals His name, but He shows us and gives us the Father in Himself. Christ is God given and God given; God revealed and God communicated, and therefore full of truth and full of grace. From the very first moment in which it was spoken, the word of promise, 'I will be your God', has been fulfilled: 'I am your God'. God gives Himself to His people, in order that His people may give themselves to Him. In Scripture we find God repeating the statement: I am your God. From the mother's promise in Genesis 3:15 onward, this rich promise, concluding in all salvation, is repeated at every moment in the life of the patriarchs, in the history of the people of Israel and of the church of the New Testament. And then all through the ages the congregation responds in endless variations with the thanks and praise of faith: You are our God and we are Your people, Your sheep. This declaration is not a rational doctrine, nor a form of unity that is imitated, but the confession of a deeply felt reality, experienced in life itself. The prophets and apostles, the pious in general, who appear before us in the Old and New Testaments and later in the Church of Christ, did not philosophize about God in abstract notions, but they confessed what God was to them and what they had in common with their God in all the circumstances of life. God for them was not a cold concept, which they dissected mentally, but a living, personal power, a reality, infinitely more essential than the world around them, the one, eternal, adorable Being. They counted with Him in their lives, they dwelt in His tent, they walked before Him, they served in His courts, they worshipped in His sanctuary. The authenticity and depth of their experience is expressed in the language they use to express what God is to them. They need not search for words, for their mouths overflow with what fills their hearts, and the world and nature provide them with images for

their thoughts. To them God is a King, a Lord, a Hero, a Guide, a Shepherd, a Savior, a Redeemer, a Helper, a Physician, a Husbandman, a Father. All their salvation and bliss, truth and righteousness, life and mercy, strength and power, peace and rest are found in Him. He is to them a sun and a shield, a compass and a buckler, a light and a fire, a fountain and a spring, a rock and a shelter, a high room and a tower, a reward and a shadow, a city and a temple. All that the world contains, scattered and divided, is a parable of the unsearchable fullness of salvation, which is present in God for his people. That is why David in Psalms 16:2 (according to a better translation) addressed Jehovah in this way: You are my Lord, I have no higher good than You (You are my highest good), and Asaph in Psalms 73:1-28 sang: Whom have I in heaven but You, nor have I any pleasure in the earth. If my flesh and my heart fail, God is the rock of my heart and my portion for ever. Heaven with all its bliss and glory is empty and deadly without God to the pious; and if he lives in God's fellowship, he has no desire for anything on earth, because the love of God far exceeds all other goods. This is the experience of the children of God, made by them because God Himself gave Himself to them to enjoy in the Son of His love. Christ also says that eternal life for human beings, the whole of salvation, consists in the knowledge of the one and only true God and of Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.

It was a solemn hour when Christ spoke these words. He was about to enter the Garden of Gethsemane across the Kidron stream and fight the last battle of his soul. Before doing so, He, as our High Priest, prepared Himself for His suffering and death, and prayed to the Father that He might glorify Him through and after His suffering, so that the Son might again glorify the Father in the distribution of all those benefits which He was now going to acquire through His obedience unto death. When the Son prays like this, He knows that He desires nothing else than what is the Father's own will and pleasure. The Father has given Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to what the Father has given Him. And that eternal life consists of nothing else than the knowledge of the one, true God in the face of Jesus Christ, the Sent One, John 17:1-3. The knowledge of which Jesus speaks here evidently bears an entirely peculiar character. It is different from all other knowledge that man can acquire, not in degree, but in principle and essence. This is clearly shown if we compare the two types of knowledge for a moment. The knowledge of God, referred to here by Jesus, differs from the knowledge of created things in origin and object, in essence and fruit.

It differs from it first of all in origin, for it is due to Christ alone. All other knowledge we acquire in a certain sense through our own understanding and judgment, through our own efforts and research. But the knowledge of the one and true God we, as children, must let ourselves be given by Christ. It is nowhere to be found without Him, in any scientific school or among any renowned philosopher. Christ alone knew the Father. After all, in the beginning he was with God, lay in his lap and saw him face to face. He was God Himself, the reflection of His glory and the expressed image of His independence, the Father's own, only begotten, much-loved Son, in whom He had all His pleasure, Matthew 3:17, John 1:14, Romans 8:12, Hebrews 1:3. Nothing in the nature of the Father is hidden from the Son, because He shares the same nature, the same attributes, the same knowledge. No one knows the Father but the Son, Matthew 11:27. And this Son hath come unto us, and declared unto us the Father. He has revealed the name of his Father to man; therefore He became flesh and appeared on earth, that He might make known to us the Truthful One, 1 John 5:20. We did not know God and did not even enjoy the knowledge of His ways. But Christ has

made us know the Father. He was not a philosopher, a scientist or an artisan; His work was to reveal the name of the Father to us. And that He has done, fully, all His life. He has revealed Him in His words, in His works, in His life, in His death, in His person and in His entire appearance.

2 His appearance. He never spoke or did anything except what He saw the Father doing. His food was to accomplish His will. He who saw Him, saw the Father, John 4:34, John 8:26, John 8:28, John 12:50, John 14:9.

He received the name Jesus from God Himself, because He was to save His people from their sins, Matthew 1:21. He is called Christ, because he is the Anointed of the Father, chosen and appointed by God himself to all his offices, Isaiah 42:1, Matthew 3:16. And He is the Anointed One, because He did not come in His own name like so many false prophets and priests, He did not exalt Himself and did not accept the honor Himself; but because the Father so loved this world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life, John 3:16.

Those who accept Him therefore receive the right and the authority to bear the name of the children of God John 1:12. They are born of God, they are partakers of the divine nature, they know God in the face of Christ, His Son. No one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and whom the Son wills to reveal, Matthew 11:27.

Secondly, the knowledge of God differs from all other knowledge in its object. Because the latter, especially in recent times, may have expanded so far, it is limited to the creature and does not find the infinite. There is a revelation of God's eternal power and divinity also in the works of nature. But the knowledge of God obtained therefrom is slight, obscured, mixed with error and, moreover, not held in value. For men, knowing God by nature, have not glorified or thanked Him as God, but have been perverted in their deliberations and have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the creature. The world is both a hiding place and a revelation of God, Romans 1:20-23. But here, in the high-priestly prayer, One appears before us, who forsakes all finite things and speaks of the knowledge of God! God the object of human knowledge, who can grasp that? God, who is the Infinite and the Incomprehensible One; who is not measured in time nor in eternity; before whom the angels cover their faces with their wings; who lives in an inaccessible light, whom no man has seen or can see! He, the object of human knowledge, of the man whose breath is in his nostrils and who is less than nothing and more than vanity! He would know God, whose whole knowledge is piecework! For all his knowledge, what does he know? What does he know in his ear, in his being, in his purpose? Does not mystery surround him from all sides? Does he not always stand at the borders of the unknown? And this man, a poor, weak, wandering and darkened creature, would know God, the high, holy, only, omnipotent God!

It is far beyond our understanding, but Christ speaks of it, who has seen the Father and explained Him to us. We can rely on Him, and His testimony is true and worthy of all acceptance. If you want to know, O man, who God is, do not ask the wise, the scholars, the researchers of this age, but look at Christ and hear His word. Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, or who shall descend into the abyss? For the word that Christ preaches is near you. He himself is the Word, the perfect revelation of the Father. As He is, so is the Father, equally just and holy, but also equally full of grace and truth. At his cross the full contents of the faith of the Old Covenant are revealed: Merciful and gracious is the Lord, longsuffering and great in benevolence. He will not punish us for

our sins, nor reimburse us for our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the East is from the West, so far does He take our transgressions from us. As a father takes care of his children, so does the Lord take care of those who fear Him, Psalms 103:8-13. And beholding the glory of Christ in the mirror of His word, we joyfully exclaim: We know Him because we are known by Him; we love Him because He first loved us, 1 John 4:19. In the third place, the origin and content determine the essence of God's knowledge in its peculiarity. In the quoted verse from the High Priestly Prayer Jesus does not speak of knowing, but of knowing God. The difference between the two is great. To know a lot about a creature, a plant or an animal or a human being, a country or a people, from books, is something completely different from knowing it from one's own observation. To know is the description given by others of a person or thing; to know is the object itself. Knowing is a matter of the head; knowing involves a personal interest and an activity of the heart.

Because the knowledge of God, given by Christ, is described in His Word, it is possible to know in this area what essentially differs from the knowledge intended by Jesus. There is a knowing of the Lord's will, without the willingness of the heart to do that will, Luke 12:47-48. There is a calling of Lord, Lord, that in no way opens the entrance to the kingdom of heaven, Matthew 7:21. There is a faith, like that of the devils, which does not arouse love, but fear and trembling, James 2:19. There are hearers of the word, who do not wish to be doers and therefore will be struck with double blows, James 1:23. When Jesus speaks here of knowing God, He has in mind a knowledge, related to the one He possesses Himself. He was not a theologian by profession, nor a doctor or professor of divinity. He saw Him everywhere, in nature, in His word, in His service; He loved Him above all things and obeyed Him in everything, even unto the death of the cross. His knowing of the truth was one with his doing of the truth. And knowledge was united with love.

It is a similar knowledge that Jesus means when He connects life to it. No, to know God does not consist in knowing much about God, but it lies in the fact that we have seen Him ourselves in the face of Christ, that we have met Him on our path of life, and have personally become acquainted with His virtues, His righteousness and holiness, His mercy and grace in the experience of our souls. That is why this knowledge, as opposed to other sciences, is called the knowledge of faith. It is not the fruit of intellectual investigation and reflection, but of childlike and simple faith, of that faith which is not only a sure knowledge but also a firm trust that not only others, but also I, have been granted forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness and salvation by God, through pure grace, solely for the merit of Christ's will. Only those who become like children will enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:3. Only the pure in heart see the face of God, Matthew 5:8. Only those born again of water and the Spirit can see God's kingdom, John 3:5. If any man will do the will of God, he shall know the doctrine of Christ, whether it is of God or whether it speaks of himself, John 7:17. They that know his name shall trust in him, Psalms 9:11; and in the same degree God is known when he is loved.

If we understand the knowledge of God in this way, it is no wonder, in the fourth place, that its effect and fruit is no less than eternal life. Between knowledge and life there seems to be very little understanding. Doesn't Ecclesiastes truthfully say: in much wisdom is much sorrow; who increases his knowledge, increases his sorrow; to make many books is no end; and to read much is weariness of the flesh, Ecclesiastes 1:18, Ecclesiastes 12:12.

Knowledge is power - we understand that, at least to a certain extent. He who knows, rules. All knowledge is a triumph of the spirit over matter, a submission of the earth to the dominion of man. But knowledge is life - who can understand that? And yet, already in the natural sphere, knowledge increases the depth and richness of life. The more comprehensive the consciousness, the more intense the life. The inanimate creatures do not know, and they do not live. When consciousness is awakened in animals, their lives also gain in content and extent. Among humans, the richest life is that of the one who knows the most. What is the life of the sick in spirit, of the ignorant, of the simple, of the undeveloped poor and limited, compared to that of the thinker and poet! But however much difference there may be, it is only a difference of degree, the life itself does not change; it always, with the greatest scholar as well as with the simplest day laborer, goes down in death, for it is fed only from the finite sources of this world. - But here we are talking about knowledge, not of any creature, but of the one true God.

If the knowledge of visible things already enriches life, how much more will the knowledge of God be the life of the dead? For God is not a God of the dead and the dead, but of life and the living. All those whom He created in His image and restored to His community are thereby raised above death and mortality. He that believeth in me, saith Jesus, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die for ever, John 11:25-26. Knowing God in the face of Christ brings eternal life, joy beyond measure and heavenly bliss. Not only does it result in these, but knowing God is itself life, new, eternal, blissful life.

According to this teaching of the Holy Scriptures, the Christian Church determined the character of that science which from time immemorial has borne the name of Theology or Theology. It is the science that derives the knowledge of God from His revelation, contemplates it under the guidance of His Spirit, and then seeks to describe it to His glory. And a theologian, a true scholar of God, is he who speaks from God, through God, about God, to His Glory. Between scholars and the simple-minded there is therefore only one difference in degree. They have together one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all of you. But to each one of us -is grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ, Ephesians 4:5-7. In this spirit Calvin introduced his Geneva Catechism with the question: what is the main purpose of human life? And the answer was clear and powerful: so that men may know the sins of God by which they were created. Similarly, the Catechism of Westminster began its teaching with the question: What is the highest and principal aim of man? and gave this short and significant answer: Man’s highest aim is to glorify God and to enjoy Him perfectly for all eternity.

01.03. General Revelation.

3. General Revelation.

If in truth there can be any knowledge of God with man, it presupposes that God from his side has made Himself known to him in one way or another.

We do not owe the knowledge of God, nor can we owe it to ourselves, to our own inventions, research or thinking. If it is not given to us freely and out of unrestricted goodness, there is no possibility that we could ever acquire it by exerting our own forces. With the knowledge of created things the situation is somewhat different. Although we are wholly dependent on God for the acquisition of this knowledge, when He created mankind, He assigned him the task of subduing and controlling the entire earth and gave him the desire and the power to do so. Man stands above nature; he can observe, investigate and to a certain extent artificially cause and produce the phenomena of nature; he can, as it were, force nature to reveal itself and its secrets to him.

Yet even this power is already limited in all kinds of ways and in all directions. The deeper science penetrates into the phenomena and approaches the essence of things, the more riddles it finds itself surrounded from all sides by the unknowable. There are not a few who are so deeply convinced of the limitations of human knowledge that they not only confess: we do not know, but also add the dismal prophecy: we will never know.

If this finiteness of human knowledge is already apparent in the study of inanimate nature, it goes without saying that it comes to the fore even more clearly in the study of living, animate and rational creatures. For here we come into contact with phenomena, which we cannot "make or break" at will, but which are objectively opposed to them and can only be known by us to a certain extent through their similarity to what we find in ourselves. Life, consciousness, sensation and perception, reason and intelligence, desire and will, cannot be broken down or put together. They are not mechanical, but organic in nature; we must take them as they are and respect them in their mysterious nature. Whoever would like to dissect life, would kill it at the same time. To a greater extent this all applies to man. For although he is a physical being and in so far as he cannot escape our observation, we only observe his outward appearance; behind this lies a hidden life, which in its outward form is only very imperfectly and inadequately revealed. To a limited degree, man even has the power to keep the inner parts of his being hidden from others. He can restrain his face in such a way that not a muscle reveals what is going on inside; he can use language to hide his thoughts; he can adopt an appearance in his actions that is in conflict with his inner being. And even though we are dealing with an honest man, who despises all these pretenses, to get to know him we still need him to open up his being for us. It is true that he often does this unnoticed and unwillingly; he does not have complete control over himself and has only a small part of himself in his power; he often betrays himself without wanting to. Nevertheless, he must emerge from the secrecy of his being by his appearance, words and deeds, whether without or with his will, if we are to know him truthfully. There is only any knowledge of a person if he opens up his being to us involuntarily or also with consciousness and freedom and reveals himself to us. This

consideration leads us to a clear understanding of the conditions under which there can only be talk of knowledge of God in mankind. God is the totally free, the totally independent God; He is in no way dependent on us, but we are in a totally dependent sense, not only naturally, but also intellectually and morally; we therefore have not the slightest disposal, not the slightest power over Him; we cannot in any way make Him the object of our research or reflection; if He cannot be found, we cannot seek Him; if He does not give Himself, we cannot accept Him. Furthermore, God is invisible; He lives in an inaccessible light, so that no human being has ever seen Him or can see Him. If He hides or conceals Himself, we can in no way bring Him within the range of our physical or spiritual perception; and without any perception, of course, no knowledge is possible. knowledge is possible. Finally, to mention nothing more, God is almighty; not only does He have all the creatures, He also has Himself completely in His power. While we humans always show ourselves in some way, outside and without our will, God reveals Himself only because and insofar as He wills. There can be no question of an appearance of God which would be involuntary and beyond his awareness and freedom. God controls Himself completely and reveals Himself only to the extent of His will.

Knowledge of God is therefore only possible on the basis of a revelation from God's side. Man can only gain knowledge of God when He, and in so far as He, makes Himself known to man freely. This disclosure of God's self is usually referred to as revelation. The Scriptures use different names for it and speak of appearing, speaking, ruling, working, making Himself known, etc. They indicate that God's will is to be revealed to man. It indicates that revelation does not always occur in the same way, but takes place in very different forms. In fact, all God's outward works, whether in word or deed, are parts and elements of the one, great, all-embracing and always continuing revelation of God. The creation, maintenance and government of all things, the calling and guidance of Israel, the sending of Christ, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the recording of the Word of God, the preservation and propagation of the Church, etc., are all ways and forms through which a revelation of God comes to us. They all make something of God known to us. All that is and is done can and should lead us to the knowledge of Him, whose knowledge is eternal life. This revelation, whether taken in a general or a particular way, always bears the following characteristics.

First, it always proceeds freely from God himself. He is here, as everywhere, the sole agent, and He acts here completely consciously and freely. It is true that those who reject the confession of a personal, self-conscious God often still speak of a revelation of God. But this is a use of the word contrary to its real meaning. From the point of view of those who believe only in an impersonal, unconscious, omnipotent force, one can still speak of an unconscious, involuntary appearance of that force, but no longer of an actual revelation, since it presupposes the complete consciousness and freedom of God. All revelation, which rightly bears this name, is based on the idea that God exists personally, that He is conscious of Himself and can make Himself known to creatures. God's knowledge of mankind has its basis and starting point in God's knowledge of himself. Without God's self-consciousness and self-knowledge there can be no knowledge of God with man. Whoever denies this must come to the unrhymed thought that there is either no knowledge of God at all, or that God first becomes self-conscious in mankind, and thus causes man to take the place of God.

Scripture teaches quite differently. Although inaccessible, it is nevertheless a Z/c/rt in which God lives; He knows Himself completely and can therefore make Himself known to us. No one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and whomever the Son wishes to reveal, Matthew 11:27. In the second place, all revelation that comes from God is self-revelation. God is the origin, and He is also the inhotid of His revelation. This is true of the highest revelation that has come to us in Christ, for Jesus himself says that he has revealed the name of the Father to men, John 17:6; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has declared God to us, John 1: 18. But this also applies to all the revelation which God has sent forth from Himself. All God's works in nature and grace, in creation and re-creation, in the world and in history, make us know something of the incomprehensible and adorable being of God. They do not all do it in the same way and to the same degree; there is an infinite variety here; the one work of God speaks more of His justice and the other of His goodness; here God's omnipotence shines forth and here His wisdom. But all together, and each to its own degree, they proclaim the great works of God, make us acquainted with His virtues and perfections, His essence and self-distinctions, His thought and word, His will and pleasure,

Here, however, we must never lose sight of the fact that God's revelation, however rich its content, never coincides with God's self-knowledge. God's self-knowledge or self-consciousness is as infinite as His essence, and therefore, of course, cannot be communicated to any creature. The revelation of God in His creatures, both subjectively in the works of His hands, and subjectively in the consciousness of His reasonable creatures, always comprises but a small part of the infinite knowledge which God possesses of Himself. Not only mankind on earth, but also the blessed and the angels in heaven, and even the Son of God according to his human nature, have a knowledge of God which is distinct in principle and essence from God's self-knowledge. Nevertheless, the knowledge which is communicated by God in His Revelation and which can be acquired from it by reasonable creatures, although limited and finite, and even remains so throughout eternity, is nevertheless a true and pure knowledge. God reveals Himself in His works, as He is. From His revelation we learn to know Him ourselves. There is therefore no rest for man until he ascends from the creature to God Himself. Revelation must be about God Himself. It does not serve to teach us a few sounds or words, but it does serve to train us through the creatures to the Creator Himself and to bring us to rest at His Fatherly Heart.

Thirdly, revelation, which emanates from God and has God as its content, also has God Himself as its goal. It is of, through and to Him; God has wrought all things for His own sake, Proverbs 16:4, Romans 11:36. Although the knowledge of God, which is communicated in His revelation, is and remains essentially distinct from His self-knowledge, it is nevertheless so rich, so broad and so deep, that it can never be fully included in the consciousness of any reasonable creature. The angels are far superior in intellect to man, and daily see the face of the Father who is in heaven, Matthew 18: 10, but they are nevertheless desirous of seeing the things that are presented to us by the preachers of the Gospel, 1 Peter 1:12. And the more deeply people consider the revelation of God, the more they are compelled to cry out with Paul: O depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and unsearchable His ways, Romans 11:33. Revelation therefore cannot have its final destination in man, but partly bypasses him and rises above him.

It is true that man occupies an excellent place in this revelation. It is addressed to mankind in order that they may seek the Lord, that they may seek Him and find Him, Acts 17:27, and the Gospel must be preached to all creatures, that believing men may receive eternal life, Mark 16:15-16, John 16:20, and John 17:20. John 16:15-16, John 3:16, John 3:36. But this is not and cannot be the last and highest goal of revelation. God cannot rest in mankind. But man must know and serve God, that he, with and at the head of all creatures, may bring glory to God for all his works. In revelation, whether through or by man, God prepares His own praise, glorifies His own name, spreads out His virtues and perfections in the world of His creatures before His own eyes. Since revelation is of and through God, it also has its destination and goal in His glorification. This entire revelation, which is of, through and to God, has its center in the person of Christ, and at the same time reaches its climax in Him. It is not the shining firmament or the mighty Nighthawk, nor a prince or the great man of the earth, nor a philosopher or an artist, but the Son of Man who is the highest revelation of God. Christ is the Word incarnate, who in the beginning was with God and was God Himself, the Only-begotten of the Father, the Image of God, the radiance of His glory and the expressed image of His independence; he who has seen Him has seen the Father, John 14:9. The Christian stands in that faith; he has come to know God in the face of Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. God Himself, who said that the light would shine out of the darkness, is the One who shone in his heart to give light to the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:6. But from this high vantage point the Christian sees all around him, backward and forward and to all sides. And when, in the light of the knowledge of God, which he owes to Christ, he lets his eyes wander over nature and history, over heaven and earth, then everywhere in the whole world he discovers traces of the same God, whom he has learned to know and to call upon as his Father in Christ. The Sun of Righteousness opens to him a wonderful panorama, which extends to the ends of the earth. By its light he sees back into the night of past times and penetrates into the future of all things; backwards and forwards the horizon is light, even though the sky is often covered with dark clouds. The Christian, who looks at everything by the light of God’s Word, is therefore not a narrow-minded creature; he is broad of heart and of mind; he looks over the whole earth and counts everything as his own, because he is Christi and Christ Godes, 1 Corinthians 3:21-23. He cannot give up the faith, that the revelation of God in Christ, to which he owes his life and to which he owes his life and salvation, bears a special character. But this faith does not shut him off from the world, but rather enables him to perceive the revelation of God in nature and history.

God’s revelation in nature and in history, and gives him the means by which he can recognize the true and the good and the beautiful everywhere and separate them from all the lying and sinful mixture of people.

Thus he distinguishes between a general and a special revelation of God. In general revelation God uses the ordinary course of events; in special revelation He often uses unusual means, apparition, prophecy and miracle, to make Himself known to people. The first is addressed to all men; the second to the world of men; and the third to the world of men. The first is addressed to all men and, by general grace, stops the outbreak of sin; the second is addressed only to those who live under the Gospel, and, by special grace, glorifies Himself in the forgiveness of sins and the renewal of life. But however much the two are distinct, they are nevertheless closely related to each other. Both have their origin in God, in His free goodness and favour. General revelation is

due to the Word, which was with God in the beginning, which made all things, which has shone like a light in the darkness and enlightens every mankind, coming into the world, John 1:1-9. Both revelations have grace as their content, the one general, the other particular; but so that the one is indispensable to the other.

It is the general grace that makes the special grace possible, prepares it, and carries it on; the special grace in its turn raises the general grace to itself and employs it continually. Both revelations also have as their goal the preservation, the protection, and the salvation of the human race, and along these lines they lead to the glorification of all God's virtues. The content of both revelations, not only of the special but also of the general, is contained in the Holy Scriptures. The latter, although derived from nature, is therefore included in the Scriptures, because we human beings, because of the darkness of our understanding, could never deduce it purely from nature. But now Scripture throws a light on our path through the world, and gives us the true conception of nature and history. It makes us perceive God where we would not otherwise see him; and, enlightened by it, we behold the virtues of God displayed in all the works of his hands.

Already the creation, taught by Scripture, proves to us the revelation of God in nature. For creation itself is an act of revelation, the beginning and principle of all subsequent revelation. If the world had existed eternally alone or eternally apart from God, it could not have been a revelation of God; in the latter case it would have been an obstacle to God revealing Himself through it. But whoever upholds the creation of the world with Scripture, confesses at the same time that God reveals Himself in the whole world. For every work bears witness to its maker, and the more so the more truly it can be called a product of its maker. -

Since the world is God's work in the fullest sense, and since it owes not only its being but also its very being to God from the beginning and throughout, something of God's virtues and perfections is expressed in every creature. As soon as, on the other hand, the revelation of God in nature is denied, and confined, for example, to the mind or feelings of man, the danger is close at hand that the creation of God will be denied, that nature will be governed by a power other than that which reigns in the human mind, and that thus, openly or in secret, polytheism will be reintroduced. Scripture, teaching creation, thereby also upholds God's revelation, and in it the unity of God and the unity of the world.

Furthermore, Scripture teaches us that the world was not created by God in the beginning, but is constantly maintained and governed by that same God from moment to moment. He is not only infinitely superior to the world, but He also dwells with His omnipotent and omnipresent power in all His creatures; He is not far from every one of us, for in Him we live, move and are, Acts 17:27-28. The revelation that comes to us from the world is therefore not only a reminder of a work of God in days long gone, but also a testimony of what God is and will and does in these times. When we lift up our eyes, we not only see who created all these things, and brought forth their host in number, but we also see that He calls them all by name, because of the greatness of His power, and because He is strong in might; and that not one is lacking, Isaiah 40:25. He covereth himself with the light as with a garment; He stretcheth out the heavens as with a curtain; He covereth his chambers with the waters, maketh the clouds his chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind, Psalms 104:2-3. He sustains the earth with the fruit of his labors, makes the grass grow for the beasts, and the grass for the service of man, bringing forth bread from the earth and wine that

gladdens the heart of man, Psalms 104:13-15. He establishes the mountains by his strength and quiets the roaring of the seas, Psalms 65:7-8, makes the outlets of the morning and evening to rejoice, visits and enriches the land, blesses its fruit and crowns the year of his goodness, Psalms 65:9 ff. He feeds the birds of the air, covers the grass of the field with glory, Matthew 6:26-30, makes His sun rise on the bad and the good, and rains on the just and the unjust, Matthew 5:45. He made man a little less than the angels, crowned him with honor and glory and gives him dominion over all the works of his hands. Glorious is his name on the face of the earth! Psalms 8:1-9. And not only in nature, but also in history God carries out His counsel and brings about His work. He made the whole human race from one blood, to dwell upon the whole earth, Acts 17:26. He destroys the first human race in the flood and at the same time preserves it in the household of Noah (Genesis 6:1-22, Genesis 7:1-24, Genesis 8:1-22, Genesis 9:1-29). He confounds the talk of mankind in Babylon's tower and scatters it over the whole earth, Genesis 11:7, 8. And when the Most High gave the inheritance to the nations and separated Adam's children, He humbly ordained the times beforehand and the provisions of their dwelling places, and set their land poles according to the number of the children of Israel, Deuteronomy 32:8, Acts 17:26. Although He chose the people of Israel to be the bearers of His special revelation, and allowed the Gentiles to walk in their own ways, Acts 14:16, yet He did not lose sight of them nor leave them to their own devices. On the contrary, He did not neglect Himself, doing good from heaven, giving us rain and fruitful times, filling our hearts with joy and gladness, Acts 14:17. That which is evident from God was manifest in them, for God revealed it to them, Romans 1:19, that they might seek the Lord, whether they might touch Him and find Him, Acts 17:27.

Through this general revelation God has preserved the peoples and led them to the dispensation of the fullness of time, in which it pleases Him to gather all things into one again in Christ, both those in heaven and those on earth, Ephesians 1:10. From all races and tongues and peoples and nations He is bringing His church, Romans 11:25, Ephesians 2:14 ff. Revelation 7:9, and is preparing that end of the world, in which the saved will walk in the light of the City of God and all the kings and peoples of the earth will gather in it all their glory and honor, Revelation 21:24, Revelation 21:26. In theology, attempts have been made to rank all these testimonies, which bear witness to the nature and history of God's existence and being, and to divide them into a number of groups. Thus, over time, we have come to speak of six proofs for the existence of God.

Firstly, the world, however great and powerful it may be, still bears the testimony everywhere that it exists in the forms of space and time, that it has a finite, accidental, dependent character, and thereby points back from itself to an eternal, necessarily existing, independent being, which is the final cause of all things (cosmological proof).

Secondly, everywhere in the world, in its laws and orders, in its unity and harmony, in the organization of all its creatures, a purpose is discernible which makes a mockery of all explanations based on chance and leads us to recognize an all-wise and all-powerful being which has established that purpose with an infinite intellect and which pursues and achieves it through its omnipotent and omnipresent power (teleological evidence). In the third place, the consciousness of all people contains the awareness of a highest being, above which nothing higher can be thought of, and which at the same time is thought by all to be necessarily existing. If such a being did not exist, the highest, most perfect and necessary thought would be an illusion, and man would lose faith in the testimony of his consciousness (ontological proof). This is immediately followed by

the fourth proof: man is not only a reasonable, but also a moral being. In his conscience he feels bound by a law that stands high above him and demands his unconditional obedience; and that law points back to a holy and just legislator, who can save and destroy (moral proof). To these four proofs come two more, taken from the agreement of the peoples and from the history of mankind. It is a remarkable phenomenon that there are no nations without divine service. Some have claimed otherwise, but historical research has increasingly proved them wrong; there are no atheistic tribes or peoples. This phenomenon is of great significance; for its absolute generality demonstrates its necessity and thus confronts us with one of these two conclusions: that either mankind as a whole suffers from a foolish imagination on this point, or that the knowledge and service of God, which exist in corrupted forms among all peoples, are based on His existence.

Likewise, the history of mankind, considered in the light of Scripture, shows a plan and a course which point to the government of all things by a supreme being. It is true that in the lives of individuals and peoples all kinds of objections and difficulties arise from this consideration. But it is all the more striking that everyone who practices history, consciously or unconsciously, starts from the premise that it is guided by thought and plan, and that it is by discovering this thought that he sets his goals. History and the interpretation of history are based on faith in God's providence.

All these so-called proofs have no power to compel man to believe. Besides, in science there are few proofs that are capable of this. In the formal sciences, thesis and logic, this may be the case; but as soon as we come into contact with real phenomena in nature and even more so in history, all kinds of objections can usually be made to the reasoning and decisions based thereon. In religion and morality, in law and beauty, whether or not a person will give himself up depends much more on his state of mind. The fool can, in spite of all testimonies, keep saying in his heart: there is no God, Psalms 14:1, and the Gentiles, although knowing God, have not glorified or thanked Him, Romans 1:21. The above-mentioned proofs for the existence of God do not address man as a mere human being, but they address him as a reasonable and moral being. They do not appeal only to man's dissecting and reasoning mind, but they also appeal to his heart and mind, to his reason and conscience. And then they have value, strengthen faith and confirm the bond between God's revelation outside and His revelation in mankind. The revelation of God, which comes to man through nature and history, would have no effect on him if there were not something in man himself that corresponded to it. The beauty in nature and art would be unbearable to man if he did not have a sense of beauty in his bosom. The law of morality would not resonate with him unless he himself heard the voice of conscience within. The thoughts that God embodied in the world through His Word would be incomprehensible to him if he were not himself a thinking being. And likewise, the revelation of God in all the works of His hands would be utterly incomprehensible to man if God had not implanted in his soul an inextinguishable awareness of his being and being. But now it is an undeniable fact that God has added to the external revelation in nature an internal revelation in man himself. The historical and spiritual studies of religion show again and again that religion cannot be explained without such an inborn awareness; always they return in the end to the often rejected proposition that man is a religious being by nature.

Scripture raises this beyond all doubt. After God had made all things, He created man, and in that same instant created him in His image and likeness, Genesis 1:26. Man is God's race, Acts 17:28. Although he, like the prodigal son in the parable, has left his father's house, he still retains the memory of his origin and destination in his furthest error; in his deepest fall he still retains some

small remnants of the image of God, after which he was created. God reveals Himself outside He also reveals Himself in man; He does not leave Himself untouched in his heart and conscience. This revelation of God in man, however, is not a second, entirely new revelation, added to the first, no self-contained source of knowledge apart from and independent of the latter. But it is a capacity, a susceptibility, an urge to notice God in his works and to understand his revelation. It is an awareness of the Divine within us, which enables us to perceive the Divine outside us, just as the eye enables us to see light and colors, and the ear enables us to hear sounds. It is, as Calvin called it, a feeling of Godhead, or, as Paul described it, an ability to perceive, from among creatures, the unseen things of God, namely His eternal power and divinity. When we try to derive this innate sense of Godhead, it appears to contain two elements. In the first place, it contains a sense of absolute dependence. Before all reasoning and action, there is in us a self-consciousness, which is intimately woven together with our selfhood and coincides with it, as it were. Before all thinking and acting, we are and exist; we exist in a certain way; and we have a consciousness of our existence and of our so-existence which is inseparably connected with it. And the core of this sense of self, which is almost identical with our self being, is a sense of separateness. In our innermost being we are immediately, before all reasoning, aware of being a creature, limited, dependent. Dependent on everything around us, on the entire spiritual and material world; man is ■dependent on the universe. And furthermore, dependent with everything, in the fullest sense, on God, who is the one, eternal and true being. But this feeling of Godhead contains a second component. If it were nothing more than a complete feeling of dependence, and thus left the essence of that power on which man knows himself to be dependent entirely undefined, that feeling would lead him to powerless rebellion or to mute, passive resignation. But the feeling of Godhead implies a certain awareness of that being on which man depends; it is a consciousness of a higher, absolute power, but not of a blind, unreasonable, immovable and insubstantial power, equivalent to a destiny, but of a supreme power, which is at the same time perfectly just, wise and good. It is an awareness of the ■Eternal Power," but also of the ■Godliness," that is, of the absolute perfection of God. And that is why man is not led to despondency and despair by this feeling of dependence, but rather it encourages him to religion, to serving and honoring Godhead. The dependence of which man is conscious in relation to the Divine essence is of a very special kind; it implies freedom and urges us to act freely. It is the dependence, not on a slave, but on a son, even a prodigal son. The ■sense of Godhead is thus, according to Calvin’s description, at the same time the ■seed of religion."

01.04. The value of general Revelation.

4. The value of general Revelation. In determining the value to be assigned to general revelation, there is great danger of being guilty either of underestimation or of overestimation. When we draw attention to the rich grace that God has bestowed in His special revelation, we can sometimes be so filled with it that the general revelation loses all meaning and value for us. But if, at another time, we become acquainted with all the true and good and beautiful things that, by virtue of God's general revelation, are to be found in nature and in the world of man, then it may happen that the special grace that appears in the person and work of Christ may lose its lustre and glory in our soul's eyes. This danger of straying to the right or to the left has always existed in the Christian Church, and in the theory and no less strongly in the practice of life the general revelation has been denied and the special revelation has been denied. Today the temptation to disregard general revelation is not as strong as in earlier centuries. But the temptation to reduce special revelation as much as possible, for example to the person of Christ, or even to deny it altogether and reduce it to general revelation, is all the stronger.

We must be on our guard against both of these unilateral tendencies; and we shall be safest when, in the light of the Holy Scriptures, we examine the history of mankind and allow them to show us what people owe to general revelation. It will then appear to us that in some respects they have progressed very far by its light, but that in other respects their knowledge and ability have been limited by insurmountable limits. When the first people in paradise violated God's commandment, the punishment which they had earned by their sin did not immediately and fully come into effect. They do not die on the same day on which they sinned, but live; they are not sent to hell, but see themselves entrusted with a task on earth; they do not die, but receive the promise of a female seed. They enter into a situation which was known to God and determined by Him, but which could not be foreseen or calculated by human beings; a situation which bears a wholly peculiar character, in which wrath and mercy, punishment and blessing, judgment and endurance are connected with each other. It is this situation, which still persists in nature and humanity and which combines the sharpest contrasts.

We live in a wonderful world, a world that offers us the greatest contrasts. The high and the low, the large and the small, the exalted and the ridiculous, the tragic and the comic, the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad, truth and lies are mixed together in an incomprehensible manner. Alternately the seriousness and the vanity of life take hold of us. Sometimes we are inclined to pessimism, sometimes to optimism; the man who weeps alternates every moment with the man who laughs. The whole world is marked by humor, rightly described as a smile in a tear. The deepest cause of this present state of the world lies in the fact that God continually manifests His wrath on account of man's sin, and yet, according to His own will, also continually manifests His grace. We perish in His wrath, and yet in the morning we are saturated with His mercy, Psalms 90:7, Psalms 90:14. There is a moment in His wrath, but a lifetime in His mercy; in the evening weeping fades away, but in the morning there is jubilation, Psalms 30:6. Curse and blessing are so wonderfully connected and mixed together that they often seem to merge into one another.

Work in the sweat of the brow is both at the same time. And thus together they point to the Cross, which is at the same time the highest law and the richest grace. And that is why the Cross is the center of history and the reconciliation of all contradictions. This situation immediately commenced after the fall, and in the first time, until the calling of Abraham, it again had a completely individual character. The first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis are the most important; they form the starting point and the basis of the entire history of the world.

Right at the start it deserves attention that general and special revelation, although distinct, do not yet occur separately next to each other, but continue to be constantly related to each other and are addressed to the same people, that is, to the same, then existing, humanity. The special revelation was not yet given to a few persons and was not limited to a single people, but extended to all people living at that time. The creation of the world, the formation of mankind, the history of paradise and the fall, the punishment for sin and the first demonstration of God's grace, Genesis 3:15, the public practice of religion, Genesis 4:26, and the beginning of culture, Genesis 4:17 ff, The flood and the building of the tower all belong to the goods which mankind has acquired on its journey through the world; and it is therefore not at all surprising that survivals of all these events, albeit often in a very distorted form, occur among all peoples of the earth. The history of mankind has a common origin and beginning and is built on a broad, common foundation.

Nevertheless, in spite of this unity and communion, there soon came separation between people. And this separation had its cause in religion, in the relation in which one placed oneself to God. The Lord's service was still very simple then; there could be no question of a public worship service as we know it, as long as mankind consisted of only a few families. Yet from the very beginning God's service consisted of prayers and sacrifices, of bringing an offering, of dedicating to God the best that one had, Genesis 4:3-4. The Scriptures do not say how man came to offer such sacrifices, and the opinions of scholars on the origin of sacrifices differ widely today; but it is clear that the first sacrifices arose from a feeling of dependence on and gratitude to God, and were of a symbolic nature. They were to be an expression of man's surrender and dedication to God; what mattered was not the gift in itself, but the spirit in the gift. Abel brought, both in disposition and in gift, a greater and better offering than Cain, Hebrews 11:4, and was therefore accepted by the Lord in grace. Thus from the beginning there was already a separation between the children of Adam, a separation between the righteous and the godless, between martyrs and murderers, between the church and the world. And even though God interfered with Cain's life, sought him out, admonished him to repentance, and even credited mercy to justice (Genesis 4:9-16), the breach was no longer healed; the separation continued and took its course in the separation of the Cainites from the Sethites. In the circles of the Cainites, unbelief and apostasy increased hand over fist and from generation to generation. They did not descend into idolatry and iconoclasm; the Scriptures make no mention of these among mankind before the Flood; these forms of false religion are not original but the product of later development, and evidence of a religious sense suppressed in their hearts by the Cainites. They gave themselves up, not to superstition, but to unbelief; they came, if not to theoretical, at least to practical denial of the existence and revelation of God. They acted as if there were no God; they ate and drank, married and spent, just as it will be in the future of the Son of Man, Matthew 24:37 f. And they threw themselves with all their might on culture and sought therein their salvation, Genesis 4:17-24. Rejoicing in a long life, which sometimes amounted to hundreds of years, Genesis 5:3 f., possessing rich gifts and titanic

physical strength, Genesis 4:23, Genesis 6:4, and boasting of the power of their sword, Genesis 4:23-24, they imagined that their own arm could provide their salvation.

It is true that in the generations of Seth the knowledge and the service of God were kept pure for a long time. In the days of his son Enos they even began to call on the name of the Lord, Genesis 4:26. This does not mean that they first began to honor God with prayers and sacrifices, because this had already taken place before then; Cain and Abel already mentioned sacrifices, and even though no explicit mention is made of prayers, they were certainly included in God's service from the very beginning, because no religion is conceivable without prayer; the sacrifice itself is a prayer embodied in life, and is always accompanied by prayer. Also, the expression in Genesis 4:26 does not mean that God was specifically called by the name of Lord at that time; for, apart from the question whether the name of Jehovah was already known at that time, the essence of God expressed in that name was not made known by the Lord to Moses until much later, Exodus 3:14. But in all probability the name of the Lord, which was begun at that time, means that the Sethites separated themselves from the Cainites, held their own meetings in the name of the Lord, and thus openly and publicly bore witness to the Cainites as to their loyalty to the service of God. They no longer only prayed and offered sacrifices on and for themselves, but from then on they gave a communal testimony; as the Cainites gave themselves over to the service of the world and sought all their salvation in it, the Sethites committed themselves to God and proclaimed His name in prayer and thanks, in preaching and confession, in the midst of an evil generation.

Through this public preaching a constant call to repentance went out to the descendants of Cain. And it continued, even when religion and morals among the Sethites began to decline and they began to mix with the world. Enos' grandson carried the name of Mahalalel, praise of God, Genesis 5:15; Enoch walked with God, Genesis 5:22; Lamech, at the birth of his son Noah, expressed his expectation that he would comfort them from the labor and trouble of their hands because of the earthly land, which God had cursed, Genesis 5:29, and Noah himself, the son of the Sethites, Genesis 5:29, and Noah himself appeared at last as a preacher of righteousness, 2 Peter 2:5, and preached to his contemporaries the gospel of salvation through the Spirit of Christ, 1 Peter 3:19-20. But these pious people were more and more the exception. Sethites and Cainites mingled and brought forth children, who in violence surpassed the previous generations, Genesis 6:4. Man's wickedness was manifold, all the thoughts of his heart were evil from his youth and always, and he filled the earth with wrath, Genesis 6:5, Genesis 6:12-13, Genesis 8:21. Although God in His forbearance granted a postponement of one hundred and twenty years, Genesis 6:3, 1 Peter 3:20, and in the preaching of Noah still indicated a way of escape, old man walked towards his doom and finally perished in the waters of the flood.

After this terrible judgment, in which only Noah and his family, numbering eight souls, were spared, a dispensation commenced which differed in many respects from that which preceded the flood. The flood was, according to the Scriptures, a unique event in the history of mankind, having its likeness only in the fire of the last days, Genesis 8:21 f. It is like a baptism, which condemns the world and preserves those who believe, 1 Peter 3:19-20. The new dispensation was introduced with a covenant. When Noah built an altar after the flood and offered sacrifices to God on that altar, which expressed the thanks and the supplication of his heart, the Lord said to Himself that He would no longer bring such judgment on the earth, but would introduce a fixed order of nature. As a consideration, it is important to note that the pattern of man's heart is evil from his youth,

Genesis 8:21. These words have a great deal in common with, and yet differ considerably from, those in Genesis 6:5, where it is said that all the thoughts of a man's heart are always evil. The words used there in Genesis 6:5 serve as a consideration for the destruction; those used here, in Genesis 8:21, serve as a consideration for the preservation of the earth. There the emphasis is on the wicked acts in which the corrupt heart of old mankind was revealed; here, on the other hand, attention is paid to the sinful nature which always remains in man, even after the flood.

It is as if the Lord wants to say in these words that He knows what awaits His creation if He left it to itself. Then man's heart, which always remains the same, would again break out in all kinds of terrible sins, provoking Him to wrath again and again and for a second time causing Him to destroy the entire earth. And He will not have that. That is why He will now establish mankind and nature in immutable order, prescribe to both the path in which they are to walk, and thereby limit and contain both. All this takes place in the covenant which God establishes with creation after the flood and which therefore bears the name of the covenant of nature.

Although this covenant also flows from God's grace in a broader sense, it is still fundamentally different from the usually called covenant of grace, which is established with the congregation in Christ. For this natural covenant rests on the consideration that man's heart is evil from childhood and will remain evil, Genesis 8:21; its content is the restoration of the creation blessing of fruitfulness and of dominion over animals, Genesis 9:1-3, Genesis 9:7, and to this end it also offers the possibility of death, Genesis 9:5-6; it is called the natural covenant. Genesis 9:5-6; it is established with Noah, the progenitor of the second human race, and in him with all mankind and even with the entire living and empty creation, Genesis 9:1 ff; it is sealed with a natural phenomenon, Genesis 9:12 ff; and it has as its purpose the creation of a new world, and its purpose is to prevent a second event like the flood and to ensure the continued existence of mankind and the world, Genesis 8:21-22, Genesis 9:14-16. With this, the existence and life of mankind and the world rest on a different, more solid foundation.

It is no longer fixed in the act of creation and in God's order of creation, but now receives its basis in a new, special act of God's mercy and longsuffering. It is not by virtue of His creation ordinances, which have been violated by man, that God is obliged to give man life and existence; but in a covenant He obliges Himself to preserve creation in spite of its fall and rebellion. From now on, the maintenance and government of the world no longer rest on a mere will, but on a covenant obligation. Through this covenant God owes it to Himself to maintain the world in its existence. In this covenant, He has pledged His name and His honour, His truth and faithfulness, His word and His promise to the creature for its existence. Thus are the ordinances of mankind and the world in a covenant of grace with all nature unshakably fixed, Genesis 8:21-22, Job 14:5-6, Job 26:10, Psalms 119:90-91, Psalms 148:6, Isaiah 28:24 f.,Jeremiah 5:24, Jeremiah 5:31, Jeremiah 33:20, Jeremiah 33:25. This covenant introduces an entirely different order of things than existed before the flood. The mighty forces of nature which worked in the past and still work in the flood have been subdued. The terrible monsters of living beings, who lived there in the past, have perished. The tremendous catastrophes, which in the past touched the whole of the kosher nation, have given way to an even progression of phenomena and events. People's lifespan has been shortened, their strength diminished, their nature softened, they have been organized into a society and placed under the control of a government. Nature and the world of mankind have been restricted by the covenant. Everywhere there are laws and orders.

Everywhere dams and dikes have been built to stem the flow of iniquity. Order, measure, and number have become the hallmark of creation. God extends the wild animal in mankind, enables him to develop his gifts and strengths in art and science, in society and state, in profession and business, and thus fulfils the conditions which make history possible. But this history is interrupted one more time by the penetrating act of the confusion of tongues. After the Flood the people first dwelt in the land of Ararat, in the Armenian highlands, where Noah became a farmer (Genesis 9:20). As they multiplied, they extended eastward along the rivers of the Tigris and Euphrates, and came to the plain of Sinear or Mesopotamia (Genesis 11:2). Here they settled down, and as they increased in wealth and power, hastened to plan to make a name for themselves by building a tall tower and to keep mankind from being scattered. Against God's command to fill and control the whole earth, they set forth the ideal of maintaining unity through an external center and of binding all mankind together in an empire that finds its strength in power and the glorification of mankind as the goal of its efforts. For the first time in history the idea occurs here of concentrating and organising mankind with all its power and wisdom, with all its art and science, with all its culture, in front of God and His kingdom, an idea that has arisen again and again, and to which all kinds of so-called great men have aspired in the course of the centuries.

Therefore it is necessary that God intervenes and makes this attempt to build an empire once and for all impossible. He does so by the confusion of speech, which hitherto had been one. In what way and in what time this confusion took place, is not specified. But in any case it consisted in the fact that the people became physiologically and psychologically distinct from one another, that they began to see and call things differently, that as a result they were divided into nations and peoples and scattered to all sides of the earth. It should also be taken into account, that this confusion of speech was already prepared by the descent of different sons of Noah, Genesis 10:1, and by the departure of Noah's descendants from Armenia to Sinear, Genesis 11:2. The idea of building Babel's tower would not have arisen, if the very danger and fear of dispersion had not already arisen long and earnestly. In this way Scripture explains the emergence of nations and peoples, of tongues and languages. Indeed, the immense diversity of mankind is a wonderful and inexplicable fact. People, who all descend from the same parents, share the same spirit and the same soul, the same flesh and the same blood, stand as strangers face to face. They do not understand each other. Not only that, but they are divided into races which dispute each other's existence, are bent on each other's destruction, and live century after century in secret and open warfare with each other. Racial instincts, feelings of nationality, enmity, hatred, separate the peoples. All this is a terrible punishment, a terrible judgment, which cannot be undone by cosmopolitanism and peace treaties, by volapuk and pasilalie, by no empire or world culture.

If ever there shall be unity again among mankind, it* cannot be accomplished by an outward mechanical connection around some tower of Babel, but it can only be accomplished from within, by assembly under one and the same Head, Ephesians 1:10, by the peace-making creation of all nations into one new man, Ephesians 2:15, by the regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:6, by the walking of all nations in one light, Revelation 21:24. The unity in mankind, which can only be restored from within, has therefore also been disturbed once in the confusion of tongues from within, centrally. The false unity was violently broken, so that true unity could be made room for it; the kingdom of the world was broken up, so that the Kingdom of God could be established on earth. Henceforth the peoples are also broken up and scattered over the earth.

Israel is chosen from all these peoples to be the bearer of God's revelation. General and special revelation, hitherto united, separate and are apart for a time, to meet again at the foot of the Cross. Israel is set apart to walk in the ways and dedications of the Lord, while the Lord lets the other nations walk in their own ways.

However, this should not be taken to mean that God had no involvement with these peoples and had left them to their own devices. This idea in itself is already preposterous, because God is the Creator, Sustainer and Ruler of all things, and nothing originates, takes place and exists without His omnipotent and omnipresent power. But Scripture also repeatedly pronounces decidedly the opposite. When the Most High distributed the inheritance to the nations, when He separated Adam's children from one another, He set the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel. 32 : 8. When the earth was divided, God reckoned with Israel and appointed for his people a country according to their number, but therefore He also distributed to all peoples their inheritance and determined their borders. He made the whole human race from one blood, that it should dwell not in one place but in the whole earth; for He did not create the earth that it should be empty, but formed it that men should dwell therein (Isaiah 45:18). Thus also He has set down (delineated, established) the times which were ordained beforehand for the life of the nations, and also the provisions (boundaries) of their dwelling places; the age and dwelling place of all the nations were determined in His counsel and appointed by His providence, Acts 17:26.

Moreover, although in times past He caused all the nations to walk in their own ways, He nevertheless did not leave them indifferent, but did them good from heaven, giving them rain and fruitful times and filling their hearts with food and gladness, Acts 14:16-17. By His revelation in nature and history He sent His call to all hearts and consciences, Psalms 19:1. From the creation of the world God made His unseen things, His eternal power and Godhead known in the creatures, Romans 1:19-20. Although the Gentiles received no law as the people of Israel, and therefore have no law in this sense, yet by doing in concrete cases what is commanded by the law they show that in their moral nature they are themselves the law, that the actions commanded by that law are written in their hearts. And this is also confirmed in the fact that the judgment of the conscience and of the thoughts forming between them after their actions either accuses or exonerates them, Romans 2:14-15. The religious and moral consciousness of the heathen thus proves that God interfered with them Through the Word, who in the beginning was with God and God Himself, all things were made, and certainly in that Word was the life and light of man: their being and their consciousness, their existence and their reason are due to that Word. And not only in its principle and origin, but also in the sense that it is sustained from moment to moment by the Word of God. For that Word is not only the author of all things, but it also remained in the world as the sustainer and ruler of all things. And as such it not only gave life to all men, but also enlightened with consciousness, reason and intelligence every man who was born into the world, John 1:3-10.

History imprints its seal on this testimony of Scripture. For not only did all kinds of inventions and businesses spring up soon after the fall in the circles of the Cainites, Genesis 4:17 ff, but also, when after the flood the people settled down on the plain of Sinear, they brought about a high degree of culture within a relatively short time. According to Genesis 10:8-12, Nimrod, a descendant of Cusch, a son of Cham, was the founder of the kingdom of Babel. The Scriptures

call him a great hunter before the Lord, because he drove away the tearing animals by his extraordinary strength, made the plain of Sinear safe, and attracted and moved the people to choose their place of residence there. Thus he founded several cities, Babel, Erech, Accad and Caine in the plain of Sinear; and from there he penetrated further into the land of Assyria and laid the foundation of the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth, Ir and Calah and Resen. The oldest inhabitants of Sinear were therefore, according to Scripture, not Semites, but Chamites; and the young science of Assyriology, which is engaged in translating and explaining the nail inscriptions excavated in Assyria, confirms this, insofar as it also teaches that Sinear was originally inhabited by a people of the Sumerians, who cannot be counted among the Semites. But this ancient population of Sinear was later overrun by a migration of Se- mites. These people retained their own language, but took over the culture of the Sumerians and merged with it to form the later people of the Chaldeans. The Semitic element gained the upper hand when the city-king of Babel, Hammurabi, perhaps the same as Amraphel in Genesis 14:1, made Babel his capital and subjugated all Sinear. The tenth chapter of Genesis also expresses this itself, because in Genesis 14:11 it is said that Nimrod the Chamite went to the land of Assur and founded cities there, but in Genesis 14:22 we read that Assur, that is, the population living in Assur, is related to Elam, Arphachsad, Lud, Aram and must be counted among the descendants of Shem. The civilization that we encounter in the land of Sinear, in science and art, in morals and law, in trade and industry, is at a height which, the better we learn it from the excavations, the more astonished we are. How and when it came into being we do not know; but it completely destroys the common idea that the further we go back, the rougher and uncivilized peoples we come into contact with. As long as we do not build all kinds of phantastic impressions on the uncivilized condition of the so-called natural peoples, but try to penetrate the past on the basis of history, we are strengthened in the thought of Scripture that the oldest period of Noahite mankind, through the initiative of men like Nimrod, stood at a high level of culture. And this civilization was not confined to the land of Sinear. As mankind expanded, it spread over the earth after the confusion of tongues. Of course, it happened that tribes moved further and further away from the center of civilization and sought refuge in the wild and inhospitable places of Asia, Europe and Africa. It is not surprising that these tribes and peoples, in their isolated lives, cut off from all contact with other peoples, struggling with the rough and tumble of nature, have remained at the level of civilization they had adopted or, in many cases, have even sunk below it. These peoples are nowadays usually referred to as ■natural peoples'. But this name is unclear and incorrect. For in all these peoples we find all those characteristics and goods which belong to the basic elements of civilization. They are all human beings, not mere creatures of nature; they all have, without distinction, consciousness and will, reason and intelligence, heart and conscience; they have language and religion, law and order, family and society, tools and jewelry. And among them, too, there is so much difference that the boundary between the peoples of nature and those of culture cannot be defined. There is an important difference in civilization between the Boschjesmen in South Africa, the inhabitants of Polynesia and the Negro races. And however different they may be, they all have in common a fund of ideas, traditions, e.g. about the Flood, memories and expectations which point to the same origin.

Much more so among the so-called cultured peoples, the Indians and Chinese, the Phoenicians and Egyptians. The foundations of the world view, which we discover among all these peoples, are the same as those which the excavations in the land of Sinear have made known to us. Here is the

origin of all culture, the cradle and cradle of mankind. From Central Asia, mankind has spread over the whole earth; from this center it took with it those elements of culture which are common to all civilized peoples and which each of them has developed further in an independent manner and according to its own nature. The ancient culture of Babylonia, with its writing, its astronomy, its mathematics, its timekeeping, etc., is still the foundation on which ours is built. And yet, when we look at this entire history of civilization from a religious and moral point of view, it leaves a deep impression of dissatisfaction and disappointment. The Apostle Paul said of it that the Gentiles, knowing God from His general revelation in nature, nevertheless did not glorify or give thanks to Him as God; but they were perverted in their deliberations and their unwise hearts were darkened. Making out that they were wise, they became foolish and changed the glory of the immortal God into the likeness of a mortal man, and of fowl, and of four-footed and creeping animals, Romans 1:21-23. Impartial historical research of the religions of the peoples leads to the same result. One can, by using a false philosophy of the different forms of religion to go back to an intangible essence of religion in the mind of mankind, flower the seriousness of this result. But the fact remains the same: mankind has not glorified God nor thanked God along the long road of its civilization.

Already with the oldest inhabitants of Sinear we find this service of the creature instead of the Creator. According to some, the religion of the Babylonians, like that of other peoples, is based on the idea of the unity of God, and without doubt this idea of Godhead must have existed before it could be applied to creatures. But in fact, from ancient times the religion of the Babylonians consisted of the worship of all kinds of creatures, who were thought of as gods. How this transition took place from the service of the one true God to the worship of creatures is impossible to determine for lack of historical data. But it is an unproven and arbitrary assumption that religion would have evolved from polydaemonism (worship of all kinds of souls and spirits; feticism, animism, totemism) through polytheism (worship of all kinds of gods) to monotheism (worship of one god). Nowhere do we see that such a development took place, because Israel is the only exception. But history teaches us repeatedly that people can lapse from the confession of one God into the worship of many gods; we are witnesses to this in the history of Israel, in the history of many Christian churches, and in our own time. For when belief in the one God is abandoned, all kinds of polytheistic ideas and superstitious practices arise.

Furthermore, there is not such a difference between lower and higher religions, between the religions of so-called natural peoples and those of cultural peoples, as is usually assumed. The same thoughts and actions recur, albeit in a modified form, among all the pagan peoples; they even live on in all kinds of forms of superstition among the Christian nations, and are honored again in modern circles with the decline of the Christian religion.

First, we find idolatry and statuary among all peoples. Idolatry consists of inventing something else in place of the one true God, or in place of Him, upon which man puts his trust. The creatures come into consideration for this, first of all the sky with its sun, moon and stars, as for instance in the Babylonian religion, which has rightly been called an astral or star religion; or the heroes, the geniuses, the great men, who are thought of as a kind of in-between beings between gods and men and who are worshipped in Greece, among other places. In Greece, for example; or the ancestors, who after their death have passed on to a different and higher state, and in Chinese religion are the main object of worship; or different animal figures, for example, of a bull, a

crocodile, etc., or the saints and spirits who are generally thought to inhabit all kinds of living and inanimate beings, temporarily or permanently, and as such are an object of worship in the religions of both civilized and uncivilized peoples.

Whatever form idolatry takes, however, it is always the worship of the creature rather than of the Creator. The distinction between God and the world has been lost; the holiness, that is, the distinctness of God and His absolute elevation above all creatures, has been completely lost in the Hei¬dendom.

Secondly, with this idolatry go all kinds of false ideas about mankind and the world. Religion is never separate in Heidelberg, but is closely interwoven with all life, with the state and society, with art and science. A religion which exists only in emotions and moods is nowhere to be found. Religion, as man's relationship to God, also regulates all other relationships, and therefore automatically includes a particular view of mankind and the world, of the origin, essence and destiny of all things. In particular, the religious ideas which accompany belief in the gods relate to the past and to the future. In all religions there are memories of paradise and expectations of the future, thoughts about the origin and future of mankind and the world; about a golden age, which existed at the beginning and was followed by ages of silver and iron and clay, and about man's survival after this life, about a judgment that will be held over all at the end, and about a different situation that will then arise between the righteous and the wicked. In the various religions these ideas often occupied an entirely different place. The Chinese religion looks back to the past and is absorbed in ancestor worship; the Egyptian religion extends to the future, is concerned with the dead and is the religion of the kingdom of the dead. But all these elements are present in all religions to a greater or lesser degree. And in this all these representations are similar, that they mix the element of truth with all kinds of error and foolishness. The boundary between Creator and creature has been erased, and therefore the boundary between world and man, between soul and body, between life here on earth and life after death, between heaven and hell, is nowhere clearly drawn. Everywhere the physical and the ethical, the material and the spiritual, the earthly and the heavenly are confused and mixed up with each other. The lack of awareness of the holiness of God corresponds to the lack of awareness of sin. The pagan world does not know God; it does not know the world and man; it does not know sin and misery.

Thirdly, the religions of the nations are all characterized by the attempt to attain salvation themselves by exerting all human power. Idolatry automatically leads to self-willed religion. When the service of the true God is abandoned, and thus there is no longer any objective, true-historical revelation, man tries to force the gods or spirits he has invented into revelation. Idolatry is always accompanied by superstition, mantis (divination), and magic (sorcery). Manticism is the attempt to discover the will of the gods, either by oneself or with the help of soothsayers, priests, oracles, etc., and by means of starry-eyed witchcraft, dream interpretation, bird watching, etc. And magic is the attempt to make the will of the gods subservient to itself, to its own happiness, by means of formalistic prayers, voluntary sacrifices, self-pain etc.

Here, too, there is all kinds of difference in forms. Soothsaying and witchcraft have a different character and meanings in the various religions. But they are found everywhere and are a necessary part of the Pagan religion.

Everywhere it is man who comes to the fore and seeks his own salvation. Nowhere is the actual meaning of redemption (reconciliation) and grace known.

Nevertheless, although these characteristics have characterized the general character of the pagan religions, some of them have undergone reforms which deserve our deliberate attention and a separate, though brief, discussion. When on the one hand religion degenerates into all kinds of coarse and crude forms of superstition and witchcraft, and on the other hand civilization advances, a conflict arises everywhere from time to time. And out of that conflict, no doubt also under the guidance of God, are born those men who strive for reconciliation and try to lift religion out of its deep decay. This was done by Zarathushtra, who probably lived in Persia before the seventh century B.C., by Confucius in China in the sixth century B.C., by Buddha in India in the fifth century B.C., by Mohammed in Arabia in the sixth century A.D., and by many other known and unknown men.

There can be no disagreement about the fact that the religions founded by these men are in many respects highly elevated above the popular religions in the midst of which they lived. The hypothesis of development and the hypothesis of dilution are both, in religion as in every other area of culture, highly one-sided and incapable of summarizing the wealth of phenomena occurring here in a single formula. Periods of prosperity and decline, of revival and depression, alternate in the history of all peoples and in every field. Nor are these men deliberate impostors, instruments or accomplices of Satan, but serious people who have themselves wrestled with the conflict that arose between popular belief and their enlightened consciousness, and who have sought, by the light they have been given, a better way of obtaining true happiness. But however much this may be recognized, all these reforming divinities differ not in essence but in degree from the idolatries of the people. They have cut off the wild branches of the false religion, but they have not eradicated its root. Zarathushtra preached from the contradiction between good and evil, but he conceived this contradiction not only ethically but also and primarily physically. Thus he was forced to distinguish between a good and an evil God, and to create a dualism that permeated the whole world, nature, mankind and animals, and in practice led to the mutilation of life. Confucianism was a state religion that was formed from other religious components and linked the worship of natural gods and ancestors. Buddhism, at its inception, was not really a religion but a philosophy, which placed evil in suffering and sought suffering in existence, and therefore recommended abstinence, numbing of consciousness, destruction of being as the way of salvation. And Muhammed, who was familiar with Judaism and Christianity and who, out of his fervent belief in the approaching judgment which, according to him, was to befall his materialistic contemporaries, came to the confession of a single God, most certainly brought about a divine and moral reform. But in his personal life, the religious preacher increasingly stepped back behind the statesman and legislator, and the religion he founded enthroned in God the unlimited omnipotence, the absolute arbitrariness, in man the slavish submission. There was no communion between God and man in this religion, because neither the cause of separation nor the way to reunification was understood. The happiness of heaven consists in the full satisfaction of sensual desires.

If, therefore, we look over the entire field of general revelation, we discover on the one hand that it has been of great value and has borne rich fruit, but on the other hand that mankind has not found God by its light. It is thanks to the general revelation that all people still have a religious and moral

awareness, that they still have some consciousness of truth and lies, good and evil, right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, that they live in the context of marriage and family, society and the state; That they are restrained by all these external and internal bonds and protected from sinking into bestiality, that within these limits they devote themselves to the acquisition, distribution and enjoyment of all kinds of spiritual and material goods; i. i. e. that humanity is maintained in its existence, preserved in its unity, continued and developed in its history. But in spite of all this, it remains true to the word of the Apostle Paul that the world with all its wisdom has not known God in His wisdom, 1 Corinthians 1:21. When Paul attributes wisdom to the world, he means it in all seriousness. By the light of general revelation the world has gathered a treasure of wisdom, wisdom concerning the things of this earthly life. But this wisdom of the world makes it all the less blameworthy, for it shows that man has not lacked God's gifts, reason and intelligence, power of thought and will. But it does bring to light that man, because of the darkening of his mind and the hardness of his heart, did not use the gifts he had been given in the right way.

Thus the light has shone in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it, John 1:5. The Word was in the world, but the world did not know Him (the Logos), John 1:10 .-. With all its wisdom the world has not known God, 1 Corinthians 1:21.

01.05. Special Revelation.

5. Special Revelation.

(The manner of Revelation). The inadequacy of general revelation brings into focus the necessity of special revelation. But this necessity must be properly understood.

It does not imply, nor is it intended, that God would be obliged and compelled, internally by his essence or externally by the circumstances, to reveal himself in a special way. For all revelation, and especially that which comes to us in Christ and through the Scriptures, is an act of God's grace, a free and open gift. of God's grace, a free disposition of His will, a proof of His undeserved and thousandfold forfeited favor. Only so far can there be question of a necessity for special revelation, if it is inseparably connected with the purpose which God Himself has determined for His creation. If it is God's will to restore creation destroyed by sin, to recreate mankind in His image and allow them to live with Him forever in heavenly bliss, then special revelation is necessary. Because for that purpose the general one is inadequate. And it is not even this goal that requires a special revelation. For if we recognize and acknowledge the inadequacy of general revelation for this purpose of the world and mankind, we already owe this to special revelation. We naturally think that we and our virtues, the world and its treasures, are enough for our salvation. The pagan religions are no exception, but are a confirmation of this rule. It is true that they all speak of and appeal to a special revelation which is said to have come to them through priests, soothsayers, oracles, etc. And this in turn provides an indirect link between the two. And this indirectly provides strong evidence for the thesis that no one is satisfied with the general revelation and that everyone feels the need in his heart for another, more detailed revelation of God than that which nature and history offer him. But these special revelations, to which Paganism. But these special revelations, to which Paganism appeals, clearly show that man, having lost his fellowship with God, no longer understands His revelation in nature either, and in seeking and groping after God, takes his own paths, which lead him further and further away from the knowledge of the truth and more and more into the service of idolatry and iniquity (Romans 1:20-32). The special revelation of God is therefore necessary if we are to understand correctly His general revelation in nature and history, in heart and mind, and to purify its pure contents from all kinds of human errors, and thus learn to value it correctly. In the light of Scripture we first realize that General Revelation has a rich significance for the whole of human life, and yet that with all its riches it is insufficient and inadequate for the attainment of mankind's true destiny.

Although, for the sake of clear understanding and good order, we have first discussed general revelation and exposed its inadequacy before proceeding to deal with special revelation, this should not be understood to mean that in the previous paragraph we set aside special revelation and ignored its content. On the contrary, this special revelation has already guided us in the past and has illuminated the way we go about our research. That is why we are not engaging in a so-called unbiased investigation into which special revelation it is, whose necessity we have seen, and where it can be found. We do not go with the doubters of our days to examine all the different

religions to ask whether they offer the special revelation of God which our hearts need. For the fact that we have come to know false religions as false, that we have learned to recognize idolatry and idolatry, divination and witchcraft, unbelief and superstition, whether in a coarser or a finer form, as sin and error and lies, we owe this to the special revelation which was given to us in Christ. We would therefore be deliberately extinguishing the light that shines on us if we were to set aside special revelation or, even if only temporarily and methodically, take it out of account; and we would thus actually be proving that we preferred darkness to light, and that our thoughts and deliberations could not bear the light, John 3:19-21.

Besides, general revelation can, to a certain extent, make us realize the need and necessity of special revelation. It can also provide many strong reasons for the possibility of such a special revelation. For if one does not agree with materialism and pantheism and therefore actually denies all revelation, but still truly believes in the existence of a personal God who created the world, gave man an immortal soul and destined him for eternal bliss, and who also maintains and governs all things through His providence, there is no longer any reason in principle to dispute the possibility of special revelation. Creation is Revelation, a very special, a completely super-natural, wonderful Revelation; whoever accepts it, recognizes in principle the possibility of all subsequent Revelation, even up to and including the Incarnation. But whatever general revelation may be able to bring to bear on the necessity and possibility of special revelation, it can say nothing about its reality, because it rests on a free gift from God alone. The reality of special revelation can only be seen in its own existence. It is only seen and recognized in its own light. This special revelation, in which God first spoke to us through the prophets and then through the Son (Hebrews 1:1), and which we recognize and accept not through reasoning and evidence but through childlike faith, is closely related to general revelation, but is nevertheless essentially distinct from it. This difference, as was indicated briefly before, but which now needs to be developed more fully, is especially evident in the manner in which special revelation takes place, in the content it contains, and in the goal it aims to achieve. The manner in which special revelation takes place, and which is the subject of this paragraph, is not always one and the same, but differs according to the means employed by God, and is therefore indicated by various names: appearing, revealing, discovering, making known, proclaiming, teaching, etc. Among these, the term of ’revelation’ is particularly important. Among these, the term ’speaking’ draws particular attention. The Holy Scriptures also use the same word for the works of God in creation and providence. God said: there be light, and there was light, Genesis 1:3. He made the heavens by the word, and all their host by the Spirit of His mouth, Psalms 33:6. He speaks, and it is there; He commands, and it is there, Psalms 33:9. The voice of the Lord is on the waters, speaks in the thunder, breaks the cedars, makes the desert tremble, retaliates and exterminates the enemies, Psalms 29:3-9, Psalms 104:7, Isaiah 30:31, Isaiah 66:6. [All this work of God in creation and providence can be called a speech, because God is a personal, conscious, thinking being, who brings all things into being by the word of His power, and thus puts thoughts into the creatures, which can be read and understood by mankind as His image and likeness. God indeed has something to say to mankind through his works.

There is relatively little disagreement about this speaking of God through the works of His hands. Many, who are unaware of a special revelation, still like to speak of a revelation of God in creation. But there is still a great difference among them. Some find this revelation more in nature, others more in history with its great men, and still others prefer to find it in the history of religions with its

religious personalities. Some also place greater emphasis on the revelation that comes to mankind from outside, in nature and history; others attach greater importance to that which takes place in man himself, in his heart or in his conscience. The idea is gaining ground among many that Revelation and religion are closely related and intimately connected, indeed that both have the same content and are two sides of the same thing. Revelation is the divine and religion the human moment in the relationship between God and man. God reveals himself to each as much as he has religion, and man has religion as much as God reveals himself to him.

However, this view is fundamentally rooted in pantheism, which identifies God and man, and thus also revelation and religion. Those who adhere to it can no longer really speak of the revelation of God, not even in nature and history, in the world and in mankind. For revelation, properly understood, presupposes, as we noted earlier, that God is aware and knows Himself, and that He can therefore, at His pleasure, communicate knowledge of Himself to creatures. From the pantheistic point of view, however, the personhood, self-consciousness and self-knowledge, and thus also the reasonable will in God, are denied. God is nothing more than the essence, the power of and in all things. There can therefore be no question here of a revelation of God in the actual sense, at best only of an unconscious, unwilling appearance or working of God. Of an appearance and action of God which introduces no thoughts, no conceptions, no knowledge of God into the consciousness of man, but at best only arouses in man's heart attitudes, inclinations, conditions of a certain mood, which are then interpreted and expressed by that man entirely independently and freely, according to his civilization and development. In fact, religion in mankind and in the individual man then becomes a process by which God becomes aware of himself and learns to know himself. God does not reveal Himself to man or speak to him, but it is man who reveals God to himself. So when this pantheistic school still uses the terms 'revelation' and 'God's speech' etc., it does not derive them from its own world view, in which they no longer fit, but from another, the world view of Scripture, and it uses them in a distorted sense. Scripture, however, already calls general revelation a speaking of God, because it proceeds from the assumption that God really has something to say and says through that revelation to His creatures. Thus it also maintains the distinction between God and man, between Revelation and religion. For if God has His own thought and knows Himself, and if He has expressed that thought to a greater or lesser degree in His works, then the possibility remains that man, because of his darkened mind, may misunderstand God's thoughts and be thwarted in his deliberations. And religion, in this case, is so little the other side of Revelation that it becomes, rather, a guilty and erroneous interpretation of it.

Because Scripture interprets God's general revelation in the way it does, and can call it, in the defined sense, a speaking of God, it keeps the way open for yet another and more real speaking of God in His special revelation. All Scripture makes us know God as a being who is fully conscious, who can think and therefore speak. The question in Psalms 94:9 : Should He, who plants the ear, not hear? Will He, who forms the eye, not see? can, according to the meaning and the opinion of the Holy Spirit, be completed with these others: Could he who knows himself perfectly not communicate knowledge of himself to the creatures? He who disputes this possibility not only denies the God of regeneration, but also the God of creation and providence, as Scripture recognizes Him; just as he who understands God's speech in general revelation in the proper sense, in the sense of Scripture, loses the right to raise fundamental objections to God's speech in special revelation. For God can reveal Himself in a special way, because He does so in a general

way. He can speak in an actual sense, because He can do so in a metaphorical sense. He can be the Resurrector, because He is the Creator of all things. The great difference between God's speaking in general revelation and His speaking in special revelation is that, in the first case, God leaves it to man to derive his thoughts from the works of His hands, but in the second case He utters these thoughts Himself, and thus offers them to man and brings them into his consciousness. In IIsaiah 28:26 we read that God instructs and teaches the countryman about the way in which he should perform his work. But that education is not given to him in literal words, like a reading lesson; but it is grasped and expressed for him in all the arrangements of nature, in the nature of air and soil, of time and place, of grain and corn. And the countryman has to learn with great care to know all these orders of nature, in order to understand the teaching that God gives him therein. He is thereby exposed to error and mistake, but if he finally understands the teaching, he owes it to God, from whom everything originates, who is wonderful in counsel and great in deed. In general revelation this practical teaching is sufficient in relation to its purpose. For God intends by it to awaken mankind to seek Him, that they may seek Him and find Him, Acts 17:27, and if they do not find Him they will not be excused, Romans 1:20. There He seeks man himself and tells him who and what He is. He does not leave it to man to deduce and make up from a group of facts who God is, but He Himself says to man in clear words who He is.

He says to mankind in no uncertain terms: Here and such am I. It is true that God also uses facts from nature and history in special revelation to make Himself known in His various virtues. And those facts, which are often miracles, are no appendage and addition, but an indispensable element in Revelation. But they are never bare facts, the conception and explanation of which is left to us, but they are surrounded on all sides by God's own word. They are preceded by it, accompanied by it, and followed by it. The central content of special revelation is the person and work of Christ; and this Christ is announced and described centuries before in the Old Testament, and, when He has appeared and performed His work, He is again explained and explained in the writings of the New Testament. Special revelation therefore runs from the Christ, but also, in parallel and in connection with it, from the Scriptures, from the Word of God. For this reason, special revelation can be called speech in a much more actual sense than general revelation. The first verse of the letter to the Hebrews summarizes the entire revelation of God in the Old and New Testaments, through the prophets and the Son, under the name of speaking. But it adds at the same time that this revelation has taken place many times and in many different ways. The first expression indicates that the revelation was not given completely in a single act, but that it took place in many successive acts, and thus had a long history. And the second expression indicates that the various divine revelations were not all given in the same way either, but that they took place in different times and situations, in different ways and in different forms. In many places of the Holy Scriptures, e.g. Genesis 2:16; Genesis 2:18, Genesis 4:6 ff, Genesis 6:13 ff, Genesis 12:7, Genesis 13:14 etc. it is simply said that the Lord appeared, said, commanded etc., without any further mention of the way in which this took place. But other texts also shed some light on the manner of revelation, and enable us to distinguish between two types of means employed by God. The first type includes all those means which have an objective (figurative) character and through which God appears and speaks to man as it were from without. Thus God appears many times to Abraham, Moses and the people of Israel on Mount Sinai, above the Tabernacle and in the Holy of Holies, in clouds of smoke and fire as signs of His presence, Genesis 15:17, Exodus 3:2, Exodus 13:21, Exodus 19:9, Exodus 33:9, Leviticus 16:2, etc., or makes what He has to say in the

presence of the people of Israel known as the 'Holy Spirit'. Or also He makes known to mankind what He has to say through angels, Genesis 18:2, Genesis 32:1, Daniel 8:13, Zechariah 1:9, Matthew 1:20 etc., and especially through the Angel of the Covenant, who carries the name of the Lord within him, Exodus 23:21. Furthermore, in order to make His will known He often uses destiny, Proverbs 16:33, and the Urim and Thummim, Exodus 28:30. Some times He speaks with an audible voice, Exodus 19:9, Deuteronomy 4:33, Deuteronomy 5:26, Matthew 3:17, 2 Peter 1:177, or writes His own law on the tablets of the testimony, Exodus 31:18, Exodus 23:16. To this group of means of revelation are also to be counted the miracles, which occupy such a wide and prominent place in Scripture, but are at present subject to fierce opposition from all sides. It is a futile effort to defend the miracles of Scripture against those who have utterly rejected the world view of Scripture. For if God does not exist, as atheism and materialism teach, or if He does not have an independent, personal existence but is at one with the world, as pantheism proposes, or if He withdrew from the world after Creation and abandoned it to His own devices, as deism proclaims, then it goes without saying that miracles are impossible. And if the impossibility of miracles is established in advance, there is no need to argue about their reality. But Scripture has a different idea of God, the world and the relationship between the two. Firstly, it teaches that God is a conscious, willing, and also omnipotent being, who has brought the whole world into being with all its powers and laws, but who has by no means exhausted his full power in it. He retains and possesses in Himself an infinite fullness of life and power. Nothing is too miraculous for Him, Genesis 18:14; with Him all things are possible, Matthew 19:26.

Secondly, Scripture does not see the world as a whole, which in all its parts possesses one and the same being, one and the same substance, and only differs in forms. But it understands the world as an organism, the members of which, although belonging to the whole, are each equipped with a different power and vocation. In the one world there is room for different kinds of beings, which, although maintained and governed by the same divine power, nevertheless differ in nature from one another. In that rich world there is matter and spirit, soul and body, heaven and earth; there are inorganic and organic, lifeless and living, senseless and reasonable creatures in it, minerals and plants and animals, human beings and angels. And in mankind there is again a distinction between his head and his heart, his reason and conscience, his mind and will, his ideas and his actions. And all these different realms in one and the same world are based on different forces and work according to different laws. Everything is interrelated, as are all the members of the body, but in the whole each part still has its own place and task. And thirdly, the Schritt teaches us that God and the world, although distinct, are never separate. God has an own, completely independent existence in Himself, but He is not separated from the world; on the contrary, in Him we live and move and are, Acts 17:28. He is not only the Creator, who called all things into being at the beginning, but He is and remains the owner, the possessor, the King and the Lord, who constantly maintains and regenerates everything by His omnipotent and omnipresent power. Everything, therefore, not only had its beginning, but everything, as it progresses, has its first cause in Him. The second causes by which God works are different; but the first cause of all creations is always God and God alone.

If we agree with the Scriptures in these basic ideas, and thus stand on the ground of theism, all grounds for questioning or disputing the possibility of miracles are lost. For everything that happens in nature and history is then an act, a work of God, and in this sense a miracle. And the

so-called miracles are nothing but a special demonstration of that same divine power which works in all things. It works in those things in different ways, by different means (second causes), according to different laws and therefore with different results. It has been said, with some justification, that for a stone it is a miracle that a plant grows, for a plant it is a miracle that an animal moves, for an animal it is a miracle that a human being thinks, and thus for a human being it is a miracle that God raises the dead. If God, with His omnipresent and omnipotent power, works through all creatures as His means, how could He not work with that same power in another way ■ and by other means than those familiar to us from the ordinary course of nature and history? Miracles, therefore, are not a breaking of the laws of nature. For these are fully recognized by Scripture, even though it does not enumerate them or formulate them; for, according to it, the order of the whole structure is fixed in God's natural covenant with Noah, Genesis 8:22. But, just as man subdues the earth with his mind and will and controls nature with his culture, so God has the power to make this created world subservient to the execution of His counsel. The miracles prove that the Lord is God, not the world.

Now this would not have needed any explanation to man if he had not fallen. Then he would have known and acknowledged God from all the works of His hands. Without entering into the question whether miracles would have occurred without sin, we will suffice here with the remark that they would have had a different character and a different purpose in any case. For the miracles which have actually taken place and of which the Scriptures tell us are characterized by their own nature and purpose. In the Old Testament miracles, purpose and salvation go hand in hand. The flood is a means to destroy the godless generation of the time and to keep Noah and his family in the ark. The miracles which are grouped around the persons of Moses and Joshua: the plagues in Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, the legislation at Sinai, the entry into and the conquest of Canaan, have as their purpose to judge the enemies of God and His people and to provide a safe residence for His own people in the land of promise. The miracles, of which later the person of Elijah in particular forms the centerpiece, fall in the time of Ahab and Izebel, when paganism threatens to suppress the entire service of Jehovah, and reach their climax on Carmel, where the battle between Jehovah and Baal is decided.

All the miracles of the Old Testament have the common characteristic of executing a negative judgment on the nations and of positively creating and preserving in the people of Israel a ground for the continuing revelation of God. They find their purpose in that, in the face of all idolatry and idolatry, Jehovah, the God of the covenant, the God of νο■■ς Israel, is known and acknowledged as God. Behold, that I, I Who am and no God with me. I kill and make alive, I smite and I heal; and there is none that saveth out of my hand, Deuteronomy 32:39, Deuteronomy 4:35, Isaiah 45:5, Isaiah 45:18, Isaiah 45:22. And when this goal has been reached, then the full revelation in the person of Chris begins. This person of Christ is himself a miracle, in his origin, in his essence, in his words and works, the miracle of world history. Accordingly, the miracles He performs are also of a unique nature. First of all, He Himself performs many miracles during His earthly life: miracles by which He proves His power over nature (changing water into wine, miraculous feeding, calming the storm, walking on the sea, etc.); then miracles by which He proves His power over the consequences of sin, the diseases and infirmities, the elixirs of life; and finally miracles by which He proves His power over sin itself, over its guilt and blemish and over the dominion of Satan (forgiveness of sins, expulsion of Satan and the evil spirits). In these three kinds of miracles the

peculiarity of the person of Christ is already expressed. Apart from a single exception, such as the curse of the fig tree, all the miracles of Jesus are miracles of salvation. He did not come to condemn the world, but to save it, John 3:17. In these miracles He also acts as Prophet, Priest and King and does the works that the Father has shown Him and commissioned Him to do, John 4:34, John 5:36, John 9:4, etc. But even more clearly, the person of Christ approaches us in the miracles, which are not performed by, but in and with Him. Therein we see above all who and what He is. His supernatural conception, his miraculous life and death, his resurrection, ascension and sitting at the right hand of God are miracles of salvation. They prove much better than the works done by Jesus his absolute power over sin and all its consequences, over Satan and his entire empire. And likewise, they reveal even more clearly than those works that this power is a saving, redeeming power, which will only gain its complete victory in the new heaven and the new earth. The miracles performed by the first witnesses in the apostolic age are to be considered as works of the exalted Christ, Acts 3:6, Acts 4:10. They were necessary to prove that Jesus, who was rejected by the world, attached to the cross and dead and now considered dead, was alive and had all the power not only in heaven but also on earth. The miracles of the Old Testament showed that Jehovah was God and that no one was with Him. The miracles of the New Testament show that Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, whom the Jews crucified, was raised up by God and exalted at His right hand to be a Sovereign and a Blessed Maker (Acts 4:10, Acts 5:30-31). When this goal has been reached, when a congregation has been planted in the world that believes and confesses this revelation of the Father in the Son through the communion of the Holy Spirit, then the outward visible miracles will cease, but the spiritual miracles of regeneration and conversion will continue in the congregation, until the fullness of the Gentiles enters and all Israel becomes sick. At the end of time, according to the testimony of the Holy Scriptures, will come the miracles of the future, the appearing of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the judgment, and the new heaven and earth. The entire revelation runs to the restoration of the fallen human race, to the re-creation of the world, to the recognition of God as God by all creatures, and all the miracles also run into this revelation. They are thus no strange element, no arbitrary appendage or annex to Revelation. But they are a necessary, an indispensable part of it. They are themselves revelation. In word and deed God makes himself known to mankind with all his virtues and perfections. In addition to this first type of means, which are all objective and external, there is a second series of forms and methods which God uses in His revelation. These include all those means which have a subjective character, which are not present outside but within man himself, and through which God does not speak from outside to man, but from within him. The first place is taken by that peculiar revelation which was given to Moses, the Mediator of the Old Testament. It is described as one in which the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend, Exodus 33:11.

Moses had a completely unique place in the Old Testament and was also highly elevated above all the prophets. God spoke to him, not through a vision, not in dark words, but from mouth and mouth; he did not see the Lord in a vision, but he saw his likeness, his stature, not his essence or face, but the afterglow of the glory of God that passed before his eyes, Numbers 12:8, Exodus 33:18-23.

Furthermore, among these means of revelation are the dream, Numbers 12:6, Deuteronomy 13:1-6; the vision, that is to say, such a state, in which the eye of the body is closed to the outside world and the eye of the soul is opened to the perception of divine things, Numbers 12:6,

Deuteronomy 13:1-6, Deuteronomy 12:6, Deuteronomy 13:1-6; and especially also the inspiration, or the intervention of God's Spirit in the human consciousness, Numbers 11:25-29, 2 Samuel 23:2, Matthew 16:17, Acts 8:29, 1 Corinthians 2:12, 2 Peter 1:211. This last revelation, by means of intervention in the consciousness of man, already occurs several times in the Old Testament, but there it is still always presented as a working of the Spirit, which comes from above and for a moment strikes the prophet. But in the New Testament, when the Holy Spirit himself has been poured out, inspiration not only becomes more common as a form of revelation, but it also assumes a more organic and lasting character.

These two types of means of revelation may be summarized under the name of manifestation and inspiration. It must be remembered, however, that the content of manifestation consists not only of deeds but also of thoughts and words. And it must also be borne in mind that inspiration, as referred to here, is distinct both from that activity of the Holy Spirit which prophets and apostles received when recording the revelation (inspiration or theopneustion of the Scriptures), and from that interior enlightenment which is the portion of all believers.

01.06. Special Revelation II.

6. Special Revelation II.

(The content of revelation).

After having been acquainted with the different ways in which special revelation has taken place, we now turn our attention to its contents. As with the general revelation, we can best understand it here, too, if we briefly review the history of the special revelation. Then, without a separate discussion, we will know its purpose.

Special revelation did not begin with Abraham, but began immediately after the fall. It is therefore no accident that Abraham was a son of Therah, and that he was a descendant in the eighth generation of Shem, whose God was and would be Jehovah, Genesis 9:26. In the generation of Shem, as before the flood in that of Seth, the knowledge of God was preserved the longest and the purest. Therefore, when the Lord calls Abraham, He does not present Himself as another God, but as the same God whom Abraham already knew and confessed. From elsewhere, too, from what Scripture tells of Melchizedek, Genesis 14:18-20, we know that the knowledge of the true God did not yet end, knowledge of the true God was not yet completely lost. And of the Philistine king Abimelech, the Hittites of Hebron, the Pharaoh in Egypt we read that they recognized and honored the God of Abraham, Genesis 20:3, Genesis 21:22-23. Genesis 26:29, Genesis 40:8, Genesis 41:16, Genesis 41:38-39. But after the confusion of tongues and the division of mankind, not unbelief anymore, but superstition and idolatry grew by the hand. That was the case in Egypt, Exodus 18:9-12, in Canaan, Genesis 15:16, Genesis 18:1 f. and also in Babylon. Even among the Semites idolatry had penetrated. According to Joshua 24:2, Joshua 2:14-15 the fathers of Israel, Therah, the father of Abraham, Nahor and Haran, when they lived beyond the river, served other gods; and from Genesis 31:19, Genesis 31:34-35; Genesis 35:2-4 we know that Laban had and worshipped special household gods, teraphim; therefore Laban is called in Genesis 31:20 an Arammi, an Aramean, a Syrian, verg. Deuteronomy 26:5. So that mankind would not sink into superstition and unrighteousness, the covenant of nature with Noah would not be broken and God’s intention for mankind would not be thwarted, God takes a different path with Abraham. He cannot destroy the human race another time in a flood, but He can, while letting the other peoples walk in their own ways, establish a covenant with one person and in this one person with one nation, continue and fulfill His promise in the way of that covenant, and, when the fulfillment has come, extend it to all mankind. Temporary isolation of one people becomes the means to lasting unity with all mankind. With Abraham, therefore, a new era begins in the history of Revelation. The special revelation, which is given to the patriarchs, joins in and incorporates the previous one, but it also continues and develops it. It is therefore of great importance to understand this new revelation correctly in its peculiarity. This is all the more so since the answer to the question as to what the revelation to Abraham, and therefore the religion of Abraham, consisted of decides the other question as to what the revelation to Israel, and therefore the nature of the Israelite religion, was.

Today many have blocked their way to a correct understanding of the origin and nature of Israel's religion. First, they deny all historical value to the period 'of the patriarchs', and consider Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. to be demigods or heroes, just as such beings are sung about by Homer in the Iliad. Secondly, they start the religion of Israel with a low, pagan form of religion, such as animism, feticism, ancestor worship, polydaemonism or polytheism. And third, they try to show that the essence of Israel's divine service, as it gradually emerged from the prophets, especially in the eighth century B.C., lay in a so-called ethical monotheism, that is, in the recognition of one God who was not only all-powerful but also just and good. This modern interpretation of the Old Testament can be seen as an attempt to explain the whole of the religion of Israel, as with all other peoples, by purely natural factors, through slow and gradual development, without special revelation. But the whole of Scripture opposes this and punishes the modern view with the failure of its attempt both to explain the change in Israel's religion and to understand its nature. For the origin of Israel's religion cannot be found in this way, because the prophets always and everywhere do not appear with a new and different deity, but proclaim their words in the name of the same God, who is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who is the God of their fathers, the God of Israel, and whom the people, by virtue of the covenant, are bound to serve and honor. Many, who feel the weight of this consideration, therefore return from the prophets to Moses and consider him to be the actual founder of Israel's religion. But even Moses did not and could not act in the name of a strange and unknown deity, in which case he would not have found faith with the people of Israel; but he joined history and called the people to the exodus in the name of and by the command of that God who was the Faithful One, who had committed himself to the patriarchs and was now fulfilling his promise. A serious consideration of the origin of Israel's religion forces us to go back with Scripture to the period of the patriarchs. And to this same period we must return if we are to understand the nature of Israel's religion. This essence is by no means found in so-called ethical monotheism. Certainly the religion of Israel contained this element, that God was a single, omnipotent, just and holy being. The heart and soul of this religion lay in something else; it lay in the fact that this God, who was one and eternal, just and holy, covenanted himself to Israel as his God. This is how the Apostle Paul understood it. In Romans 4:1-25, with which Galatians 3:5 ff can also be compared, he asks the question what it is that Abraham received from God. With reference to Genesis 15:6, he answers that it does not lie in righteousness by works, but in righteousness by faith, in other words, in the grace of the forgiveness of sins, in the undeserved favour and blessing of God, just as David later sees in the forgiveness of sins the salvation of the sinner. The Apostle goes on to say that this great gift of grace was not first given to Abraham when he was circumcised, but long before that, in Genesis 15:6, and that the fourteen-year institution of circumcision that followed in Genesis 17:1-27 underlined the righteousness of faith and was a sign and seal of it. Thus the forgiveness of sins, and with it the whole of salvation, is independent of the Law and all its demands. And the same is also true of the universality of this benefit. Not by the law, but long before and independent of the law, the promise was made to Abraham that he would be a father of many nations and an heir of the world. The Apostle's entire argument is based on the history of the Old Testament itself. It is not what Abraham knows of God and does for God that is of primary importance in that account, but what God gives Abraham. Well, first of all it is God who seeks Abraham out, calls him and leads him to Canaan. Second, it is He who promises Abraham to be his God and also the God of his seed. Thirdly, He promises that He will give him a seed against all expectations, will make him the father of a great nation, and will give that nation

the land of Canaan. Fourthly, He adds that in that seed He will make Abraham a blessing to all the nations of the earth. And fifthly, finally this promise is raised by God in a covenant to a binding obligation, sealed with the sign of circumcision, and after Abraham's trial of faith confirmed by God with an oath, Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 12:7, Genesis 12:13, Genesis 13:14-17, Genesis 15:1, Genesis 15:17-21, Genesis 17:1, Genesis 18:10, Genesis 22:17-19.

All these promises together form the content of God's revelation to Abraham. They have as their center the one great promise: I will be your God and the God of your seed. And they extend through the people and the land of Israel to Christ, and in Christ to all mankind and to the whole world, Romans 4:11 f. And it is to this that faith and the walk of faith correspond from man's side, Romans 4:16-22, Hebrews 11:8-21. For a promise cannot become ours except through faith, and faith is manifested in an upright walk before God, Genesis 17:1. Abraham is the example of trusting faith, Isaac of suffering faith, Jacob of fighting faith. In the history of the patriarchs the character and calling of the people of Israel is already described. While the peoples of the earth walk in their own ways, and develop the gifts of general grace, by a creative act of God, Genesis 18:10, Deuteronomy 32:6, Isaiah 51:1-2, from Abraham is raised a people, which, like its progenitor, has to walk in faith, owes the land of its dwelling place not to its own power but to God's grace, and only by this can acquire a blessed dominion over the nations, that it faithfully keeps the promise of the Lord's salvation like an Isaac, and that it awaits its fulfilment, like a Jacob, by fighting. No human calculations or deliberations can promote this fulfillment, nor can human weaknesses or sins obstruct it. For God is the giver and the polluter of the promise. While He punishes sin, He at the same time makes it serve the execution of His counsel. And Israel, like Jacob of old, can only partake of that promise and that blessing of the Lord if it is purified by the punishment, its strength broken, and only by the struggle of faith and prayer becomes victorious. I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me, Genesis 32:26, Hosea 12:4. This promise remains the content of all subsequent revelations of God in the Old Testament, though it is of course expanded and developed therein, and it therefore remains the core and essence of the Israelite religion. With the conclusion of the covenant on Sinai and the legal dispensation then established by God, another era undoubtedly began. But in order to understand the nature of Israel's religion and the Old Testament economy, we must be deeply aware that the promise previously made to Abraham was not nullified by the later administration of the law. This is again explicitly taught to us by Paul. In Galatians 3:15 f. he compares the promise, which was given to Abraham and his seed, with a covenant or rather with a will, which, once established by the testator, cannot be nullified by another. This is also the case with God's promise to Abraham and all the goods contained therein. They are a free disposal of God. They are, as it were, bequeathed by God to Abraham and his seed, and must therefore be placed in the hands of that seed once, by God's decree. All peoples who came forth from Abraham according to the flesh do not qualify as that seed, thus not the descendants which he obtained through Hagar and Ketura (Genesis 17:20, Genesis 25:2). For the Scriptures do not speak of ■seeds', that is, of many descendants or peoples, but only of one seed, of one generation, which was to come from Abraham. And that is the offspring, the seed, the people, that was to be born of the son of promise, Isaac, and was to culminate in Christ, as the seed par excellence.

When, therefore, God bequeathed His salvation to Abraham and his seed by way of a will in the promise, this implied that these salvation goods would one day belong to Christ, that they would

be His property and possession, and would be distributed by Him to His congregation, gathered from all over the world. But then this promise, which had previously been given to Abraham testamentary, that is, independent of all human conditions and all human fulfilment of the law, solely by God's free will, could not be nullified by a later additional law either. If that had happened, God would have nullified his own promise, his own decree, his own will, his own oath. For only one of these is possible: we receive the salvation goods contained in the promise, either from the promise or from the law, from grace or merit, from faith or from works. It is a fact that Abraham received the righteousness of faith from the promise even before he was circumcised; that the Israelites in patriarchal times and in Egypt, i.e. for hundreds of years, also obtained this benefit solely by virtue of the promise and not by virtue of the law, which did not yet exist at that time; and that God bestowed this promise on Abraham and his seed until Christ and in this case to all mankind; that is to say, He bestowed it as a gift from God thus bestowing it as an everlasting covenant and confirming it with a lasting oath.

Galatians 3:17-18, Hebrews 6:13 ff; well, if all this is so, it is impossible that the law, which God later gave to Israel, should have nullified His promise. But if this is the case, then the question becomes all the more important as to what God gave Israel the law for, in other words, what is the meaning and significance of the dispensation of the covenant of grace, which came into being with the law, and thus what is the essence of the religion of Israel. That question was important in Paul's days and is no less important in our days. In the days of the Apostles there were those who saw in the law the essence of Israel's religion and who therefore demanded that the Gentiles should only come to Christianity through Israel, through circumcision and the observance of the law. And there were others who despised the law, attributed it to a lower God, and considered it to belong to a lower religious standpoint. Nominalism and antinomianism were then opposed to each other as extremes. And today the same opposition occurs under other names and forms. There are those who define the essence of Israel's religion in ethical monotheism, that is, in the recognition that God is a holy God who requires only that we keep his commandments, and who also define Christianity in this way, so that the distinction between the two is lost and the enlightened Jew and the enlightened Christian profess the same religion entirely. And there are others who, from the height of their spiritual freedom, look down upon low, narrow-minded, legalistic Judaism and know of no higher ideal than that of delivering mankind from the hands of the Jew and removing all Semitic elements from Japhethism; they consider all decay to come from Judaism and all salvation from the Indo-European race. Semitic and anti-Semitic minds wrestle with and therefore, as extremes, often touch each other. For Paul the question of the meaning and purpose of the Law was so important that he returned to it many times in his letters. The answer he gives contains the following moments:

First, the law was added to the promise; it was added later, but was not originally connected with it. Many years passed before the law was proclaimed after the promise. And when it was added to the promise, it still had a temporary, transient character. While the promise or covenant of grace is eternal, the Law lasted only until the time when the very seed of Abraham, namely the Christ, would appear, to whom the promise had actually been made and who was to receive and distribute the contents of the promise (Romans 5:20, Galatians 3:17, Galatians 3:19).

Secondly, this temporary, transient character of the Law is already evident in its origin. Although the Law came from God, it was not given directly and immediately to the people of Israel and to

each member of that nation. But all kinds of mediations took place in connection with it. From the side of God the law was given by means of the angels, under thunder and lightning, in a heavy cloud and at the sound of a very strong trumpet. Hebrews 12:18, Acts 7:38, Acts 7:53, Galatians 3:19. And on the part of the people, who were afraid and had to stand at the foot of the mountain, Moses was asked to act as a mediator, to speak with God and to receive the Law, Exodus 19:21 ff. Exodus 20:19, Deuteronomy 5:22-27, Deuteronomy 18:16, Hebrews 12:19, Galatians 3:19-20. not by angels, but by God's own Son; and it is not received on our account by someone to whom we gave the order, by an intermediary on our part, but all believers receive it personally in Christ Himself, John 1:17, Galatians 3:22, Galatians 3:26.

Thirdly, as coming from God, the law is holy and just and good and spiritual; it is in no way the cause or agent of sin, even though sin takes its cue from the commandment. It is not even powerless in itself; in fact it is a commandment for life, but it is only powerless in man because of his sinful flesh. But all this does not alter the fact that it differs from the promise, not only in degree, but also in essence. It is not contrary to the promise, but neither is it of the promise and of faith. Therefore it cannot be given for the purpose of nullifying the promise. But being essentially different from the promise, it bears a different character from the promise, and has also a different purpose, Romans 3:8, Romans 14:7, Galatians 3:17, Galatians 3:21.

Fourthly, that special purpose, which is peculiar to the law, and with which it is given by God, is of two kinds. First, it was added to the promise for the sake of transgressions, Galatians 3:19, that is, to make transgressions greater. But then sin has a different character; then it is not ■violation' in the sense in which Paul speaks of it, as distinguished from sin in general. With Adam, however, who received a commandment, to which life or death was attached (Romans 5:12, Romans 5:14) and likewise with Israel, who were to receive life or death, blessing or curse, in the way of obedience or disobedience, sin had yet another character. As sin against a law, with life or death attached to it, it became a ■violation', that is to say, it acquired the character of a breach of the covenant, a position opposite to and outside of that peculiar relationship in which God had placed Himself with Adam in the covenant of work and with Israel in the Sinaitic covenant. If there is no such law, then sin remains sin, but there is no actual ■violation', Romans 4:15. The sins of the Gentiles are certainly sins, but they are not a breach of covenant as with Israel; and being without such a law as God gave to Israel, they are condemned without it, Romans 2:12. With Israel, however, sins could become "transgressions" precisely because they received a law from God with the promise of life and the threat of death. The law thus created the possibility of this. To this extent Paul can say that the Sinaitic law, although holy and by no means the cause of sin, was added to the promise in order to increase ■violations; that it is the power of sin, and arouses desire; That sin takes its cause from the commandment to transgress; that sin sleeps and is dead, without such a law; that it increases the ■crime", which again is not sin in general, but those particular sins, which bear the nature of a mistreatment, of a fall, of a breach of covenant, Galatians 3:19, Romans 5:13, Romans 5:20, Romans 7:81,Co 15:56. But because the law brings about all this, it also, of course, by its very nature incurs wrath, that is to say, it threatens divine punishment, pronounces judgment on all men and all their deeds, justifies no one, but puts all under the curse and makes all damnable, subject to the wrath of God, Romans 3:19-20, Romans 4:15, Galatians 3:10-11, Galatians 3:22. Therefore, if there were people under the Old Testament who received forgiveness of sins and eternal life, they did not owe it to the law, but to the promise.

But in connection with this negative purpose, the increase of transgressions and the aggravation of judgment, the Law, given by God to Israel, also received a positive purpose. For, by giving sin the character of transgression, breach of contract, unfaithfulness, by making all sin, even the hidden lusts in the heart, known as sin, as contrary to God's law, and as worthy of His wrath and the punishment of death, Romans 3:20, Romans 7:7, 1 Corinthians 15:56, it throws light on the necessity of the promise, and proves that, if justification of sinners is possible, there must be a righteousness other than of works, Galatians 3:11. Far from being opposed to the promise, therefore, the Law serves precisely as a means in the hand of God to bring the promise ever closer to its fulfilment. The Law took Israel into its custody, like a prisoner deprived of freedom of movement; like a ■paediatrician', it took Israel by the hand, accompanied her always and everywhere, never leaving her free; like a guardian and caretaker, it took Israel constantly under its supervision, so that she might learn to know and love the promise in its necessity and glory. Without the Law, so to speak, nothing would have come of the promise and its fulfillment. Israel would soon have sunk back into paganism and lost both the revelation of God with its promise and its own religion and place among the nations. But now the Law surrounded Israel, isolated her, maintained her in her isolation, preserved her from the clutter, and thus created and demarcated a circle in which God could keep her revelation, that is, her promise pure, expand, develop, multiply, and bring her ever nearer to fulfillment. The law served to fulfill the promise. It placed all under the wrath of God and under the sentence of death, it condemned all to sin, so that the promise given to Abraham and fulfilled in Christ might be given to all believers, and all might obtain the adoption of sons, Galatians 3:21-29, Galatians 4:1-7. When we now take up Paul's position, a surprising light is shed on God's revelation in the Old Testament, on Israel's religion, on the meaning of the law, on history and prophecy, on psalms and wisdom. With the person of Moses, a new period indeed begins in the revelation of God and in the history of Israel. But just as the revelation with Abraham does not break off God's earlier revelations, but incorporates and continues them, so too the dispensation of God's grace under the Law joins those before the Law. The Law, which came with the promise, did not invalidate or nullify that promise, but incorporated it and rendered service to its development and fulfillment. The promise is the main thing, the law is secondary; it is the goal, this one the means; not in the law, but in the promise lies the core of God's revelation and the heart of Israel's religion. And since the promise is a promise of God, and therefore not a vain sound, but a word that has power, that is the expression of a will and does all that is pleasing to God, Psalms 33:9, Isaiah 55:11, that promise is therefore the driving force and the mainspring of Israel's history, until it obtains its fulfilment in Christ.

Just as Abraham was redeemed by the call of God out of the land of the Chaldeans, according to the words of Isaiah 29:22, and then received the promise of the covenant by God's free will, so Israel was first led by the Lord into Egypt and brought under the servitude of Pharaohs, to be freed from this misery and admitted to the covenant of God on Sinai's mountain as a people. These three facts, servitude in Egypt, deliverance from this house of bondage by God's strong hand and outstretched arm, and the conclusion of the covenant at Sinai, are the foundation of Israel's history, the pillars on which its religious and moral life rests. They live on in memory from generation to generation, are recalled in history, in prophecy and in psalmody, and cannot be stripped of their historical reality even by the most radical criticism. But they also provide immediate proof that the law was not and cannot have been given in order to nullify the promise. On the contrary, when God appears to Moses in the burning bush and calls him to his office, He

does not appear as a strange, unknown deity, but He presents Himself as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, who has seen the affliction of his people and heard their cry, and who now, because he is Jehovah, that is, the faithful God who remains constant, descends to fulfill his promise and to deliver his people from the misery of servitude. Israel will therefore not first become God's people at Horeb, or be accepted as his people on the basis of the law. But it is his people by virtue of the promise, and by virtue of that same promise it will now be redeemed from its misery. The misery and the redemption therefore precede the legislation at Sinai. And just as Abraham, having been redeemed by the call and having received the promise of God in childlike faith, is on that basis obliged to walk in holiness before God, Genesis 17:1; so Israel, after having been rescued from the house of Egypt by God's strong arm, is also exhorted and obliged by God at Sinai to a new obedience. The law which God gave to his people through Moses was a law of thanksgiving; it followed redemption, it rested on the promise; through its strength God led his people to the sweet abode of his glory, Exodus 15:13. He carried them on the wings of eagles and thus brought them to Himself, Exodus 19:4, Deuteronomy 32:11-12. And the law was therefore introduced with the promise: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of service, Exodus 20:2, Deuteronomy 5:6. But this relationship now demanded a further arrangement. In patriarchal times, when only a few families shared in the blessing of the promise to Abraham, there was no need for this; and in Egypt, when the people suffered in servitude, there was even no possibility of it. But now Israel was redeemed; it became an independent, free people and came to live in a land of its own. If it was to be a people of God in that situation as well, as a people, as a nation, then the covenant of grace had to take the form of a people's covenant; then the promise, in order to maintain and further develop itself, had to secure itself the help of the law. This was all the more necessary, since Israel, as Paul presents it, was still a child. It had gone through a hard schooling in Egypt and had received a deep sense of dependency through servitude, a deep need for help and assistance. But it was not suitable for self-reliance overnight. It took all the wisdom and gentleness of a Moses, Numbers 12:3, to give some guidance to such a people at the exodus and in the desert. Again and again they are called a stubborn people, because they will not bow to the commandment of God, Exodus 32:9, Exodus 33:3, Exodus 33:5, Exodus 34:9, Deuteronomy 9:6, etc. It always shows, not only in the desert but also later in Canaan, the character of a child. Israel was not a people of reason and intelligence; it lacked the clear self-confidence, the principled spirit, the philosophical sense, the power of separated thought. But all the more it was a people of mind and heart. This made them, on the one hand, extremely receptive, susceptible to all kinds of impressions, open to a world of emotions, extraordinarily well suited to the influence of all kinds of earthly and heavenly forces, and, on the other hand, formed by God Himself to be the recipient and bearer of His revelation. This side of the Israelite character appears to us in Scripture in all those men and women of God, who, tempted with a calling from the Lord, have nothing else to say but childlike and submissive: Behold, I speak Lord, for thy servant or thy handmaid heareth, I will be done according to thy word! And they accepted the word of the Lord, and laid it aside, and kept it in their hearts. But Israel was on the other hand, as it was in Exodus 32:1-35 : On the other hand, as it says in Exodus 32:8, Israel was ■hastily deviating from the way', inclined to wander, changeable, capricious, moody, sullen, easily carried away by some person or incident, passionate, hating with a burning hatred, or loving with a deep, tender, more than motherly love; alternately saddened to death or jumping for joy to heaven; never Western-minded, but always glowing with Eastern enthusiasm; fond of

stimulating foods like garlic and onion, Numbers 11:5, on lentil purée, Genesis 25:34, and game meat, Genesis 27:14 f., on brilliant colors, beautiful garments, parfumeries and precious stones, Joshua 7:21, Isaiah 3:18 on all that shines and glows in sunshine. Da Costa and Heine are both sons of Israel.

Such a people had to be put under the guardianship and discipline of the law if they were to fulfill their calling to become a blessing to all the nations of the earth through the promise. And this is the nature of the law.

First of all, the law is not of the promise or of faith, but is added to the promise, and serves not to nullify the promise, but to prepare the way for its fulfillment. In modern times many try to reverse the relationship between the law and the prophets. They do not speak of law and prophets, but of prophets and law, and they say that the laws in the books of Moses only came into existence centuries after Moses and even to a large extent after the Exile. In this presentation one can with good will still recognize this component of truth, that indeed not the law in God's revelation and in Israel's religion was the main thing and occupied the first place. The promise preceded it and occupied the first place, and the law was the means for it. It is therefore quite possible that the Law of Moses was later revised by second or third editors and enriched with inscriptions or additions in connection with the needs of the times; for the Law as a whole had a temporary and transitory character and was already amended in various respects by Moses in the book of Deuteronomy. But this idea, as if prophecy had preceded the law, is contrary to the facts, to the nature of the law, to the nature and task of prophecy, and also to sound reasoning. For there can be no doubt that Israel had its Temple, priests, sacrifices, etc., long before the eighth century, and that laws and regulations were necessary for them, as well as for civil, social and political life. A religion without a cult and without orders is always and was especially in antiquity, also with Israel, unthinkable. The objection that there was no place in the time of Moses for such a written law, with such rich content, as is recorded in Exodus to Deuteronomy, has lost its force after the discovery of the law by Hammurabi, who lived about 2250 years before Christ and reigned as king over Babylon for 55 years.

Second, the content of the law is consistent with the purpose for which it was given by God. To determine its value, it must not be compared with the laws in force in Christian states today. For, although the Mosaic law, especially in its principles, still retains its significance today, it was itself intended by God as a temporary measure and, in the fullness of time, when it had reached its fulfilment, it was abolished because of its weakness and unprofitableness. Nor may comparison of Israel's legislation with that of the ancient peoples, e.g., of Babylon, be a criterion of judgment. It is true that such a comparison is important, that it makes us notice all sorts of similarities and differences, and that in some cases it can make us understand the Mosaic law better. But Israel was its own people, set apart by God, with its own destiny, namely to be the bearer of the promise, and therefore it had to lead its own life in view of this goal. When we look at the Law of God given to Israel from this point of view, the following characteristics stand out:

1. It is a religious law through and through. Not only in some parts, e.g., when it regulates worship, but in its entirety, also when it gives instructions for moral, civil, social and political life. Above the whole Law is written: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the house of Egypt. The Law is not based on an abstract monotheism, but on a relationship historically created by God Himself

between Him and His people. It is a law of the Covenant and always governs the life Israel must lead according to the demands of the Covenant; He is the lawgiver in all commandments, and for His sake they must all be fulfilled. The whole law is animated by the thought: Jehovah first loved you, sought you out, redeemed you, brought you into his covenant and accepted you as his people.

2. It is a moral law through and through. In the Law of Moses we distinguish three elements: moral, civil and ceremonial laws. And this distinction is good. But we must not lose sight of the fact that the whole law is inspired and sustained by moral principles. The application of these moral principles to concrete cases often differs from the one we are making today. Jesus himself said that Moses permitted the giving of a curse to a married woman only because of the hardness of the heart (Alatth. 19: 8). But the spirit that animates the Mosaic law is the spirit of love. This is the second commandment, equal to the first, Matthew 22:39; and in it the whole law is fulfilled, Romans 13:8, Galatians 5:14, 1 Timothy 1:5. This love is shown to the weak and miserable, the poor, foreigners, widows, orphans, servants and maids, the deaf, the blind, the aged, etc., in a mercy such as no ancient law knew. It has been rightly said that Israel’s morality is written from the point of view of the oppressed. Israel never forgot his foreignness and his misery in Egypt.

3. The Law of Moses is a holy law, by no means only in that part which is called the holy law (Leviticus 17:1-16, Leviticus 18:1-30, Leviticus 19:1-37, Leviticus 20:1-27, Leviticus 21:1-24, Leviticus 22:1-33, Leviticus 23:1-44, Leviticus 24:1-23, Leviticus 22:1-55, Leviticus 26:1-46), but in all its parts. Again, there is no law in antiquity which conceives of sin as sin so deeply and so seriously. Sin is called by different names; it is not only called sin in general, but also crime, guilt, apostasy, rebellion and is always committed in the last instance against God, against the God of the covenant, and thus always bears the character of a ■violation," a breach of the covenant. For all these sins, however, there is forgiveness; but not in such a way that Israel has to acquire it by his good works or even by his sacrifices. For forgiveness is contained in the promise; it is a benefit, not of the law, but of the gospel; it is not obtained by sacrifice, but only by faith, Exodus 33:19, Exodus 34:6-7, Exodus 34:9, Numbers 14:18-20. But these same places, which so powerfully proclaim God’s free grace, remarkably connect with it the statement that He by no means holds the innocent guiltless and visits the iniquity of the fathers to the children in the third and fourth generations. The one does not contradict the other. For precisely because Jehovah forgives sins to His people in the promise, out of pure grace, He wants His people, as having received such a great benefit out of grace, also to walk in the way of that covenant. And if they do not do this, God, according to the character that sin bears, takes one of these three paths with His people. In some cases the Law, in its sacrifices, opens up the possibility of reconciliation, without the sin having any further civil consequences. In other cases the law prescribes some kind of civil punishment, sometimes, but relatively rarely, the death penalty. And in a much greater number of cases God Himself reserves the visitation and comes against His people with judgments, pestilence, exile, etc. These three ways, which God keeps with his people in case of transgression, do not nullify the promise nor acquire it, but are only the means by which God fulfills his promise and assures his troth to his people, also in days of waste. Of all the nations of the earth the Lord hath known Israel only: therefore visiteth he all his iniquijties. 3:2.

4. Finally, the Mosaic Law is also a law of freedom; it preserves and gives a great deal of freedom. This is immediately evident from the remarkable fact that the people, on the one hand, voluntarily

agree to God’s covenant and accept His law. God does not force His covenant and law on Israel, but invites them to consent voluntarily, Exodus 19:8, Exodus 24:4, Exodus 24:7; Deuteronomy 5:27, Joshua 24:15-25. Furthermore, the law does not interfere with existing rights and relations, but presupposes and recognizes them. Even before the legislation at Sinai, Israel was more or less organized. It was genealogically divided into families, families (family groups), genera and tribes and was thus patriarchally organized. Each of these four sections in the people had its own head or representative. Meetings of these elders already took place in Egypt, Exodus 4:29, Exodus 3:16 ff. and also occurred after the exodus, to listen to the words of the Lord, Exodus 19:7, to decide on proposals by Moses, Deuteronomy 1:9-14, or to make proposals to Moses themselves, Deuteronomy 1:22-23. Besides these public assemblies the people of Israel had two other kinds of officials, first of all ■ambtsbeden" or ■schrij- vers", who had to regulate everything concerning the civil status and who already existed in Egypt, Exodus 5:6, Exodus 5:10, Exodus 5:14, Exodus 5:19, Numbers 2:16, Deuteronomy 1:15, Deuteronomy 16:18. Joshua 23:2; and secondly ■judges", who were introduced by Moses, to assist him in the administration of justice, Exodus 18:21, Exodus 18:23, Deuteronomy 1:13 f. but later, like the chiefs and scribes, had to be appointed in all the cities by the choice of the elders, Deuteronomy 16:18. In this organization of the people, the family was the starting point and the basis, as it is still held in high esteem by the Jews today. And because the family had such an important place in Israel, the woman was better suited than in any other nation. The question which is decisive here, as has rightly been pointed out, is whether the man is considered first and foremost a member of the family (husband, son, brother), or whether he is considered in the first place a citizen or a warrior. The latter was the case, for example, in Greece and Rome; and this had the consequence that the woman was pushed back and considered inferior. But in Israel the man was above all a member of the family, his vocation was first and foremost to take care of his family, he was not opposed to or elevated above but next to the woman, who was entitled to the respect and love of children, Exodus 20:2, and who was worthy of the praise of a bar wife for himself, Proverbs 12:4, Proverbs 31:10 ff. This whole patriarchal-aristocratic form of government, which existed in Israel before the law, was recognized and confirmed by the law. Numerous laws relate to marriage and serve to keep this state of life holy and to protect the family. Other provisions safeguard the patriarchal form of government against priesthood and kingship. The elders, the officers and the judges are distinguished from the priests and the Levites. Only in the highest court did priests also sit, Deuteronomy 17:8-13, Deuteronomy 19:17-18, because in the important cases that arose there a proper interpretation of the law, which was assigned to the priests, Leviticus 10:8-11, Ezekiel 7:26, Ezekiel 44:23, Jeremiah 18:18, was of the highest importance.

Israel, in all its government, was the opposite of a hierarchy. Likewise, according to the law, despotism had no place. If Israel later desired and received a king from God (1 Samuel 8:7), he was not to be a king in the manner of the nations, but was bound by God’s law and merely an executor of His will (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). For in the essence of the matter God was the Koning, as well as the legislator and judge of Israel, Exodus 15:18, Exodus 19:6, Numbers 23:21, Deuteronomy 33:5, 1 Samuel 8:7, Isaiah 33:22, Psalms 44:5, Psalms 68:25, etc. This was expressed in the fact that He passed judgment in the ordinary way by judges, who had to be strictly impartial, had to know no persons and had to judge only by the standards of the law; further, in the fact that in special cases He made His will known by lot, by the Urim and Thummim and by the prophets; and finally, most powerfully, in the fact that in many transgressions He

reserved the punishment for Himself. Many of the prescriptions in the law are not articles of law, on which some civil punishment is prescribed, but simply urgent admonitions and warnings. They are addressed to the conscience and, precisely because of this, leave Israel a great deal of freedom. The types of punishment were also few, mainly just beatings and in case of serious offenses (blasphemy, idolatry, sorcery, cursing of parents, murder, adultery) death by stoning. There was no mention of inquisition, rack, imprisonment, banishment, confiscation of property, burning, hanging, etc. If Israel walked in the way of the covenant, it would receive rich blessings from the Lord; but if it did not obey His voice, it would also be struck by His curse and visited with all kinds of misery, Deuteronomy 28:29. From these characteristics of the Law the purpose is revealed with which it was given by God to Israel. The Lord defines this Himself when, at the conclusion of the covenant on Sinai, He had Moses tell the people of Israel that if they would obey His voice and keep His covenant, they would be His property from among all nations, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, Exodus 19:5-6. Israel is and must affirm itself in the way of the covenant to be the chosen people of God out of all nations, chosen not for their dignity or merit, but according to God's free love and in conformity with His oath to the fathers, Deuteronomy 7:6-8. But Israel did not receive this gracious privilege to shut herself off from those peoples and to exalt herself above them, but to be a kingdom of priests, who have a priestly task to perform toward the peoples, to bring them the knowledge and the service of God, and through this way to rule over the peoples. Israel can and will fulfill this calling, however, only if it is itself a holy people, if it devotes itself wholly to the Lord, obeys His voice and walks in His covenant. The holiness to which Israel is called does not yet have the full and deep meaning which this concept receives in the New Testament. It includes not only moral holiness, but also ceremonial holiness, as is expressed in particular in Leviticus 17:1-16, Leviticus 18:1-30, Leviticus 19:1-37, Leviticus 20:1-27, Leviticus 21:1-24, Leviticus 22:1-33, Leviticus 23:1-44, Leviticus 24:1-23, Leviticus 22:1-55, Leviticus 26:1-46.. But this moral and this ceremonial component in the law are not opposed to each other. They are two sides of the same thing. Israel is a holy nation when it acts in accordance with all the moral, civil and ceremonial laws that God gave at Sinai, both internally and externally, in faith and in conduct. And if that people - as the Lord knew - would not be true to their calling but would at every moment, throughout their history, be guilty of disobedience and apostasy, then the Lord would certainly visit them and punish them more severely than any other people in the world. But at the end of the Tribulation the Lord would still return to his people, turn his prison and have mercy on them, circumcise their hearts and the hearts of their seed, to love the Lord their God with all their hearts and with all their souls, Deuteronomy 4:29-31. He cannot give up his people, because his own name and honor before the enemies is at stake, Deut. Through the unfaithfulness of Israel He must confirm His faithfulness, the truthfulness of His word, the immutability of His counsel, the firmness of His covenant; He must show that He is God and that there is no other God with Him, Deuteronomy 32:39. It returns to its starting point. The Law is after and it is until the promise. From this point of view of the covenant the Scriptures consider the whole history of Israel. It is not her purpose in the historical books of the Old Testament to give a precise and concise account of all the vicissitudes of the people of Israel, nor to trace the causal relationship between all the events. But she describes the progress of the Kingdom of God, touches only briefly on what is of no importance to it, or passes over it in silence, and on the other hand dwells at length on what is of significance to it. In the history of Israel, Scripture wants to show us who and what God is to his people. It is not without reason that the description of Israel's

history has been called "Jehovah's diary". The Lord lets it be known, as it were, from day to day, what His findings are and what His interference is with Israel. In the first period, when the people were still under the impression of God's mighty deeds, they remained faithful to His law. By those deeds Jehovah was so clearly shown to be the one true God, Exodus 6:6, Exodus 18:18, that the people thought of no other gods, and when they heard the words of the Lord from the mouth of Moses, said as if with one voice: All these words which the Lord hasspoken we will do, Exodus 19:8, Exodus 24:3, Deuteronomy 2:7, Deuteronomy 5:27. And later, when it had received the inheritance of Canaan and was given the choice by Grey Joshua as to whom it should serve, it answered, almost haughtily: Far be it from us to forsake the Lord in order to serve other gods, Joshua 24:16, Judges 2:7. But when Joshua and the elders, who had seen the great deeds of God, were dead, and another generation arose, not knowing the Lord nor the work that He had done for Israel, they left the Lord their fathers' God, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods among the peoples around them. 2:6-13. Israel was not productive in idolatry; it did not create its own false religion, but either adopted the gods of the heathen themselves, or began to serve the Lord in the form of images, in the heathen manner. In Egypt and the desert it lapsed into the Egyptian idolatry, Exodus 16:28, Joshua 24:14, Ezekiel 20:7, Ezekiel 20:13; later in Palestine it was guilty of the service of the Canaanite, Phoenician (Baal, Ascher, Astarte) and As-Syrian (fire and stars) gods, 2 Kings 21:3, 2 Kings 21:5, 2 Kings 23:5-15, Jeremiah 7:24-31, Ezekiel 20:21, Ezekiel 22:3 f. Israel constantly isused the first and second commandments of God's law, and in so doing undermined the very foundations of the covenant.

Already in the days of t Judges, these ■heroes of the people of the law', the history of Israel moved forward through apostasy, punishment and distress on the one side, and salvation and blessing on the other. Judges 2:11, Judges 2:11-23. It was a time of confusion, in which the various tribe lost sight of the national cause, each pursuing his own policy, and each doing what was right in his own eyes. Joshua 17:6, Joshua 6:21-25. This situation was brought to an end by Samuel and the institution of kingship. But after Solomon the national unity was broken for good, and ten tribes separated themselves from the Davidic house of kings. Jeroboam made the political split into a religious one as well, by founding a special sanctuary in Dan, introducing the image service and abolishing the legal priesthood. Thus he became the king ■who made Israel sin." The history of the kingdom of Ephraim for two and a half centuries became a history of the continuing apostasy from Jehovah, against which the prophecy raised its voice in vain, and finally ended in the removal of the ten tribes. And it is true that Judah was highly favored above Israel, because it was always ruled by the same royal house of David and remained in possession of the lawful sanctuary and the lawful priesthood; but nevertheless also in this realm, even in spite of many reformations of the pious kings, the apostasy and wickedness became finally so great, that the judgment could not fail to come. Almost one hundred and forty years after the Kingdom of Israel, Judah also lost its independent existence. But this constant apostasy of the people of Israel should not make us forget that God kept a remnant in them throughout the ages, according to the election of His grace. There was always a core in Israel that remained faithful to Jehovah's covenant. Even in the dark ages of Elijah there were still seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. These were the pious, the righteous, the faithful, the needy, the wretched, or whatever they may be called in the Psalms, who continued to put their trust in the God of Jacob and did not act falsely against his covenant. They thirsted after God as a deer thirsts after the streams of water; they would not dwell anywhere but in His sanctuary; they contemplated His law and clung to His

promises. To them the law was not a burden but a joy, their entertainment all day long. They imitated Moses in saying that the keeping of this law would be Israel's wisdom and understanding before the eyes of the nations. For when they heard these statutes they would exclaim: This people alone is a wise and understanding people. For what great nation is there, whom the gods are so near, as the Lord our God, whenever we call upon Him? And what great nation is there, that hath such righteous statutes and rights, as this whole law is, which I give unto you this day? Deuteronomy 4:6-8. And as the times grew sadder, they clung to the promise the more. God would not abandon the work of His hands; He could not, for His name's sake and His own, break the covenant which He had freely made with the fathers. Out of their circle God raised up those men who, as prophets, psalmists and wise men, proclaimed the word of God and unfolded the promise in ever clearer terms. In the midst of misery they lifted up their heads, saw the future by the light of the Lord's Spirit and prophesied of the new day, of David's Son and Lord, of the root of Isai, of Immanuel, of the Sprit of Righteousness, of the Servant of the Lord, of the Angel of the Covenant, of the new covenant and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament begins after the fall with the promise of the female seed, Genesis 3:15, and ends with the announcement of the coming of the Angel of the Covenant, Malachi 3:1.

Also after the Exile, such a nucleus remained in Israel, Malachi 3:16. Even through the Exile the people were purified as a nation, made to turn away permanently from idolatry and statuary, and placed under strict discipline of the Law by Ezra and Nehemiah. This situation brought with it other serious dangers; a scripture developed that focused on the letter and lost sight of the essence and spirit of the old covenant; sects arose such as Phariseism, Sadduceism and Esseism, which, through their own unwilling treatment of divine revelation, substituted the fleshly for the spiritual Israel. Nevertheless, even in the four hundred years that elapsed between Ma- leachi and John the Baptist, God's leadership continued with his people. After the Exile, Israel never enjoyed full political independence; it passed from one dominion to another, and was successively submissive to Persia and Media, to Macedonia and Egypt, to Syria and Rome; it was a servant in its own land. But this political servitude contributed to Israel's becoming more and more aware of its own character and calling, to its placing the spiritual possession of divine revelation among its privileges and honors, and to its taking the greatest possible care in its collection and preservation. Furthermore, this awareness of its spiritual prerogatives penetrated so deeply into Israel's consciousness that it not only shaped its character, but also enabled it to maintain its national self-sufficiency under the severest persecution. Israel has suffered and been oppressed as no other nation in the world. But both inside and outside of Palestine it remained itself; it was the in its Old Testament it possessed a treasure, richer than all the wisdom of the Gentiles; it formed a cosmopolitan congregation with Jerusalem as its center; in its synagogues it offered the idolatrous peoples the spectacle of a religion without an image or altar, without sacrifice and priesthood; it preached everywhere the unity and truthfulness of Israel's God, and it carried within its bosom the unquenchable hope of a glorious future, which would also be a blessing for the nations. Thus it prepared Christianity in Paganism. And within their own circle, by God's grace, the multitude of faithful was preserved, who, like Simeon and Anna and so many others, quietly awaited the redemption of Israel. Mary, the mother of the Lord, is the most glorious example of these pious people. In her Israel reaches its destination, to receive and keep the highest revelation of God in childlike faith. Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word Luke 1:38.

Thus the entire revelation of the Old Testament ends with Chris, not with a new law or doctrine or institution, but with the person of Christ. A human being is the completed revelation of God; the Son of Man is also God's own unborn Son. Old and New Testaments do not stand together as law and gospel, but they relate to each other as promise and fulfillment, Acts 13:12, Romans 1:2, as shadow and body, Colossians 2:17, as image and reality, Hebrews 10:1, as movable and immovable things, Hebrews 12:27, as servitude and freedom, Romans 8:15, Gal. 4. And since Christ was the very substance of Old Testament revelation, John 5:39, 1 Peter 1:11, Revelation 19:10, He is also its keystone and crown in the dispensation of the New Covenant. He is the fulfillment of the law, of all righteousness, Matthew 3:15, Matthew 5:17, of all promises, which in Him are yes and amen, 2 Corinthians 1:20, of the whole covenant, which is now confirmed in His blood, Matthew 26:28. The people of Israel themselves, with their history, their offices and institutions, their temple and altar, their sacrifices and ceremonies, their prophecy, psalmody and wisdom, reach their destination and goal in Him. Christ is the fulfillment of all that, in his person and appearance first of all, and then further in his words and works, in his birth and life, in his death and resurrection, in his ascension and sitting at the right hand of God.

Once he has appeared and completed his work, the revelation of God can no longer be supplemented or increased, but only explained and extended to all peoples through the apostolic witness in Scripture. Since Revelation has been completed, the time has come for its contents to become the property of mankind. Whereas in the Old Testament everything was prepared for Christ, now everything is derived from Him. Christ is the turning point of time. The promise made to Abraham now extends to all nations. The Jerusalem that was below makes way for the Jerusalem that is above and the mother of us all, Galatians 4:26. Israel is replaced by the congregation of all languages and nations. It is now the dispensation of the fullness of time, in which the middle wall of separation is broken down, Jew and Gentile are created into a new man, and everything is gathered under Christ as Head, Ephesians 1:10, Ephesians 2:14-15. And this dispensation continues until the fullness of the Gentiles comes and Israel shall be saved. When Christ has gathered His church, prepared His bride, completed His kingdom, He hands it over to the Father, that God may be all in all, 1 Corinthians 15:28. I will be your God and you shall be my people, that was the substance of the promise; and that promise is perfectly fulfilled in Christ, through Him who was and who is and who is to come, in the New Jerusalem, Revelation 21:3.

01.07. The Holy Scriptures.

The Holy Scriptures. With the revelation, both general and special, we are acquainted by the Holy Scriptures.

It is important to see clearly the distinction and the connection which exist between the two. On the one hand there is an important difference between revelation and Scripture. Revelation sometimes preceded its description by a long time; for example, before Moses there was a revelation, but there was no Scripture. This revelation often contained much more than was later recorded in writing; the books of the prophets, for example, those of Amos, are often only a brief summary of what they spoke orally to their contemporaries; many prophets in the Old Testament and many apostles in the New Testament, who were all organs of special revelation, left nothing in writing; and even of Jesus we are told explicitly that he left many other books as well. He did many other signs, so many that if each one were written down, the world would not be able to contain the written books, John 20:30, John 21:25. Conversely, God may have revealed something to His prophets and apostles when they were writing, which they themselves did not know beforehand and therefore could not have preached to others. This is, for example, at least in part the case with the revelation which John received on Patmos about the future.

Scripture is therefore not the revelation itself, but the description, the record, from which the revelation can be known. When Scripture is called the record of revelation, however, one must guard against another error. There are those who not only distinguish between Revelation and Scripture, but also separate and disassociate them. They acknowledge that God worked in a special way in the revelation which preceded the Scriptures; but they further present it as if the description of this revelation had been left entirely to the individuals themselves and had not been subject to God’s special providence. Scripture is then still a record of revelation, but an accidental and imperfect one, so that we have great difficulty in deducing from it what does or does not belong to special revelation. From this point of view a great distinction is made between the Word of God and Holy Scripture, and we prefer to use the expression that Holy Scripture is not the Word of God, but that the Word of God is contained in Holy Scripture. This representation is already beforehand and in itself improbable. For, besides taking a far too mechanical view of the relationship between word and scripture, it also forgets that if God wished to grant a special revelation, which, as we have seen in the previous paragraph, was destined for all mankind in the seed of Abraham, that is, in Christ, He must also have taken special measures to preserve this revelation unalterably and to make it generally known by means of the Scriptures. For this purpose the written word also proves its worth in general. The written word differs from the spoken word in that it does not wither away into the air but remains; that it is not falsified as oral tradition but retains its purity; and that it is not limited to a few people who hear it, but can be extended to all peoples and to all times. Writing preserves the spoken word, frees it from decay and makes it universal. But we need not dwell any longer on this human reasoning. The idea that special revelation is from God, but that Scripture came into existence without His special care, is diametrically opposed to the testimony of Scripture itself. She repeatedly and emphatically

declares that, as Scripture, she is also the Word of God. Scripture is distinct from previous revelation, but it is not separate from it. It is not a human, accidental, arbitrary, imperfect addition to Revelation, but is itself a constituent part of Revelation. It is the conclusion and the completion, the cornerstone and the keystone of it. In order to see this, we have only to look at the following clear testimonies, which Scripture contains.

First of all, God repeatedly instructs the prophets not only to communicate the revelation they have received orally, but also to record it in writing. In Exodus 17:14 Moses receives the command from the Lord to write down the story of the battle with and the victory over Amalek, which was of such great significance for Israel, in memory in the appropriate book of God's saving acts. In Exodus 24:3-4, Exodus 24:7 and Exodus 34:27 he is commanded to write down the rights and the laws according to which God had made His covenant with Israel. And when Israel completed its wanderings in the wilderness and arrived in the fields of Moab near Jericho, it is expressly said that Moses described the journeys of the children of Israel by word of mouth, that is, at the command of the Lord, Numbers 33:2. The Lord also expressly said of the song sung by Moses in Deuteronomy 32:1-52 that it was to be written down and put into the mouth of the children of Israel, so that later, in days of apostasy, it would be a witness against them, Deuteronomy 31:19, Deuteronomy 31:22. Such commands, to record the received revelation, also occur later at the prophets, Isaiah 8:1, Isaiah 30:8, Jeremiah 25:13, Jeremiah 30:2, Jeremiah 36:2 Jeremiah 36:27-32, Ezekiel 24:2, Daniel 12:4, Habakkuk 2:2. Although these injunctions apply only to a small portion of Scripture, they nevertheless show that God, who strictly enjoins that one shall neither add to nor subtract from His words, Deuteronomy 4:2, Deuteronomy 12:32, Proverbs 30:6, has also extended His special care to the written record of revelation. In the second place, Moses and the prophets are clearly aware that they not only speak, but also proclaim the Word of God in writing. Thus Moses is not only called in a special way to be a guide to the people of Israel, Exodus 3:1-22, but the Lord also speaks to him face to face, like a man to his friend, Exodus 33:11, and makes known to him all his rights and statutes. The entire body of laws is attributed to the Lord in the books of Moses and throughout the Scriptures. He made known to Jacob His words, and to Israel His commands and His rights; so He has not done to any people, nor do they know His rights, Psalms 147:19-20; Psalms 103:7. Likewise the prophets are not only aware that they are called by the Lord, 1 Samuel 3:1-21, Isaiah 6:1-13, Jeremiah 1:1-19, Ezekiel 1:1-28, Ezekiel 2:1-10, Ezekiel 3:1-27, Amos 3:7-8, Amos 7:15 and received their revelation from Him, Isaiah 5:9, Isaiah 6:9, Isaiah 22:14, Isaiah 28:22, Jeremiah 1:9, Jeremiah 3:6, Jeremiah 20:7-9, Ezekiel 3:16, Ezekiel 3:26, Ezekiel 3:27, Amos 3:8 etc. - What Amos says, is their conviction: surely the Lord will not do a thing, unless he has revealed his secret to his servants the prophets, Amos 3:7, compare. Genesis 18:17. But they also know that when they write, they do not proclaim their own word, but the word of the Lord; just as Moses wrote his laws, so they introduce their special prophecies with the formula: Thus saith the Lord, or: The word of the Lord came to me, or . Thus saith the Lord, or the word of the Lord hath come unto me, or the sight, the word, the burden of the Lord, Isaiah 1:1, Isaiah 2:1; Isaiah 8:1, Isaiah 13:1, Jeremiah 1:2, Jeremiah 1:4, Jeremiah 1:11, Jeremiah 2:1, Ezekiel 1:1, Ezekiel 2:1, Ezekiel 3:1, Daniel 7:1, Amos 1:3, Amos 2:1, Amos 3:1, :1, , etc.

Thirdly, there is the testimony of the New Testament. Jesus and the apostles repeatedly quote statements from the Old Testament under the names of Moses, Isaiah, David, Daniel, Matthew

8:4, Matthew 15:7, Matthew 22:43, Matthew 24:15. But not less often they use the formula: It is written, Matthew 4:4, or: The Scriptures say, John 7:38, or: God says, Matthew 12:26, or: The Holy Spirit says, Hebrews 3:7 etc. By this method of quotation they clearly show that the Scriptures of the Old Covenant, although composed of different parts and originating from different authors, nevertheless constitute one organic whole, which also in its written form has God as its author. Jesus and the Apostles express this conviction not only indirectly, but also directly in clear terms. Jesus declares that Scripture cannot be broken, that is, dissolved, deprived of its authority, John 10:35, and that He also personally did not come for Himself to dissolve the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them, Matthew 5:17, Luke 16:27. The apostle Peter says, that the prophetic word is firm and reliable and a light in our path. And that is why it is so, because the prophecy contained in the Scriptures of the Old Testament is not based on a prediction and explanation of the future given by the prophets themselves, for the prophecy was not brought about in the past by the will of man; but holy men of God, driven by the Holy Spirit, have spoken it, 2 Peter 1:19-21, cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12. And in the same sense Paul declares that the holy Scriptures, which together make up the Old Testament, can make us wise unto salvation, if we examine and read them by faith which is in Christ Jesus. For all and every Scripture which is included in the Holy Scriptures is inspired of God (theopneustos = breathed of God, breathed by Him) and for that reason also useful for doctrine, for reproof (conviction and punishment), for correction and for instruction in righteousness, 2 Timothy 3:16.

Finally, fourthly, as far as the Scriptures of the New Testament themselves are concerned, Jesus Himself left no scriptures, but He chose, called and empowered His Apostles, especially after His passing in the midst of the world, to act as His witnesses, Matthew 10:1, Mark 3:13, Luke 6:13, Luke 9:1, John 6:70. He equips them for this purpose with special gifts and powers, Matthew 10:1, Matthew 10:9, Mark 16:15 ff, Acts 2:43, Acts 5:12, Romans 15:19, 1 Thessalonians 2:4, especially with the Holy Spirit, who will remind them of everything Jesus said, John 14:26, and will also proclaim to them the things to come and thus guide them into all the truth, John 16:13. Thus it is not really the apostles themselves who testify of Christ, but it is the Holy Spirit who acts in and through them as Jesus' witness, John 15:26-27. Just as the Son came to glorify the Father, John 17:4, so the Holy Spirit comes to glorify the Son, taking from the Son everything He speaks and does, John 16:14. The apostles had to bring this testimony of Christ not only to their own people and contemporaries in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, but to all mankind and to the ends of the earth. 16: 15, Acts 1:8. In this charge to go out into all the world, the command to also testify in writing about Jesus is not directly contained in so many words. But if the promise made to Abraham was to come to mankind in Christ, the Gospel could not reach its destination unless it was also recorded and thus preserved for all ages and extended to all nations. The Apostles, therefore, were so guided by the Holy Spirit in their missionary work that they naturally took up the pen and, through the Gospels and letters, gave witness to the fullness of grace and truth which was fresh in Christ. Not only in their oral preaching, but also in their writings they were consciously concerned to unfold the truth which God had revealed in Christ and made known to them through his Spirit.

Matthew writes the book of the generation, that is the history of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, Matthew 1:1. Mark relates how the Gospel began with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and took its origin from Him, Mark 1:1. Luke, after careful investigation and by means of a regular account,

Luke wishes to provide Theophilus with certainty concerning those things that were absolutely certain in the circle of the faithful on the basis of the testimony of the Apostles, Luke 1:1-4. John writes his Gospel that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, we may have life in his name, John 20:32, and likewise says in his first letter that he proclaims what he has seen, heard, looked at, and touched with his hands from the Word of life, that we may have fellowship with the Apostles, and that this fellowship may also be with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, 1 John 1:1-3. Paul is convinced, that he was not only called an apostle by Jesus Christ Himself, Galatians 1:1, and received from Him his evangelie by revelation, Galatians 1:12, Ephesians 3:2-8, 1 Timothy 1:12, but that he also preaches the word of God by mouth and pen, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Thessalonians 2:15,2 Thessalonians 3:14, 1 Corinthians 2:4, 1 Corinthians 2:10-13, 2 Corinthians 2:17, so that whoever preaches another gospel is cursed, Galatians 1:8. And just as all the apostles linked the eternal life or death of mankind to the acceptance or rejection of their word, so John, the Apostle, in the last chapter of his Revelation, threatens a severe punishment to anyone who adds to or subtracts from the words of this book's prophecy, Revelation 22:18. The special activity of the Holy Spirit, by which the recording of revelation was effected, is usually referred to by the name of inspiration, 2 Timothy 3:16. What this consisted of is elucidated by comparisons from nature and further explanations in Scripture. In general, a human being is susceptible to having thoughts of others taken into his consciousness and to being guided in his train of thought by others; all education and instruction, all knowledge and science, are based on this susceptibility. Usually this communication of thoughts by others to us takes place by means of signs or gestures, of spoken or written words. And we, with consciousness and intention, often with great effort, incorporate these thoughts into our imagination and thinking and make them a part of our soul life. But the phenomena of hypnotism, suggestion, etc., prove that even without any self-effort on our part, ideas and thoughts can be introduced into our consciousness and imposed as a dominating force on our will and actions. In this way, people can be reduced to mindless tools that simply carry out what someone else (the hypnotist) commands them to do. Scripture and experience show that in this way man is also susceptible to the influences and effects of evil spirits, so that he himself no longer speaks or acts, but is controlled in his thoughts and actions by the evil spirit. For example, in Mark 1:24 it is the evil spirit that speaks through the possessed person and recognizes Jesus as the Holy One of God.

Another phenomenon which may serve to clarify the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is what is known as inspiration among artists. All great thinkers and poets have the experience that the best and most beautiful things they have produced are not due to their own efforts but to thoughts that suddenly come to them. Of course, such an experience does not exclude previous research and thought; genius does not make effort and diligence superfluous. But even though study is generally an indispensable condition for gaining such experiences, they are not necessarily the logical conclusion or the mature result of them. There is always a mysterious force at work in genius that cannot be calculated. Nietzsche wrote of it to his sister: You cannot comprehend the violence of such creations; one is full of passionate enthusiasm, rapture and tension, one hears and sees nothing, one takes. The thought strikes like lightning. Everything happens involuntarily to the highest degree, as if in a storm of feeling of freedom, of independence, of power, of divinity; that is my experience of inspiration.

If such phenomena already occur in the ordinary life of man or artist, all grounds for opposing God's influence on the thoughts and will of His creatures are lost. God dwells with His Spirit in all things created, Genesis 1:3, Psalms 33:6, Psalms 104:30, and especially in man, who was created by the Spirit of God and made alive by the breath of the Almighty, Job 33:4, Psalms 139:1-16 ff; in Him we live, move and are, Acts 17:28. Thinking, willing and acting is also in its sinful direction under the dominion of God; nothing happens without His foreknowledge and counsel, Ephesians 1:11. The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as streams of water; He inclines it to everything He wants, Proverbs 21:1. He weighs the hearts and all the steps of men, Proverbs 5:21, Proverbs 16:9, Proverbs 19:21, Proverbs 21:2. In another and much more intimate way God dwells with His Spirit in the hearts of His children; by that Spirit He brings them to the confession of Christ as Lord, John 12:3, makes them know the things that have been given to them, 1 Corinthians 2:12; 1 John 2:20, 1 John 3:24; 1 John 4:6-13, 1 Corinthians 2:12, 1 John 2:20, 1 John 3:24, 1 John 4:6-13, grants them gifts of wisdom and knowledge, 1 Corinthians 12:8, and works in them both the will and the work, according to His good pleasure, Php 2:13.

All these workings of God's Spirit in the world and in the church are not the same as the inspiration given to the prophets and the apostles, but they can serve to clarify and explain. If there is a dwelling and working of the Spirit of God in all creatures, not just in name but in deed and in truth, if the same Spirit again dwells in a special sense in God's children, all reason to consider the peculiar activity referred to by the name of inspiration impossible or improbable is removed. But then again, it is necessary to understand the difference between the working of God's Spirit in the world and the church, and that in the prophets and apostles. The difference becomes clear when we compare Romans 8:14 with 2 Peter 1:21. In the former, Paul says that all those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God; but Peter explains in the quoted text that the holy men of God, the prophets, were driven by the Holy Spirit and thus brought forth prophecy. The guidance of the Spirit is the part of all believers and consists in an enlightenment of the intellect and a guidance and control of will and affections, through which they receive knowledge, desire and strength to do what is pleasing to God. But the inspiration of the Spirit was given only to the prophets and apostles, and consisted of a revival and an impetus to make known to mankind the revelation of God's counsel which they had received. The character of the inspiration is further defined by the formula, used more than once, that what is written in the Old Testament was spoken of the Lord by (through) the prophet, Matthew 1:22, Matthew 2:15, Matthew 2:17, Matthew 2:23, Matthew 3:3, Matthew 4:14, etc. In Greek a preposition is used with the Lord, indicating Him as the origin of what is spoken; but the preposition used with the prophets indicates that they are the means, the organs, through which God has spoken. This is still more evident when it is said that God spoke through the mouth of His prophets, Luke 1:70, Acts 1:16, Acts 3:18, Acts 4:25. The doctrine which Scripture offers us is thus that God or his Spirit is the actual author or speaker of his word, but that in speaking he made use of the prophets and apostles as his organs.

We would, however, be greatly misunderstanding Scripture if we were to infer from this notion that the prophets and apostles had been organs without consciousness or will, and that they had served only as a ■speech channel' in the hand of the Holy Spirit. For not only does God always honor His own work and never treat His reasonable creatures as if they were senseless beings, but the Scriptures strongly contradict this ■mechanical" conception of inspiration. Although the prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, they themselves spoke (2 Peter 1:21). The words which

they wrote are repeatedly cited as their own words, Matthew 22:43, Matthew 22:45, John 1:23, John 5:46, Romans 10:20, etc. As in the receiving, so also in the recording of the revelation they remain fully conscious of themselves; their own activity is not suppressed but lifted up, strengthened and purified by the impulse of the Spirit; they themselves diligently investigate, Luke 1:3, they think and act, and they are not afraid to act. They think about and remember the revelation they have received in the past, John 14:26, John 1:1-3, they make use of historical sources, Numbers 21:14, John 10:13, etc., they find a way to communicate with the Holy Spirit etc.; they find, as e.g. the psalmists, in their own experiences the material for their song; and in all the writings from which the Bible is composed, the own disposition and nature, the own development and education, the own language and style of the various authors are expressed. The study of Scripture teaches us not only about the one word of God, but also about the different personalities of the Bible writers. What a difference there is between the books of Kings and those of the Chronicles, between Isaiah and Jeremiah, between Matthew and Luke, between John and Peter and Paul.

Here again, as in all God’s works, diversity emerges from unity and unity from diversity. When God spoke to us through the prophets and apostles, He took their entire personalities, which He had formed Himself, into His service and made them the self-conscious and self-operating organ of His inspiration. And this inspiration therefore bore no mechanical, but a ■organic" character. In this view of inspiration we can also do full justice to the human side of Scripture. The Bible did not fall out of the sky all at once, but came into being gradually. The Old Testament, as we use it, contains thirty-nine books: five law books, twelve historical (Joshua to Esther), five poetical (Job to Song of Songs) and seventeen prophetic books. This order is not temporal, for many historical books, e.g. Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, are of much later date than many poetic and prophetic books, and among the prophetic books many small ones, such as Joel, Obadiah, Amos, Hosea, are older than the much larger books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. But the order is businesslike and takes similar books together. The genesis of all these books has taken place gradually, in the course of many centuries, under very different circumstances, through the labors of very different men. In the science of theology there is a special subject which is concerned with the investigation of the circumstances under which a certain book of the Bible came into being, by whom it was written, to whom it was addressed, etc. Because of the misuse that has been made of this discipline, it has acquired an unfavorable name, and everyone has heard of it, that the ■critics, as they say, have torn out page after page from the Bible". But the abuse does not take away the use here either. For a proper understanding of Scripture as a whole and of each of its parts in particular, it is of great importance to know precisely how it came into being over time and under what circumstances each book of Scripture came into being. Knowledge of this will eventually benefit the explanation of the Word of God. We learn from it that the inspiration of God’s Spirit has had a deep and broad impact on the lives and thoughts of God’s holy men. For centuries, up to the time of Moses, there has been no Scripture, no written Word of God. At least we have no knowledge of it. In itself it is not at all impossible that even before Moses there were written records of some word or incident of great importance to the history of special revelation which was later recorded and preserved in his books. Not so long ago, this claim would have been considered foolish, because it was then believed that the art of writing was not yet known in the days of Moses. But today, thanks to the discoveries in Babylon and Egypt, we are better informed and we know not only that the art of writing was known long before Moses, but also that it was widely used.

We know of histories and laws which have been preserved in writing and which were written down hundreds of years before Moses. There is therefore nothing improper in the assertion that Moses also made use of older written sources for his description of history and legislation. The story in Genesis 14:1-24, for example, may very well be based on a written tradition.

However, we do not know this with certainty and, in general, it can be said that there was no written word of God before Moses. That is why there was a word of God, because special revelation began immediately after the fall, and so there was already a canon in this sense, i.e. a rule of faith and life. Mankind has never been without the Word of God; always, from its earliest beginnings, it has been in possession not only of the general revelation of God in nature and conscience, but also of a special revelation in word and history. But that word of God was not immediately written down, but was orally transmitted into the families and the generations from parents to children. In those days, when mankind was still small and shared in the blessing of an advanced age, when kinship, family consciousness and respect for the past meant so much more than they do now, this form of tradition was sufficient for the pure preservation and propagation of the Word of God. But in time, as mankind expanded and fell into all kinds of idolatry and superstition, this was no longer possible. And with Moses begins the written record of the Word of God. Perhaps there were already written documents, which he recorded and processed; as mentioned above, we do not know for sure, but the probability increases when we consider that written records by Moses himself are only mentioned in a few places in the so-called five books of Moses, namely Exodus 17:14. It is therefore quite possible that various parts of the five books of Moses already existed in earlier times, or were added to and reworked by Moses himself or by others at Moses' command, or later after his death. This last statement was generally accepted in earlier times with regard to the account of Moses' death, Deuteronomy 34:1-12, but in view of additions, for example, as in Genesis 12:6, Genesis 13:7, Genesis 36:31, etc., it must also be extended to other passages. To the Divine authority this adds and subtracts nothing; and by the expression which occurs repeatedly in Scripture: the law or the book of Moses, 1 Kings 3:1, 2 Kings 6:1, Malachi 4:4, Mark 12:26, Luke 24:27, Luke 22:44, John 5:46-47 this is not contradicted. For the five books of Moses remain been preserved in writing and which were written down hundreds of years before Moses. There is therefore nothing improper in the assertion that Moses also made use of older written sources for his description of history and legislation. The story in Genesis 14:1-24, for example, may very well be based on a written tradition.

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Thus there have been many more prophets in Israel than the four major ones and the twelve minor ones whose books are preserved in our Bible. The historical books mentioned above are full of names of prophets, and describe their activities sometimes very extensively. They deal with Deborah, Samuel, Gad, Nathan, Ahia, Shemaiah, Azariah, Hanani, Jehu son of Hanani, Elijah, Elisha, Hulda, Zechariah, the first mar¬tler among the prophets of the kingdom of Judah, and many others, also unnamed, e.g. 2 Chronicles 25:28, more. Of all these men nothing scriptural has come to us. There is even occasional mention of schools of prophets, 1 Samuel 10:5-12, 1 Samuel 19:19

2 Kings 2:3, 2 Kings 2:5, 2 Kings 4:38, 2 Kings 2:3, 2 Kings 1:5, 2 Kings 4:38, 2 Kings 4:43; 2 Kings 6:1, where many sons or pupils of the prophets devoted themselves together to spiritual exercises and theocratic work. From these schools probably also originated the prophetic historiography, which has been preserved for us in the books of Joshua, Judges, etc.

Especially in the books of the Chronicles, mention is made several times of the historical writings of prophets, 1 Chronicles 29:1-30, 2 Chronicles 9:29, 2 Chronicles 20:34, etc. The prophets whose activities are described in the historical books are nowadays often called prophets of the deed, in distinction to the later written prophets. This name is not incorrect, provided that one keeps in mind that all prophets, past and later, have been prophets of the word. They all spoke and testified; their name in Hebrew, nabi, probably already indicates this, Exodus 4:16, Exodus 7:1, and the basic features of prophetic preaching are already contained in the testimony of the oldest prophets. But the prophets of the older period differ from the later ones in two respects: First, they limited their view to the internal affairs of the people of Israel and did not yet include other nations in their circle of vision; and second, they paid more attention to the present than to the future; their words of exhortation and warning usually had an immediate, practical purpose; it was the period in which, under and for a long time after the reigns of David and Solomon, the hope remained that Israel would keep God's covenant and walk in His ways. But when, in the ninth century B.C., Israel gradually became involved in foreign politics and, ignoring its own calling and destiny, allowed itself to be drawn into it, the prophets turned their attention to the surrounding peoples and expected the complete fulfilment of God's promises no longer to take place in the apostate present, but in the Messianic future to be brought about by God Himself. Standing on their watchtowers, they see across the width and the length of the earth, they interpret the signs of the times not by their own understanding and interpretation, but by the light of the Holy Spirit, 1 Peter 1:4, 2 Peter 2:20-21, and they test them by the light of the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 2:20-21, and compare all situations in Israel in the religious, moral, political and social fields, and all the relations of Israel to other nations, to Edom, Moab, Asshur, Chaldaea, Egypt, etc., to the central covenant in which Jehovah stands with his people. And then they all, each according to his nature and time in his own way, but still announce the essentially same word of God: they make known to Israel his sins and God's punishments; they comfort the people of the Lord with the unchangeableness of his covenant, the promise of his faithfulness, the forgiveness of all their iniquities; and they point everyone's eye to the joyful future, in which God himself under the king from the house of David will extend his rule over Israel and over all the nations. But this gives the word that they proclaim in God's name a significance that goes far beyond the present. It no longer has its limit and purpose in the Israel of old, but it has a content and scope that extends to the ends of the earth and can only be fulfilled in mankind. The word of prophecy is now passing into writing; from the ninth century before Christ, from the days of Joel or Obadiah, the prophets began to record the contents of their sermons, sometimes on explicit divine instructions. 8:1, Habakkuk 2:, Isaiah 36:2, and with the clearly expressed intention that this word may remain until the last day, forever, until eternity, Isaiah 30:8, and be recognized by later generations in its truthfulness, Isaiah 34:16. The psalmody runs parallel to the prophecy; it too is of ancient date. Song and music were loved in Israel, 1 Samuel 18:7. 2 Samuel 19:35, , Amos 6:5 etc. Songs with different subjects are preserved in the historical books: the song of the sword, Genesis 4:23-24, the song of the well, Numbers 21:17-18, the song of the conquest of Hesbon, Numbers 21:27-30, the song of the crossing of the Red Sea, Exodus 15:1-7, the song of Moses, Deuteronomy 32:1-52, the song of Deborah, Richt. 5, the song of Hanna, 1 Samuel 2:1-36, the lament of David on the death of Saul and Jonathan, 2 Sam., and on the death of Abner, 2 Samuel 3:33-34 etc.; the Book of the Righteous, which is quoted in Joshua 10:13, 2 Samuel 1:18, seems to have contained many songs. Furthermore, many songs occur in the writings of the prophets, e.g., in Isaiah 5:1-30 : The

song of the vineyard, Isaiah 14:1-32. The song of mockery of the fallen king of Babylon, Isaiah 38:9 f.: The psalm of Hiskiah, Jonah 2:1-10 the prayer of Jonah, Habakkuk 3:1-19 the hymn of Habakuk etc. Many of these songs are closely related to the psalms and pass unnoticed into them here. Between prophecy and psalmody there is an intimate connection, which is even expressed in the form; both arise from a mighty inspiration of the Holy Spirit, both draw the whole world of nature and history into their circle of vision, both see all things by the light of the word of God, both aim at the proclamation of the kingdom of the Messiah, and both use the language and form of poetry. When the poet of the psalms is introduced to the mysteries of God's counsel, he becomes a seer, and when the prophet refreshes his soul with the promises of God, he adopts the tone of the psalms, 1 Chronicles 25:1-3; Asaph is called a seer, 2 Chronicles 29:30, and David in Acts 2:30 a prophet. But still there is a distinction. The psalmody was prepared by the above mentioned songs, especially by the song of Miriam, Exodus 15:1-27, the song of Moses, Deuteronomy 32:1-52, and the psalm of Moses, Psalms 90:1-17, but then, after the revival of the service of Jehovah under Samuel, reached its highest flowering in David, the lover of psalms of Israel, 2 Samuel 23:1. The Davidic psalmody contains the basic forms, according to which the later psalmody was practiced under Solomon, Josaphat, His- kia, and in the time of and after the exile. The psalms of David are now referred to in the caption of Psalms 72:1-20 all as ■prayers". And this is the character, which is peculiar to all psalms. They differ greatly from one another, and are sometimes songs of praise and thanks, and sometimes of complaint and supplication; sometimes they are more hymnic, then elegiac, then more prophetic-didactic in content; they are sometimes concerned with God's works in nature and then His deeds in history; they are concerned with the past, with the present, and often also with the future. But a prayerful attitude is always characteristic of the psalmist. While in prophecy the Spirit falls upon someone and becomes empowered over him, this same Spirit leads the psalmist into the depths of his own soul experiences. His own state of soul is always the reason for his song. But that state of mind is formed and cultivated by the Spirit of the Lord Himself.

David would not have been the sweet one in the psalms of Israels, if he had not been that mail with that character and with that rich life experiences. That state of mind and all its rich variety of sadness and fear, temptation and temptation, persecution and resurrection etc. form the strings on which all God's objective words and deeds in nature and history, in institution and preaching, in judgment and redemption play their melodies. And the harmony, thus obtained in the subject between God's objective revelation and His subjective guidance, is expressed in the song, which is sung as if in the presence of God and sung in His honor, which calls upon all creatures to agree with His praise, which sings until all in heaven and on earth sing along, and which therefore has found for all ages and for all generations the richest interpretation of the deepest findings■of soul life. The Psalms teach us what God, in connection with His revelation in Christ, through His Spirit, gives us to experience in the hidden parts of our hearts. Because of that meaning, they were not only spoken by the psalmists, but also written down and thereby put on the lips of the congregation of all ages.

Next to prophecy and psalmody comes the chokmah, which is the proverb or the teaching of wisdom. This too is based on natural gifts, as shown in the fable of Jotham, Richt. 9 : 7 V., the riddle of Samson, Judges 14:144, the parable of Nathan, 2 Samuel 12:1-31, the behaviour, of the wife of Thekoa, 2 Samuel 14:1-33 etc. But it got its consecrated character especially through

Solomon, 1 Kings 4:29-34, Spr. 10-22, 25-29 and continued in the Proverbs of other wise men, Proverbs 22:17, Psalms 30:1-33, Proverbs 31:31 and further in the books of Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, till long after the exile. The prophecy unfolds the counsel of God as it appears in the history of Israel and the nations; the psalmody gives an interpretation of the resonance this execution of God's counsel produces in the soul of the devout; and the chokmah relates God's counsel to practical life there. It, too, rests on the foundation of divine revelation; it takes as its starting point that the fear of the Lord is the principle of all wisdom (Proverbs 1:7); but it does not relate this revelation to the history of the people or to its own experience of the world, but transfers it to the practice of ordinary, everyday life, the life of husband and wife, of parents and children, of friendship and intercourse, of profession and business. It does not stand so high and see so far as the prophecy; it does not descend so low as the psalmody; but it looks at all the changes of fate, in which man sometimes threatens to perish, and yet it lifts him up again, through faith in the justice of God's providence. Thus it acquires a general human significance and, under the guidance of the Spirit, is preserved in Scripture for all ages.

Revelation, the Law, the counsel of God, fundamentally contained in the books of Moses, is completed in the days of the O. Test, in the preaching of the prophet, in the song of the singer, in the counsel of the wise man. The prophet is the head, the singer is the heart, the sage is the hand. In the Old Covenant, the prophetic, priestly, and royal ministries fulfilled their calling for Israel and for mankind. And in Christ, this invaluable treasure of holy literature has become the common property of the world. As the fulfillment fits the promise, so the Scriptures of the New Testament fit those of the Old Covenant. The one is incomplete without the other; the Old Testament is only revealed in the New, and the New Testament is already hidden in the Old according to its core and essence. They stand to each other as pedestal and statue, as lock and key, as shadow and body. The names Old and New Testament first indicated the two dispensations of the covenant of grace, which were given by God to His people before and after Christ, Jeremiah 31:31 ff, 2 Chronicles 3:6 ff, Hebrews 8:6 ff, but gradually they have been transferred to the scriptures that give the description and account of these two covenant dispensations. In Exodus 24:7 the law, which was the proclamation of God's covenant with Israel, was already called the book of the covenant, cf. 2 Kings 23:2, and Paul already speaks in 2 Corinthians 3:14 of a reading of the Old Testament, where he is therefore thinking of the books of the Old Testament. After these examples the word Testament was gradually used for the writings or books that are contained in the Bible and give an explanation of the old and new dispensation of grace.

Like the Old Testament, the New Testament is also composed of several books; it contains five historical ones (the four Evangels and the Acts of the Apostles), twenty-one 'doctrinal' ones (the Epistles of the Apostles) and one prophetic book (the Revelation of John). But while the 39 books of the Old Testament were written over a period of more than a thousand years, the 27 books of the New Testament were all written in the second half of the first century of our Christian era. The Gospels occupy the first place in the New Testament, but this order carries no temporal, but a business character. Although many of the epistles of the Apostles are older, the Gospels stand first because they deal with the person and work of Christ, and because they form the basis of all later apostolic activity. The word Gospel first generally meant a pleasant, joyful message; in the days of the New Testament it came to be used for the message of joy proclaimed by Jesus the Christ, Mark. It was not until later that ecclesiastical writers such as Ignatius, Justin, etc.,

transferred it to the books or writings that contained that joyful message from Christ.

Four such Gospels have been placed at the front of our New Testament. But these four writings do not contain four different ■evangelies' or glad tidings, for there is only one Gospel, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Mark 1:1, Galatians 1:6-8.'But that one Gospel, that one glad tidings of salvation, is described in four different ways, by four different persons, is shown to us in four different forms, from four different points of view. This view is expressed in the headings above our Gospels. They are referred to as the one Gospel, but according to the four distinct descriptions of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. This was not intended to imply that our four Gospels were not actually written by these four men, but were merely revisions of their writings, but rather to express the idea that in the four Gospels the one Gospel, the one image of the person and work of Christ, was described, though from different sides. That is why the early church compared the four Evangelists with the four cherubim in the book of Revelation 4:7, Matthew with the mcnsch, Mark with the lion, Luke with the bull, and John with the eagle. For the first Evangelist described Christ according to his human side, the second according to his prophetic side, the third according to his priestly side, and the fourth according to his divine side.

Matthew, the same as the tax collector Levi, who was elected by Christ to the apostleship, Matthew 9:9, Mark. According to Irenaeus, he wrote his Gospel originally in Aramaic, in Palestine, about the year 62 A.D., and especially for the Jews and Christians in Palestine, to prove to them that Jesus was truly the Christ and that all the prophecies of the Old Testament had been fulfilled in Him, Matthew 1:1.

Mark was the son of Mary, Acts 12:12, who probably had a house of his own in Jerusalem, Mark. He was first in the service of Paul, and later of Peter as well, 1 Peter 5:13, and according to tradition was invited by the Christians in Rome to give an account of the origin of the Gospel through Jesus Christ, Mark 1:1, because through his own experiences he was able to fulfill the promise of Jesus Christ. Mark 1:1, because he was so well acquainted with this subject through his stay in Jerusalem and his contact with Peter. He probably complied with this request in Rome, in about the years 64-67.

Luke, the beloved physician, as Paul calls him, Colossians 4:14, may have come from Antioch and belonged to Christ's church there early on, in the year 40. He was a travelling companion and fellow worker of Paul, and remained faithful to him to the end, 2 Timothy 4:11. He wrote a book of history, not only of the life and work of Christ (in his Gospel), but also of the first spread of the Gospel in Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece, as far as Rome (in the Hand, of the Ap.), about the year 70-75, and dedicated it to a certain Theophilus, a considerable man, who was interested in the Gospel.

These three Gospels are closely related. They are in line with the tradition that survived among the first disciples concerning Jesus' teaching and life. The fourth Gospel has a different character. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, remained in Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension and was there with James and Peter one of the three pillars of the church (Galatians 2:9). Later he left Jerusalem and towards the end of his life came to Ephesus as the successor of Paul, from where he was exiled to the island of Patmos under the Emperor Domitian in the year 95-96, to die as a martyr in the year 100. John was not a man who was very prominent in missionary work. He did not found new churches, but wanted to preserve the existing churches in the pure knowledge of

the truth. For the church, the situation had gradually changed by the end of the century. The struggle over the relationship of the Christian congregation to Israel, to the Law and to circumcision was over. It had come to an independent existence in relation to Judaism and was now penetrating further and further into the Greco-Roman world. There it came into contact with other schools of thought, especially the young Gnosticism. And now it is the purpose of John to lead the church safely through these dangers of anti-Christianity, that is, of that direction which denies the incarnation of the Word (1 John 2:22, 1 Corinthians 4:3). In contrast to this anti-Christian direction, John in his writings, which all date from the years 80-95, draws the full picture of Christ as the Word made flesh. In his Gospel, he shows that Christ was such during His walk on earth; in his Letters, that He is still such in the church today; and in Revelation, that He will also be such in the future.

All these New Testament writings discussed so far have thus had their historical origin under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And so it is with the other writings of Paul and Peter, of James and Jude. After Jesus' ascension and the persecution of the Jerusalem congregation, the apostles not only went out to preach the Gospel among Jews and Gentiles, but also maintained fellowship and interaction with the congregations that had been planted by their word.

They received oral or written reports of its spiritual condition, took an interest in its prosperity, and were responsible for its care of all the churches on their apostolic hearts, 2 Corinthians 11:28. Thus they felt called to visit them personally if possible, or to admonish, comfort, warn, or encourage them by means of epistles, according to their needs, and by all these means to instruct them more deeply in the truth which is godly.

Like all their apostolic work, this written work, which is a historical, organic, essential part of it, also had a founding character. The Gospels and Epistles of the Apostles, like the books of the prophets, if you will, are occasional writings; but they go far beyond the temporal and local interests of the communities of the time and are addressed to the church of all ages.

All Scripture, although historical, is, as St. Augustine says, a letter sent by God from heaven to his congregation on earth. And far from the fact that historical research into the origin of the books of the Bible in itself, apart from the misuse which people can make of it, would detract from the divine character of Scripture, it is, on the contrary, eminently capable of showing us the wonderful ways and channels by which God has brought this work of art into being. With this investigation into the origin of the various books of the Bible, the study of Scripture has not ended but has only just begun. A whole circle of sciences has gradually formed around Scripture, all of which have as their ultimate goal the better understanding of its meaning and conception. Here only the following should be said about them.

First, the various books of the Bible not only originated individually, but they were also collected and combined to form a canon, that is, a list or group of writings that serve as a rule of faith and life. Such a collection had also sometimes already taken place with some Bible books; the Psalms and the Proverbs, for example, originated from different people and were gradually combined into one volume. The same thing happened later with all books of the Bible. However, this should not be taken to mean that the Church had created this canon, as if she had given canonical authority to the writings of the prophets and apostles. These writings had authority in the circles of the church from the moment they were written, and they were the rule of faith and life. The Word of

God, first unwritten and later written, does not derive its authority from men, nor from the faithful, but from God, who Himself watches over it and brings it to recognition. But when later on the number of prophetic and apostolic writings increased, and writings also appeared which did not originate from prophets and apostles, but which were put in their names or were even considered as such in certain circles; then it became necessary for the church to distinguish the real, canonical books from the false, alleged, apocryphal or pseudepigraphical writings, and to draw up a list of the former. This was done both with the books of the Old Testament in the time before Jesus, and with those of the New Covenant in the 4th century after Christ. And there is a special science that carefully examines all this and tries to shed light on the canonicity of the Bibles.

Secondly, the original manuscripts, written by the prophets and the apostles themselves, have all been lost without exception. We have only copies of them. The oldest of these copies date from the ninth and tenth century for the Old Testament, and from the fourth and fifth century for the New Testament. Between the original manuscripts and the current copies lie centuries, in which the text has had a history and has been subject to smaller or larger changes. - In the original Hebrew manuscripts, for example, there were no vocal or punctuation marks or inscriptions; these were only added to the copies centuries later. The division into chapters, as we use it now, only originates from the beginning of the thirteenth century, and the division into verses from the middle of the sixteenth century. For all these reasons a science is needed that tries with all available means to determine the original text and uses it as a basis for the explanation.

Thirdly, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. As soon as the Bible was distributed to people who did not understand these languages, a translation became necessary. As early as the third century B.C. a translation of the Old Testament into Greek was begun; and later such an interpretation of Old and New Testament into many old and still later into many new languages was continued. After the revival of the Mission among the Gentiles in the nineteenth century, this work was again undertaken with zeal and now the Scriptures have been translated, in whole or in part, into almost four hundred languages and into one hundred languages. The study of these translations, especially from antiquity, is also of the utmost importance for the right understanding of the Scriptures. For every translation is already an explanation of the Scriptures.

Fourthly, from the days of the Jews, throughout all ages, and not least in our own time, a tremendous amount of care and effort has been devoted to the explanation of the Scriptures. And although it is true that every heretic has his letter and many an interpretation is an interpretation of his own opinion, nevertheless the history of the explanation of the Scriptures shows a remarkable progress, to which each century contributes its own. It is ultimately God Himself who often upholds His Word through all sorts of human aberrations and makes His thoughts triumphant over the wisdom of the world. the book or law of Moses, even though some passages were borrowed by him from other sources, described by his servants at his behest, or reworked in his spirit by later authors. As a rule, Paul did not write his letters himself either, but had them written, 1 Corinthians 16:21. And the book of Psalms is sometimes attributed in its entirety to David, because he is the founder of psalmody, although several psalms are not by David, but by others. On the basis of this Mosaic legislation, that is to say, on the basis of God’s covenant, which God had made with the patriarchs, confirmed with Israel at Sinai, and ■ordained’ in the Law of Moses, there arose later in the history of Israel under the guidance of the Holy Spirit three kinds of sacred literature: prophecy,

psalmody and chokmah. These special gifts of the Holy Spirit were in addition to the natural gifts of the Semitic race and especially of the people of Israel, but they went beyond them and were given a vocation in the service of the Kingdom of God and for the benefit of mankind as a whole. The prophecy starts already with Abraham, Genesis 18:17, Genesis 20:7, Amos 3:7, Amos 7:17, Jacob, Genesis 49:1-33, Moses, Numbers 11:25, Deuteronomy 18:18, Deuteronomy 34:10, Hosea 12:14, and Miriam, Exodus 15:20, Numbers 12:2, but then comes especially through and after Samuel and accompanies Israel's history until long after the exile. The books of the prophets in the Hebrew Old Testament are divided into two great groups, into the ■first" and the ■last" prophets. Under the prophets are summarized the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. The reason why these books are called "the first prophets" is that they were written by prophets and they relate to those prophets who preceded the later ones.

Thus there have been many more prophets in Israel than the four major ones and the twelve minor ones whose books are preserved in our Bible. The historical books mentioned above are full of names of prophets, and describe their activities sometimes very extensively. They deal with Deborah, Samuel, Gad, Nathan, Ahia, Shemaiah, Azariah, Hanani, Jehu son of Hanani, Elijah, Elisha, Hulda, Zechariah, the first mar¬tler among the prophets of the kingdom of Judah, and many others, also unnamed, e.g. 2 Chronicles 25:1-28, more. Of all these men nothing scriptural has come to us. There is even occasional mention of schools of prophets, 1 Samuel 10:5-12, 2 Samuel 19:19, 2 Kings 2:3, 2 Kings 2:5, 2 Kings 4:38, 2 Kings 4:43, 2 Kings 6:1, where many sons or pupils of the prophets devoted themselves together to spiritual exercises and theocratic work. From these schools probably also originated the prophetic historiography, which has been preserved for us in the books of Joshua, Judges, etc.Especially in the books of the Chronicles, mention is made several times of the historical writings of prophets, 1 Chronicles 29:1-30.-, 2 Chronicles 9:29-20, 2 Kings 20:34. etc. The prophets whose activities are described in the historical books are nowadays often called prophets of the deed, in distinction to the later written prophets. This name is not incorrect, provided that one keeps in mind that all prophets, past and later, have been prophets of the word. They all spoke and testified; their name in Hebrew, nabi, probably already indicates this, Exodus 14:6, Exodus 17:1, and the basic features of prophetic preaching are already contained in the testimony of the oldest prophets. But the prophets of the older period differ from the later ones in two respects: First, they limited their view to the internal affairs of the people of Israel and did not yet include other nations in their circle of vision; and second, they paid more attention to the present than to the future; their words of exhortation and warning usually had an immediate, practical purpose; it was the period in which, under and for a long time after the reigns of David and Solomon, the hope remained that Israel would keep God's covenant and walk in His ways. But when, in the ninth century B.C., Israel gradually became involved in foreign politics and, ignoring its own calling and destiny, allowed itself to be drawn into it, the prophets turned their attention to the surrounding peoples and expected the complete fulfilment of God's promises no longer to take place in the apostate present, but in the Messianic future to be brought about by God Himself. Standing on their watchtowers, they see across the width and the length of the earth, they interpret the signs of the times not by their own understanding and interpretation, but by the light of the Holy Spirit, 1 Peter 1:4, 2 Peter 2:20-21, and they test them by the light of the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 2:20-21, and compare all situations in Israel in the religious, moral, political and social fields, and all the relations of Israel to other nations, to Edom, Moab, Asshur, Chaldaea, Egypt, etc., to the central covenant in which Jehovah

stands with his people. And then they all, each according to his nature and time in his own way, but still announce the essentially same word of God: they make known to Israel his sins and God's punishments; they comfort the people of the Lord with the unchangeableness of his covenant, the promise of his faithfulness, the forgiveness of all their iniquities; and they point everyone's eye to the joyful future, in which God himself under the king from the house of David will extend his rule over Israel and over all the nations. But this gives the word that they proclaim in God's name a significance that goes far beyond the present. It no longer has its limit and purpose in the Israel of old, but it has a content and scope that extends to the ends of the earth and can only be fulfilled in mankind. The word of prophecy is now passing into writing; from the ninth century before Christ, from the days of Joel or Obadiah, the prophets began to record the contents of their sermons, sometimes on explicit divine instructions. 8:1, Habakkuk 2:2, Isaiah 36:2, and with the clearly expressed intention that this word may remain until the last day, forever, until eternity, Isaiah 30:8, and be recognized by later generations in its truthfulness, Isaiah 34:16. The psalmody runs parallel to the prophecy; it too is of ancient date. Song and music were loved in Israel, 1 Samuel 18:7, 2 Samuel 19:35, Amos 6:5 etc. Songs with different subjects are preserved in the historical books: the song of the sword, Genesis 4:23-24, the song of the well, Numbers 21:17-18, the song of the conquest of Hesbon, Numbers 21:27-30, the song of the crossing of the Red Sea, Exodus 15:1-27, the song of Moses, Deuteronomy 32:1-52, the song of Deborah, Richt. 5, the song of Hanna, 1 Samuel 2:1-36, the lament of David on the death of Saul and Jonathan, 2 Sam., and on the death of Abner, 2 Samuel 3:33-34 etc.; the Book of the Righteous, which is quoted in Joshua 10:13, 2 Samuel 1:18, seems to have contained many songs. Furthermore, many songs occur in the writings of the prophets, e.g., in Isaiah 5:1-30. The song of the vineyard, Isaiah 14:1-32. The song of mockery of the fallen king of Babylon, Isaiah 38:9 f.: The psalm of Hiskiah, John 2:1-10 the prayer of Jonah, Habakkuk 3:1-19 the hymn of Habakuk etc. Many of these songs are closely related to the psalms and pass unnoticed into them here. Between prophecy and psalmody there is an intimate connection, which is even expressed in the form; both arise from a mighty inspiration of the Holy Spirit, both draw the whole world of nature and history into their circle of vision, both see all things by the light of the word of God, both aim at the proclamation of the kingdom of the Messiah, and both use the language and form of poetry. When the poet of the psalms is introduced to the mysteries of God's counsel, he becomes a seer, and when the prophet refreshes his soul with the promises of God, he adopts the tone of the psalms, 1 Chronicles 25:1-3; Asaph is called a seer, 2 Chronicles 29:30, and David in Acts 2:30 a prophet. But still there is a distinction. The psalmody was prepared by the above mentioned songs, especially by the song of Miriam, Exodus 15:1-27, the song of Moses, Deuteronomy 32:1-52, and the psalm of Moses, Psalms 90:1-17, but then, after the revival of the service of Jehovah under Samuel, reached its highest flowering in David, the lover of psalms of Israel, 2 Samuel 23:1. The Davidic psalmody contains the basic forms, according to which the later psalmody was practiced under Solomon, Josaphat, His- kia, and in the time of and after the exile. The psalms of David are now referred to in the caption of Psalms 72:1-20 all as ■prayers". And this is the character, which is peculiar to all psalms. They differ greatly from one another, and are sometimes songs of praise and thanks, and sometimes of complaint and supplication; sometimes they are more hymnic, then elegiac, then more prophetic-didactic in content; they are sometimes concerned with God's works in nature and then His deeds in history; they are concerned with the past, with the present, and often also with the future. But a prayerful attitude is always characteristic of the psalmist. While in prophecy the

Spirit falls upon someone and becomes empowered over him, this same Spirit leads the psalmist into the depths of his own soul experiences. His own state of soul is always the reason for his song. But that state of mind is formed and cultivated by the Spirit of the Lord Himself.

David would not have been the sweet one in the psalms of Israels, if he had not been that mail with that character and with that rich life experiences. That state of mind and all its rich variety of sadness and fear, temptation and temptation, persecution and resurrection etc. form the strings on which all God's objective words and deeds in nature and history, in institution and preaching, in judgment and redemption play their melodies. And the harmony, thus obtained in the subject between God's objective revelation and His subjective guidance, is expressed in the song, which is sung as if in the presence of God and sung in His honor, which calls upon all creatures to agree with His praise, which sings until all in heaven and on earth sing along, and which therefore has found for all ages and for all generations the richest interpretation of the deepest findings■of soul life. The Psalms teach us what God, in connection with His revelation in Christ, through His Spirit, gives us to experience in the hidden parts of our hearts. Because of that meaning, they were not only spoken by the psalmists, but also written down and thereby put on the lips of the congregation of all ages.

Next to prophecy and psalmody comes the chokmah, which is the proverb or the teaching of wisdom. This too is based on natural gifts, as shown in the fable of Jotham, Richt. 9 : 7 V., the riddle of Samson, Richt. 14 : 14, the parable of Nathan, 2 Samuel 2:1-32, the behaviour, of the wife of Thekoa, 2 Samuel 14:1-33 etc. But it got its consecrated character especially through Solomon, 1 Kings 4:29-34, Spr. 10-22, 25-29 and continued in the Proverbs of other wise men, Spr. 22: 17: 30-31 and further in the books of Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, till long after the exile. The prophecy unfolds the counsel of God as it appears in the history of Israel and the nations; the psalmody gives an interpretation of the resonance this execution of God's counsel produces in the soul of the devout; and the chokmah relates God's counsel to practical life there. It, too, rests on the foundation of divine revelation; it takes as its starting point that the fear of the Lord is the principle of all wisdom (Proverbs 1:7); but it does not relate this revelation to the history of the people or to its own experience of the world, but transfers it to the practice of ordinary, everyday life, the life of husband and wife, of parents and children, of friendship and intercourse, of profession and business. It does not stand so high and see so far as the prophecy; it does not descend so low as the psalmody; but it looks at all the changes of fate, in which man sometimes threatens to perish, and yet it lifts him up again, through faith in the justice of God's providence. Thus it acquires a general human significance and, under the guidance of the Spirit, is preserved in Scripture for all ages.

Revelation, the Law, the counsel of God, fundamentally contained in the books of Moses, is completed in the days of the O. Test, in the preaching of the prophet, in the song of the singer, in the counsel of the wise man. The prophet is the head, the singer is the heart, the sage is the hand. In the Old Covenant, the prophetic, priestly, and royal ministries fulfilled their calling for Israel and for mankind. And in Christ, this invaluable treasure of holy literature has become the common property of the world. As the fulfillment fits the promise, so the Scriptures of the New Testament fit those of the Old Covenant. The one is incomplete without the other; the Old Testament is only revealed in the New, and the New Testament is already hidden in the Old according to its core and essence. They stand to each other as pedestal and statue, as lock and key, as shadow and body.

The names Old and New Testament first indicated the two dispensations of the covenant of grace, which were given by God to His people before and after Christ, Jeremiah 31:31 ff, 2 Chronicles 3:6 ff, Hebrews 1:1 ff, but gradually they have been transferred to the scriptures that give the description and account of these two covenant dispensations. In Exodus 24:7 the law, which was the proclamation of God's covenant with Israel, was already called the book of the covenant, cf. 2 Kings 23:2, and Paul already speaks in 2 Corinthians 3:14 of a reading of the Old Testament, where he is therefore thinking of the books of the Old Testament. After these examples the word Testament was gradually used for the writings or books that are contained in the Bible and give an explanation of the old and new dispensation of grace.

Like the Old Testament, the New Testament is also composed of several books; it contains five historical ones (the four Evangels and the Acts of the Apostles), twenty-one 'doctrinal' ones (the Epistles of the Apostles) and one prophetic book (the Revelation of John). But while the 39 books of the Old Testament were written over a period of more than a thousand years, the 27 books of the New Testament were all written in the second half of the first century of our Christian era. The Gospels occupy the first place in the New Testament, but this order carries no temporal, but a business character. Although many of the epistles of the Apostles are older, the Gospels stand first because they deal with the person and work of Christ, and because they form the basis of all later apostolic activity. The word Gospel first generally meant a pleasant, joyful message; in the days of the New Testament it came to be used for the message of joy proclaimed by Jesus the Christ, Mark. It was not until later that ecclesiastical writers such as Ignatius, Justin, etc., transferred it to the books or writings that contained that joyful message from Christ.

Four such Gospels have been placed at the front of our New Testament. But these four writings do not contain four different ■evangelies' or glad tidings, for there is only one Gospel, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Mark 1:1, Galatians 1:6-8.'But that one Gospel, that one glad tidings of salvation, is described in four different ways, by four different persons, is shown to us in four different forms, from four different points of view. This view is expressed in the headings above our Gospels. They are referred to as the one Gospel, but according to the four distinct descriptions of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. This was not intended to imply that our four Gospels were not actually written by these four men, but were merely revisions of their writings, but rather to express the idea that in the four Gospels the one Gospel, the one image of the person and work of Christ, was described, though from different sides. That is why the early church compared the four Evangelists with the four cherubim in the book of Revelation 4:7, Matthew with the mcnsch, Mark with the lion, Luke with the bull, and John with the eagle. For the first Evangelist described Christ according to his human side, the second according to his prophetic side, the third according to his priestly side, and the fourth according to his divine side.

Matthew, the same as the tax collector Levi, who was elected by Christ to the apostleship, Matthew 9:9, Mark. According to Irenaeus, he wrote his Gospel originally in Aramaic, in Palestine, about the year 62 A.D., and especially for the Jews and Christians in Palestine, to prove to them that Jesus was truly the Christ and that all the prophecies of the Old Testament had been fulfilled in Him, Matthew 1:1.

Mark was the son of Mary, Acts 12:12, who probably had a house of his own in Jerusalem, Mark. He was first in the service of Paul, and later of Peter as well, 1 Peter 5:13, and according to

tradition was invited by the Christians in Rome to give an account of the origin of the Gospel through Jesus Christ, Mark 1:1, because through his own experiences he was able to fulfill the promise of Jesus Christ. because he was so well acquainted with this subject through his stay in Jerusalem and his contact with Peter. He probably complied with this request in Rome, in about the years 64-67.

Luke, the beloved physician, as Paul calls him, Colossians 4:14, may have come from Antioch and belonged to Christ's church there early on, in the year 40. He was a travelling companion and fellow worker of Paul, and remained faithful to him to the end, 2 Timothy 4:11. He wrote a book of history, not only of the life and work of Christ (in his Gospel), but also of the first spread of the Gospel in Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece, as far as Rome (in the Hand, of the Ap.), about the year 70-75, and dedicated it to a certain Theophilus, a considerable man, who was interested in the Gospel.

These three Gospels are closely related. They are in line with the tradition that survived among the first disciples concerning Jesus' teaching and life. The fourth Gospel has a different character. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, remained in Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension and was there with James and Peter one of the three pillars of the church (Galatians 2:9). Later he left Jerusalem and towards the end of his life came to Ephesus as the successor of Paul, from where he was exiled to the island of Patmos under the Emperor Domitian in the year 95-96, to die as a martyr in the year 100. John was not a man who was very prominent in missionary work. He did not found new churches, but wanted to preserve the existing churches in the pure knowledge of the truth. For the church, the situation had gradually changed by the end of the century. The struggle over the relationship of the Christian congregation to Israel, to the Law and to circumcision was over. It had come to an independent existence in relation to Judaism and was now penetrating further and further into the Greco-Roman world. There it came into contact with other schools of thought, especially the young Gnosticism. And now it is the purpose of John to lead the church safely through these dangers of anti-Christianity, that is, of that direction which denies the incarnation of the Word (1 John 2:22, 1 John 4:3). In contrast to this anti-Christian direction, John in his writings, which all date from the years 80-95, draws the full picture of Christ as the Word made flesh. In his Gospel, he shows that Christ was such during His walk on earth; in his Letters, that He is still such in the church today; and in Revelation, that He will also be such in the future.

All these New Testament writings discussed so far have thus had their historical origin under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And so it is with the other writings of Paul and Peter, of James and Jude. After Jesus' ascension and the persecution of the Jerusalem congregation, the apostles not only went out to preach the Gospel among Jews and Gentiles, but also maintained fellowship and interaction with the congregations that had been planted by their word.

They received oral or written reports of its spiritual condition, took an interest in its prosperity, and were responsible for its care of all the churches on their apostolic hearts, 2 Corinthians 11:28. Thus they felt called to visit them personally if possible, or to admonish, comfort, warn, or encourage them by means of epistles, according to their needs, and by all these means to instruct them more deeply in the truth which is godly.

Like all their apostolic work, this written work, which is a historical, organic, essential part of it, also had a founding character. The Gospels and Epistles of the Apostles, like the books of the prophets, if you will, are occasional writings; but they go far beyond the temporal and local interests of the communities of the time and are addressed to the church of all ages.

All Scripture, although historical, is, as St. Augustine says, a letter sent by God from heaven to his congregation on earth. And far from the fact that historical research into the origin of the books of the Bible in itself, apart from the misuse which people can make of it, would detract from the divine character of Scripture, it is, on the contrary, eminently capable of showing us the wonderful ways and channels by which God has brought this work of art into being. With this investigation into the origin of the various books of the Bible, the study of Scripture has not ended but has only just begun. A whole circle of sciences has gradually formed around Scripture, all of which have as their ultimate goal the better understanding of its meaning and conception. Here only the following should be said about them.

First, the various books of the Bible not only originated individually, but they were also collected and combined to form a canon, that is, a list or group of writings that serve as a rule of faith and life. Such a collection had also sometimes already taken place with some Bible books; the Psalms and the Proverbs, for example, originated from different people and were gradually combined into one volume. The same thing happened later with all books of the Bible. However, this should not be taken to mean that the Church had created this canon, as if she had given canonical authority to the writings of the prophets and apostles. These writings had authority in the circles of the church from the moment they were written, and they were the rule of faith and life. The Word of God, first unwritten and later written, does not derive its authority from men, nor from the faithful, but from God, who Himself watches over it and brings it to recognition. But when later on the number of prophetic and apostolic writings increased, and writings also appeared which did not originate from prophets and apostles, but which were put in their names or were even considered as such in certain circles; then it became necessary for the church to distinguish the real, canonical books from the false, alleged, apocryphal or pseudepigraphical writings, and to draw up a list of the former. This was done both with the books of the Old Testament in the time before Jesus, and with those of the New Covenant in the 4th century after Christ. And there is a special science that carefully examines all this and tries to shed light on the canonicity of the Bibles.

Secondly, the original manuscripts, written by the prophets and the apostles themselves, have all been lost without exception. We have only copies of them. The oldest of these copies date from the ninth and tenth century for the Old Testament, and from the fourth and fifth century for the New Testament. Between the original manuscripts and the current copies lie centuries, in which the text has had a history and has been subject to smaller or larger changes. - In the original Hebrew manuscripts, for example, there were no vocal or punctuation marks or inscriptions; these were only added to the copies centuries later. The division into chapters, as we use it now, only originates from the beginning of the thirteenth century, and the division into verses from the middle of the sixteenth century. For all these reasons a science is needed that tries with all available means to determine the original text and uses it as a basis for the explanation.

Thirdly, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. As soon as the Bible was distributed to people who did not understand these languages, a translation became

necessary. As early as the third century B.C. a translation of the Old Testament into Greek was begun; and later such an interpretation of Old and New Testament into many old and still later into many new languages was continued. After the revival of the Mission among the Gentiles in the nineteenth century, this work was again undertaken with zeal and now the Scriptures have been translated, in whole or in part, into almost four hundred languages and into one hundred languages. The study of these translations, especially from antiquity, is also of the utmost importance for the right understanding of the Scriptures. For every translation is already an explanation of the Scriptures.

Fourthly, from the days of the Jews, throughout all ages, and not least in our own time, a tremendous amount of care and effort has been devoted to the explanation of the Scriptures. And although it is true that every heretic has his letter and many an interpretation is an interpretation of his own opinion, nevertheless the history of the explanation of the Scriptures shows a remarkable progress, to which each century contributes its own. It is ultimately God Himself who often upholds His Word through all sorts of human aberrations and makes His thoughts triumphant over the wisdom of the world.

01.08. Scripture and Confession.

8. Scripture and Confession. In the time of the apostles and afterwards there was no lack of all kinds of differences concerning the nature of Christianity and its relationship to Judaism and paganism. But all the more surprising is the unanimity with which the Scriptures have been accepted as the Word of God throughout the Christian Church. This applies in the first place to the Old Testament. In the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, reference and appeal was made to it time and again. Imperceptibly, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, the authority of the Old Testament passed from the Jewish church to the Christian church with the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. The Gospel brought the Old

Testament with it and could not be accepted and recognized without it. The Gospel is the fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament, without which it hangs in the air, and the Old Testament is the pedestal upon which the Gospel rests, the root from which it has grown. As soon as the Gospel was accepted somewhere, the Scriptures of the Old Testament were accepted as the Word of God, at the same time and without any contradiction. The New Testament church' therefore never existed without a Bible; from the beginning it was in possession of the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets. To these were soon added the apostolic writings. In part, these writings, like the Gospels and the general epistles, were intended for the whole church; in part, like the other epistles, they were addressed to a specific congregation at Rome, at Corinth, at Colossae, etc.

It is obvious that all these writings, as they came from apostles and apostolic men, were from the beginning held in great esteem by the Christian congregations, were read in the assembly and were also sent to other congregations for reading. Thus the apostle Paul himself requested that the epistle which he wrote to the congregation in Colossae, after being read there, should also be read in the congregation in Laodicea, and that the congregation in Colossae should also be acquainted with the letter which he wrote from Laodicea and by which is probably meant the letter to Ephesus, Colossians 4:16. And in 2 Peter 3:15-16 Peter not only mentions a letter which his readers have recently received from Paul, but he also mentions other letters of the apostle, which contain the same doctrine as the one Peter is presenting, but which are sometimes difficult to understand and are distorted by uneducated and unsteady people. It cannot be inferred from this place that a collection of Pauline letters already existed at that time; but it does clearly follow that the writings of Paul

Paul's writings were known in a much wider circle than in the local congregations to which they were addressed in particular. Of course, in the early days the churches drew their knowledge of the Gospel largely from the oral preaching of the apostles and their teachers. But when these died out and their preaching ceased, the value of the apostles' writings had to increase more and more. From testimonies around the middle of the second century, we know that the Gospels, and later the Epistles, were regularly read in the assembly of the faithful, were quoted as proof of one truth or another, and were placed on a par with the writings of the Old Testament. Towards the end of

the second century the writings of the New Testament, together with those of the Old Testament, were regarded as ■the whole Scripture', as foundation and pillar of our faith', as the Scriptures which were regularly read in religious assemblies (Irenaeus, Clemens Alexan- drinus, Tertullianus). For a long time there was a difference of opinion as to whether certain writings (Hebrews, James, Judges, 2 Peter 2:1-22 and 3 John 1:1-14, Revelation of John, Barnabas' Epistle, Hermas' Shepherd, etc.) were to be counted among the Holy Scriptures or not. But also in this matter there came gradually more clarity and unanimity; the generally recognized writings were summarized under the name of canon (rule of truth or of faith) and at the synod at Laodicea in the year 360, at Hippo Regius in Numidia in the year 393, and at Carthage in 397 they were registered and established as such.

These scriptures of the Old and New Testaments form the foundation of prophets and apostles, on which all Christian churches in communion with one another place themselves or at least claim to place themselves. All churches have officially recognized the divine authority of these scriptures in their confessions and have accepted it as a reliable rule of faith and life. This dogma has never been the subject of difference or dispute among the Christian churches; the battle against Scripture as the Word of God used to come from outside, from such heathen philosophers as Celsus and Porphyrius in the second century, but only dates from the eighteenth century within Christendom. But the church has not received this Scripture from God in order to rest quietly on it, much less to bury this treasure in the ground. On the contrary, it is called upon to preserve, interpret, proclaim, apply, translate, disseminate, praise and defend this Word of God; in other words, to make the thoughts of God, as contained in the Scriptures, prevail over the thoughts of men everywhere and at all times. All the activity to which the congregation is called is a work on and a ministry of the Word of God. It is the ministry of the Word of God, when it is preached, declared and applied in the assembly of the faithful, when it is dispensed in the signs of the covenant and enforced in the discipline. But to the service of the Word in a broader sense also belongs that it is applied, worked out and brought to dominion in one's own heart and life, in profession and business, in home and workplace, in science and art, in state and society, in works of mercy and mission, in all sides and in all directions of life. The church must be a pillar and a firm ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15), that is, a pillar and a foundation that carries the truth, not in itself, for then the truth rests in itself, that is in God, but that carries and maintains and confirms the truth here on earth before the world. If the Church omits and forgets this, it forfeits its calling and undermines its own existence. As soon as the church begins to fulfill its calling, however, a difference of opinion about the meaning of God's Word usually soon arises. Even though the Holy Spirit has been promised and given to the church as a guide in all truth, the church, neither as a whole nor in its particular members, is not equipped with the gift of infallibility. Already in the apostolic congregations there were all kinds of errors, which had their origin either in Judaism or in Paganism. And throughout the centuries these have been the two pitfalls which the congregation has been continually threatened with running aground and which it must therefore avoid with the greatest vigilance and foresight. In the face of these errors on the right and on the left, the church of Christ is compelled to pronounce resolutely and clearly which is the truth entrusted to it by God in His Word. The Church does this by meeting in smaller and larger assemblies (synods) and there determining what, in one point or another, it is convinced is the divine truth and thus the doctrine of the Church. The truth which is laid down in Scripture thus leads of itself to a confession by everyone who believes and embraces it. Confession is the calling of all believers and also the

impulse of their hearts; whoever truly believes, with all his heart and soul, cannot but confess, that is, testify to the truth that has set him free, and to the hope that has been planted in his heart by that truth. Every believer and every congregation therefore suffers, as truly as it carries the witness of the Holy Spirit within it, that God's Word is the truth. And as error takes on a finer form, the congregation is forced to account with all the more care for the content of the truth it professes, and also to express in clear and unambiguous terms what it believes. Oral confession then, by necessity, passes into the described confession (symbol, confession).

There have been objections from various sides to the drafting and handing down of such an ecclesiastical confession. The Remonstrants in this country, for example, were of the opinion that a confession was contrary to the exclusive authority of the Holy Scriptures, deprived the conscience of freedom, and prevented the growth of knowledge. But these objections are based on misunderstanding; the confessions do not serve to reduce the Scriptures, but on the contrary to uphold them and to secure them against individual arbitrariness; they do not violate but support the freedom of conscience against all kinds of spirits of error, who try to seduce the weak and ignorant souls; and they do not hinder the development of knowledge, but keep and direct it on the right track, and can themselves always be legitimately checked and revised against the Scriptures as the only rule of faith. The Apostles' Creed (the 12 Articles) is the oldest symbol. Although it was not drawn up by the apostles, it came into being at the beginning of the second century, and developed from the Trinitarian baptismal commandment given by Christ Himself, Matthew 28:19. Originally it was somewhat shorter than we know it today, but the basic type was the same; it was a brief enumeration of the great facts on which Christianity rests, and as such it is still the common basis and the indissoluble bond of all Christendom. To this apostolic symbol should be added four other confessions of an ecumenical (general) character, which are adopted by many churches, namely, the confession of the Council at Nicea in 325; the confession which, in Article 9 of our Dutch Confession of Faith, is the foundation of Christianity. Confession, which in article 9 of our Confession of Faith is called the Nicene Creed, but, although it incorporates the Nicene Creed, it expands it and only came into being some time later; next, the creed of the Council of Chalcedon in 451; and finally the creed of Athanasius, which is wrongly so called, and which is also accepted as a symbol in article 9 of the Confession of the Netherlands. In all these symbols the doctrine about Christ and the Trinity is explained. This was the subject of the great controversy in the first centuries. What do you think of the Christ? That was the all-important question which the congregation had to answer for itself and to the whole world, based on the Lord's Word. On the Jewish side there were all those who were prepared to acknowledge Jesus as a man, sent by God, equipped with extraordinary gifts, animated by the prophetic spirit, powerful in words and works, but otherwise no more than a man. And on the Pagan side, one wanted to see in Jesus a son of the gods, a form of God, who had come from heaven and, like the angels in the Old Testament, had appeared on earth for a short time and had taken on a false body; but one refused to confess in Him the One-born of the Father, who had become flesh. In the face of these two heresies, the church had to maintain, in accordance with the Scriptures, both that

Christ was the true, one-born Son of God and that He had truly come in the flesh. She expressed this after a long struggle in the above-mentioned Confessional Scriptures, and with the Apostle John she rejected as anti-Christian all doctrines which deny that the Son of God came in the flesh, 1 John 2:18, 1 John 2:22; 1 John 4:2-3. In doing so, the Christian Church maintained the essence

and the core, the very special nature of the Christian religion. And that is why the councils and synods in which this great work was accomplished have such great, fundamental significance for the whole of Christendom. In the facts of Christianity, which the Apostles' Creed enumerates, and in the doctrine of the person of Christ and of the triune nature of God, there is among the Christian churches a harmony which unites them all against Judaism and Paganism, and which, in the sad difference which divides them, must not be forgotten or disregarded. But on the common ground all sorts of disagreements and schisms soon arose. The practice of discipline led to the separations of Montanism (2nd half of the 2nd century), Novatianism (mid 3rd century) and Donatism (4th century). Much more serious was the schism that gradually took place between the Church in the East and that in the West. Various causes contributed to this: in the first place, the aversion between Greeks and Latins, the envy between Constantinople and Rome, the conflict for supremacy between the Patriarchs and the Pope. In addition, there were many smaller differences in doctrine and worship, the most important of which was the confession of the Greek Church that the Holy Spirit did not emanate from the Father and the Son (filioque), as the West taught, but only from the Father. The separation, which had already come about occasionally for a time, came to a head in 1054. The Church in the East, which prefers to call itself Orthodox, because in its opinion it has remained faithful to the teachings of the ancient Church better than Rome, suffered great losses because of all kinds of sects (Armenian Christians; Nestorians in Syria; Thomas Christians in Persia, Monophysite Jacobites in Syria and Copts in Egypt; Maronites in Lebanon), which separated from it, and especially also because of Mohammedanism, which in 1453 even became master of Constantinople. On the other hand, it received an important gain through the conversion of the Slavs, and at present still exists as the Orthodox Church in Greece, Turkey, Russia and in some small countries such as Bulgaria, Serbia and Rumenia. In Russia, however, its existence is being undermined by the appearance of many numerous and very different sects. Like the state, the church is in a very serious crisis. In the West, the power of the Catholic Church, under the leadership of the bishops of Rome, expanded from century to century. After a long period of persecution and defamation, the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity was followed by a period of peace, privilege and prestige. Although secularization increased hand over hand, the church also acquired great merits in the period from the conversion of Constantine to the Reformation. Just as she resisted and conquered paganism in the first centuries, so she also later worked diligently for the conversion of the peoples and the civilization of Europe, upheld the great truths of Christianity and the independence of the church with commendable steadfastness, ' and contributed greatly to the development of Christian art and science. But whatever may have been her merits, it can scarcely be denied that in her expansion and development of power she often moved in a direction which had not been indicated by the original, apostolic Christianity. This is especially evident in three respects.

First, the Catholic Church has more and more elevated tradition to an independent rule of faith next to, above, and even in opposition to Scripture. Many Roman doctrines and practices, such as Mass, celibacy for the clergy, the veneration of the saints, the immaculate conception of Mary, etc., cannot be proven in words from Scripture, but are nevertheless upheld on the basis of tradition. It is said of this tradition that it may only contain "what has been believed everywhere, always and by all", but in the end it is always the pope who decides whether something is tradition.

Thus the whole relationship of Scripture and Church is reversed in Rome. Scripture is not necessary, but only useful for the Church, but the Church is necessary for Scripture. For the Scriptures have no authority except through the Church, which declares them credible; they are obscure in themselves, and only become clear through the interpretation of the Church; they do not precede and are not the foundation of the Church, but the Church takes the first place, and also makes up the foundation upon which the Scriptures rest. Although the prophets and apostles were endowed with the gift of inspiration, the pope too, when he speaks ■ex cathedra', in his papal capacity, enjoys a special support and guidance of the Spirit and is infallible. Thus, the Church is sufficient in itself, if necessary missing the Scriptures; it is the one, true, and perfect agent of salvation; it possesses and distributes in the sacraments all the benefits of grace; it is the agent of grace par excellence, the state and kingdom of God on earth.

Secondly, the Catholic Church has mixed up the core of the Gospel, that is, God's free grace, the justification of sinners by faith alone, without the works of the law, if not entirely lost, at least with very impure elements, and thus confused the distinction between law and Gospel. This corruption of the original Gospel already occurred in the first centuries. But later it increased and was officially approved. In the struggle between Augustine and Pelagius, which in principle still continues, the Roman Church, especially after the Reformation, has more and more sided with the latter, not in name but in fact. God does give man, who hears the Gospel, the power to convert and to persevere in conversion. But the will and the accomplishment depend on man himself. He must gain entrance to the kingdom of God through good works.

These good works fall into two major categories with Rome: works to maintain the ordinary commandments applicable to all, and works to accomplish the counsels added by Christ to these commandments (celibacy, poverty and obedience). The first way is good, but the second way is better, more difficult but also shorter and safer; that one is for laymen, the other for monks and nuns. Whoever walks on this path of good works receives from the Church, by means of the sacraments, as much grace as he has made himself worthy of. Finally, if he perseveres to the end, he arrives in the kingdom of heaven not at the moment of rebirth or even at death, but after years of being in purgatory.

Third, the Catholic Church soon made a distinction between clergy and laity. Not the faithful in general, but the clergy alone are priests in the real sense. And in the clergy, too, all sorts of distinctions were gradually made. In the New Testament the names "elder" and "overseer" refer to the same ministers. But already in the second century this unity was lost from sight; the bishop (episcopus, bishop) was elevated high above the deacons and elders (or presbyters, priests) and was gradually regarded as a successor to the Apostles and as a guardian of tradition. These bishops have pastors, parish priests and chaplains under them and have archbishops, patriarchs and finally the pope above them. In the Pope, who was officially declared infallible at the Vatican Council in Rome in 1870, this entire, ramified ecclesiastical hierarchy closes itself off. He is the ■father" (papa, pope) of the entire Church, the ■superior priest", the successor of Peter, the ■deputy of Christ", the supreme legislative and judicial power, who, with the help of a large college of officials (curia: cardinals, prelates, procu- rators, notaries, etc.), rules the entire Church.

These errors, which began with minor deviations, have grown larger and larger over the centuries. They have developed and are still developing in the direction that the Christian, Catholic Church of

old is passing more and more into the Ultramontane, into the Roman Church (inseparably bound up with the church in Rome), into the Papal Church, in which Mary, the mother of Christ, and the Pope, the vicar of Christ, are pushing the person and work of Christ further and further into the background. The three errors mentioned above are a reduction of and an infringement on the prophetic, priestly, and royal office of Christ. This corruption of the church did not proceed without vigorous resistance at every turn. Especially in the Middle Ages there was no lack of people and movements that wanted to make improvements. But all these movements have had little success; in part they have passed quietly without leaving much fruit; in part they have been violently suppressed and smothered in blood. These means of suppression and extermination were also used against the Reformation in the sixteenth century, but they did not succeed. That was because the times were ripe for a reformation. The church was in such deep religious and moral decay that her own sons no longer trusted her; everywhere there was a sense that things could not continue like they were, and a desire for something to be done; and not a few people, for example in Italy, ridiculed all religion and Christianity and fell into complete disbelief. - What would have become of the church without the Reformation, is impossible to say; the Reformation has also been a blessing for the Roman church, as it still is for her today.

Furthermore, the Reformation was not the only powerful movement that announced the new era. It was preceded, accompanied and followed by other movements, each in its field no less important. The invention of printing and gunpowder, the rise of the free citizenry, the discovery of America, the ■rebirth' of literature and art, the new science and philosophy - all these important phenomena and events were signs of the awakening of the self-consciousness, of the transition from the Middle Ages to the new age. And by all these movements the Reformation, although starting from its own principle and pursuing its own goal, was carried and supported. And then - which is not the least important - the Reformation, in its opposition to the Roman church, attacked the evil at the root. She was not satisfied with an external improvement in the forms, but wanted the cause of the decay to be removed. For that, of course, she needed a fixed point of departure, a reliable yardstick, a positive principle. And this she found, in contrast to the traditions of the Roman church, in the word of Christ, which was credible in and of itself, necessary for the life and welfare of the church, but also perfectly sufficient and clear; in contrast to the good works, to which Rome bound salvation, in the work of Christ, which was perfect and needed no supplementation by men; and in contrast to the pope, who claimed to be the infallible substitute of Christ, in the Spirit of Christ, who is poured out in the church and leads all God's children into the truth. The Reformation did not arrive at this positive principle through scientific research and reflection, but through the experience of the guilt-laden heart, which finally found reconciliation and forgiveness only in God's free grace. The Reformation was not a scholarly or scientific movement, but a religious and moral one. Many joined it, as is the case with every division and rupture, for impure and unjust motives; but its core was formed by the weary and burdened, who sighed under Rome's pressure and now found rest for their souls at the feet of the Holy One.

Luther stopped at this experience of forgiveness. It was enough for him that he had found ■a merciful God. It is true that from this point of view he had a much freer and broader view of the whole world than the Roman Christian, for whom the natural always has the character of the profane; but resting on the justification that he had obtained through faith alone, he left everything secular, art and science, state and society to their own devices. The Lutheran Reformation limited

itself to the restoration of the preaching ministry. When they had found the answer from Scripture to the question: How does man become blessed? then they gave up further work. For Zwingli and Calvin, however, who initiated the reformation in Switzerland, that was the beginning of their work. They too came to reformation, not through rational reasoning, but through the experience of sin and grace, of guilt and reconciliation. But this experience was their starting point, but not their end or resting point. From there they penetrated deeper and went back further. Behind the grace of God, revealed in the forgiveness of guilt, lies the sovereignty of God, the infinite and adorable essence of God with all His virtues and perfections. If God was sovereign in the work of salvation, then He was sovereign always and everywhere, in creation as well as in re-creation. If He had become King in the heart, He also had to be so in the head and the hand, in the household and the workplace, in the state and society, in science and the arts. The question was not enough: How does man become blessed? but it had to be reduced to this other, higher, deeper, all-embracing question: How does God become worthy of His glory? And hence, for Zwingli and even more for Calvin, when they had found peace for their hearts in the blood of the cross, the work of reformation first began. So to speak, the whole world was open to them, not to leave them to their own devices, but to penetrate and sanctify them through the Word of God and prayer. They began in their immediate neighborhood, with the church and the city in which they lived; and they restored not only the preaching office, but also worship and discipline; not only religious life on Sunday, but also civil and social life on weekdays; not only the private life of the citizen, but also the public life of the state. And from there their reformation spread to other countries. The Lutheran Reformation was mainly limited to Germany and Denmark, Sweden and Norway. But Calvin’s Reformation found acceptance in Italy and Spain, Hungary and Poland, Switzerland and France, Belgium and the Netherlands, England and Scotland, in America and Canada. If it had not been for the "Counter-Reformation" of the Jesuits in many countries which opposed it, pushed it back and eradicated it, it would have put an end to Rome’s world domination for good.

It was not to be. The Reformation was opposed from the outset by the Church of Rome, which at the Council of Trent deliberately set itself against it and continued on its chosen path. She weakened herself by internal divisions and endless disputes. And next to her in the same sixteenth century appeared Socinianism and Anabaptism, which both started from the same basic idea, from the irreconcilable opposition between nature and grace, and therefore offered either grace to nature, or nature to grace. The same opposition, between creation and re-creation, between the human and the divine, between reason and revelation, between earth and heaven, between humanity and Christianity, or however one may further call the members of the opposition, the same opposition continued to exist until today. The divisions and ruptures that took place in the sixteenth century did not stop there. Each succeeding century increased its number. The seventeenth century gave birth to Remonstrantism in the Netherlands, to Independentism in England, to Pietism in Germany. In the eighteenth century, Herrnhuttism, Methodism, and Swedenborgianism were added, and the flood of Deism swept over all the churches. After the French Revolution, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a mighty religious awakening took place in Roman and Protestant churches. But nevertheless the divisions still increased: Darbysm and Irvingianism, Mormonism and Spiritism and all kinds of other sects crumble away the churches, which themselves are often weakened and consumed by a spirit of doubt and indifference. And outside the churches the power of monism in materialistic or pantheistic form is organizing itself into a final, deadly attack on the whole Christian faith.

All hope for the unity and universality of the church of Christ thus seems to be lost. Of the more than 1500 million people, who live on earth according to common estimates, there are about 10 million Jews, 175 million Mohammedans, 214 million Brahmins, 120 million Buddhists, 300 million Congfutseans, 140 million Shin-Toists, 173 million Polytheists. The Christians together form only a third part of the inhabitants of the earth, approximately 534 million, and among themselves are divided into 254 million Roman Catholics, 106 million Greek, 165 million Protestants, and many other groups and sects.

There is one consolation - Christ is gathering His own from all races and languages, from all peoples and nations; He will bring them all together and they will hear His voice. And they shall be one flock, one shepherd, John 10:16.

01.09. The Being of God.

9. The Being of God.

Hitherto we have discussed the character of the revelation which God has given us in His grace, and described the manner in which that revelation came about and was brought to our knowledge in Holy Scripture, under the instructive guidance of the Confession. Now we have to explain the contents of that revelation and to indicate in a regular order what we owe to that revelation for our mind and heart, for our consciousness and life. Whereas we first viewed the building of revelation from the outside and received an impression of the style in which it had been erected, we are now entering the sanctuary itself and contemplating the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are displayed there before our eyes.

It goes without saying, however, that we can develop the rich content of this revelation in various ways and let its parts pass before our eyes in a different order. We do not need to discuss all of them, but we would like to draw attention to two methods or ways in which the subject matter of Christian doctrine can be treated and has been treated many times. In the first place, we can turn to the Christian who has absorbed the contents of the revelation with true faith in his heart and ask him by what means he has come to the knowledge of the truth, in what elements this knowledge consists, and what fruit this knowledge has produced for his consciousness and life. This is the standpoint on which our Heidelberg Catechism places itself. In it, the Christian has his say and he gives a broad and clear account of the only comfort that is his share in living and dying, and of the different elements that are necessary to know in order to live and die in this comfort in a blissful way. This is a beautiful method of treatment, which deserves warm recommendation for a practical textbook. It has several advantages; it relates the truth directly to the whole Christian life, it saves us from scholarly reasoning and vain reflections, and it shows with each doctrine what it can do for the head and the heart of a human being. What use and what comfort do you derive from believing all this? That in Christ I am righteous before God and an heir of eternal life. But there is another order in which the truths of faith can be treated. We cannot only turn to the Christian to have him answer our questions about what he believes. But we can also put ourselves in the position of the Christian, and then try to give an account of the contents of our faith to ourselves and others from Scripture. Then we will not let the development of our confession be determined by the questions that are put to us and to which we will answer according to the questions. But we ourselves will then clearly explain what the content of our faith is. We do not pay much attention to the order in which we have progressively come to know the truth; rather, we try to discover the order which is actually present in the truths of faith themselves, how they are related to one another, and what constitutes their overriding principle. It is this order which is followed in our Dutch Confession of Faith; here too the Christian speaks, but he does not wait for the questions which are put to him, but explains the contents of his faith himself; he believes with his heart and confesses with his mouth what God says to the congregation in His Word and by His Spirit.

These two methods of treatment are, of course, not hostile to each other and do not exclude each other, but they complement each other and are both of great value. For the Reformed churches and no less so for the Reformed schools, it is an invaluable privilege that we have the Catechism next to the Creed and the Confession next to the Catechism. The subject matter and the subject matter, the theological and anthropological standpoints are united by it; head and heart are reconciled by it; the truth of God is a blessing for our consciousness and for our lives. That these two ways of developing the content of Revelation are not opposed to one another, but complement and balance each other, is amply demonstrated by the fact that not only in the Catechism, but also in the Creed, the Christian is speaking, and not the Christian in isolation and separated from others, but the Christian in communion with all his brothers and sisters. It is the congregation that expresses itself. We all believe with our hearts and confess with our mouths - this is how the Dutch Confession of Faith begins, this is how it continues and this is how it ends. And then, above it all, there is this significant inscription: Ware Christelijke Belijdenis, inhoudende de hoofdom der doctrine van God en van de eeuwige zaligheid van zielen.

These two, the doctrine of God and the doctrine of the eternal salvation of souls, do not constitute two independent entities that have nothing to do with each other, but they are inseparably connected; the doctrine of God is also a doctrine of the eternal salvation of souls, and the latter in turn encompasses the former. The knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ, His Son, is eternal life, John 17:3. This knowledge of God is different from the knowledge we acquire in daily life or in the schools of education and science, not in degree but in essence. It is a knowledge of its own, differing in principle, object and fruit from all other knowledge, as we explained more fully in the second paragraph. It is a matter of the head and of the heart both. It does not make us "wiser", at least not in the first place, but it makes us wiser, better and happier. It makes us happy and gives us eternal life, not only hereafter, but also here on earth. The three things we need to know are not only so that we can die in happiness one day, but also so that we can live in happiness here on earth from then on.

Blessed are the pure in heart; they are already here on earth, even if it is through the promise that hereafter they will see God, Matthew 5:7; they were saved by hope, Romans 8:24. But if we have received the principle of eternal life in our hearts in this way, we cannot help longing to know more of Him who gave us that life. From ourselves we then look more and more to Him, who is the fountain of our salvation. From the comfort we enjoy in our hearts, from the usefulness and fruit which the knowledge of God bears for our own person and for our lives, we go back ever further to the worship of the Eternal Being. We then come more and more to the realization that God does not exist for our sake, but that we exist for His. Our salvation does not become indifferent to us, but it becomes a means for His glory. The knowledge of God gives us life, but life leads us back to His knowledge. In God we find all our salvation and all our honor. He becomes the object of our worship, the content of our song, the strength of our life. From God, through God and to God all things - that becomes the choice of our heart and the motto of our actions. We ourselves and all the creatures around us become vehicles for His glory. The truth, which at first we loved above all because it gave us life, then becomes dearer and dearer to us for its own sake, for what it reveals and makes known to us about the Eternal Being. The whole doctrine of faith, in its entirety and in all its parts, becomes a proclamation of God’s praise, a display of His virtues, a glorification of His Name. The Catechism leads us to the Creed.

If, however, we try to imagine what it means that we, poor, weak, sinful creatures, know God, who is the infinite, eternal Being, then a deep respect and a holy timidity take hold of our minds. Is it really possible, then, that in the darkened consciousness of the guilty child of man a ray of light falls from Him whom no man has seen nor can see, who dwells in an inaccessible light, 1 Timothy 6:16, who is pure light without darkness? 1 John 3:5.

There have been many, and they are still, who have given a negative answer to this question. But this denial of the knowability of God can arise from two very different moods in man. Today, for many it is the conclusion of a purely rational, deductive scientific reasoning.

They say that the knowledge of man's mind is limited to observable phenomena, and that it is a contradiction to attribute personality, consciousness and will to God, and yet to say that He is infinite, eternal and totally independent. To this we may readily remark that indeed there can be no knowledge of God with man, unless God has revealed Himself to us in a general way, in nature and history, or also in a special way, through the Son. If, however, God has revealed Himself, it goes without saying that He can also be known to the same degree as He has revealed Himself. But to claim that he has not revealed himself in any way or by any means would be tantamount to saying that the world has existed apart from and independent of God for all eternity, and that he could not reveal himself in it or through it. And -then it would follow that we should never speak of God again, because this word is nothing but a sound, without any foundation in reality. So-called agnosticism (the doctrine of the unknowability of God) is practically identical to atheism (the denial of the existence of God). But the denial of the knowability of God can also arise from a deep awareness of one's own smallness and insignificance and from a concomitant deep sense of God's infinite greatness and all-conquering majesty. In this sense, the acknowledgement: we know nothing, knowledge is too wonderful for us, has been the confession of all pious people. The fathers and teachers of the Church often use the expression that when they think about God, they can ultimately say much better what He is not than what He is. Calvin somewhere admonishes his readers not to want to rob God of the mysteries by their own efforts, which are far beyond the understanding of our weak mind. And poets, such as Vondel and Bilderdijk, have often sung about this all-transcending greatness of God in the most sublime way in their songs.

Although this humble confession of God's exalted majesty and man's insignificance can in a certain sense also be called a denial of God's knowability, it is preferable, in order to avoid misunderstandings, to distinguish between God's intelligibility and knowability in accordance with the Holy Scriptures. There is no book in the world which, to the same degree and in the same manner as the Holy Scriptures, maintains, on the one hand, the absolute elevation of God above all creatures and, on the other, the intimate connection and close relationship between the creature and its Creator.

Already on the first page of the Bible we are confronted with the absolute exaltation of God above all His creatures. Without becoming tired or dull, He brings the whole world into being through His Word alone. Through the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the Spirit of His mouth all their host, Psalms 33:6. He speaks and it is there; He commands and it is there, Psalms 33:9. He does according to His will with the host of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth, and there is none who can turn His hand away, or say to Him: what art Thou doing? Daniel 4:35. The nations are regarded as a drop in a bucket and as a speck of dust in a balance. Behold, He casts the

islands as thin dust. The Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, and its beasts are not sufficient for a burnt offering. All peoples are as nothing to Him, and they are regarded with Him as less than nothing and vanity. He is to be compared with no one, and no likeness is to be applied to Him, Isaiah 40:15-18. Who in heaven can be compared to the Lord? Who is equal to the Lord among the children of the strong? Psalms 89:7. There is no name by which He can truthfully be called; His name is wondrous, Genesis 32:29, Richt. 13:18, Proverbs 30:4. When the Lord addressed Job out of a storm and spread before Him the greatness of His works, the latter humbly bowed his head and said: See, I am too small, what should I answer You; I put my hand on my mouth, Job 39:37. God is great and we do not understand, Job 36:26. The knowledge is too wonderful for us, it is high, we cannot reach it, Psalms 139:6. And yet, that same high and exalted God has a very close relationship with all His creatures, even the smallest and smallest. Scripture does not give a deductive conception of God, as philosophy does, but it presents the true, living God before our eyes and makes Him visible to us in all the works of His hands. Lift up your eyes and see who created all these things. Everything was created by His hand; everything was brought forth according to His will and counsel; everything is maintained by His power. Therefore everything bears the stamp of His virtue, the mark of His goodness, wisdom and power. And of all creatures man is created in His image and likeness; he alone is called God’s family, Acts 17:28.

Because of this close relationship, He can also be called after His creatures and He can be spoken of in a human way. The same Scriptures which most sublimely portray God’s incomparable greatness and majesty, also speak of Him in parables and images which tingle with life. It speaks of His eyes and ears, hands and feet, mouth and lips, heart and bowels. She attributes to Him all kinds of virtues, wisdom and knowledge, will and power, justice and mercy, and also attributes to Him emotions of joy and sorrow, fear and grief, zeal and jealousy, repentance and wrath, hatred and revenge. She mentions his examining and thinking, hearing and seeing, smelling and tasting, sitting and standing up, visiting and leaving, remembering and forgetting, blessing and chastising, etc. And she compares him to a sun and a moon. And she compares Him to a sun and a light, a fountain and a watering hole, a rock and a shelter, a round-axe and a buckler, a lion and an eagle, a hero and a warrior, an artist and a builder, a king and a judge, a farmer and a shepherd, a husband and a father. Everything in the entire world that can be found for mankind in the way of support and protection and help, can be found in God originally and perfectly, and in abundance. All the members of the family in heaven and earth are named after Him, Ephesians 3:15. He is the "Son of His", and all creatures are "His thankful rays".

Now, in the knowledge of God, it is always a matter of holding these two groups of statements concerning the Divine being equally and doing them justice. If we relinquish the absolute exaltation of God above all His creatures, we lapse into polytheism (Pagan polytheism), or pantheism (Algodism), which are closely related to each other, also according to history, and merge easily with each other. And if we abandon the relationship of God to His creatures, we come up against the cliff of deism (belief in one God, without revelation) or atheism (denial of the existence of God), which also correspond to each other in various ways. Scripture holds both, and Christian theology followed in its footsteps. God actually has no single name by which we can truthfully call Him, and He calls Himself and allows Him to be called by us with many, many names. He is the infinitely exalted and at the same time the living God, the one who sympathizes with all his creatures. His virtues are in some respects all incommunicable, and in another respect all communicable. This is

incomprehensible to our intellect. There is no adaequate (equivalent) concept of God. A definition, a determination, which corresponds to His essence, cannot be given of God. A name, which fully expresses what He is, cannot be found. But the one does not contradict the other. Precisely because God is the High and Exalted One and dwells in eternity, He also dwells with the one who is of a crushed and lowly spirit, Isaiah 57:15. God did not reveal Himself in order that we might form a philosophical concept of God from His revelation, but that we might accept, acknowledge and confess Him, the true and living God, as our God. These things are hidden from the wise and prudent, but they are revealed to babes, Matthew 11:25. The knowledge we acquire of God in this way is therefore knowledge of faith; it is not adaequate, not equivalent to God's essence, for God is infinitely superior to all His creatures; Nor is it purely symbolic, that is, clothed in expressions which we have formed arbitrarily and which do not correspond at all to the real thing; but it is ectypical) or analogical), because it rests on the resemblance and relationship which, in spite of God's absolute exaltation, exist between Him and all the works of His hands. The knowledge which God gives us of Himself in nature and Scripture is limited, finite, piecework, but it is nevertheless pure and true. Such is God, as He has revealed Himself in His Word, specifically in and through Christ; and such is He, the God whom our hearts need. The attempt to take into account, in the doctrine of God, all the data of Scripture and thus to maintain both His elevation above and His affinity with the creature, led early on in the Christian Church to the distinction of two groups of characteristics in the Divine Being. These two groups were traditionally referred to by different names, and even today Roman theology prefers to speak of negative and positive (denying and definite), Lutheran theology of quiescent and operative, and the Reformed of incommensurable and communicable properties. But in the essence of the matter the classification amounts to the same for all of them. It always aims to maintain both the transcendence (God's distinction from and elevation above the world) and the immanence of God (His communion with and indwelling in the world). The Reformed names of indivisible and communicable attributes make this sense even more clearly than those used by the Roman Catholics and Lutherans. The preservation of the former properties saves us from polytheism (Pagan polytheism) and pantheism (Algodism); and the preservation of the latter group saves us from deism (belief in one God, without revelation) and atheism (denial of the existence of God).

There is no overriding objection to continuing to use the Reformed classification, even though all our denominations are faulty. Only, we have to remember that the two groups of incommunicable and communicable properties are not separate and apart from each other. Of course we cannot treat them both at the same time and we must discuss one before the other. But the point of the classification is that we should always remember that God possesses all his communicable qualities in an absolute manner, in an infinite and therefore indivisible degree. God's knowledge, wisdom, goodness, righteousness, etc., do have some resemblance to those same virtues in creatures, but they are God's in an independent, unchanging, eternal, omnipresent, simple, in a word, absolutely Divine way. That is why we can distinguish between the being and the characteristics of creatures; a human being can lose his arm and his leg, can even be in sleep or in a daze without ceasing to be a human being. But this is not possible with God. His attributes coincide with His being. Every quality is His essence. He is not only wise and true, good and holy, just and merciful. But He is wisdom, truth, goodness, holiness, justice and mercy themselves, and therefore also the origin and fountainhead of all those virtues which are present in creatures. He is all that He has, and the source of all that creatures have; the abundant fountain of all good. The

indefectible attributes are therefore those virtues or perfections of God which indicate that everything in God exists with Him in an absolutely divine way, i.e. to an extent which cannot be communicated to creatures. This group of characteristics maintains the absolute elevation and incomparability of God and finds in the name Elohim, God, its clearest interpretation. It is true that the name of God is also applied to creations; not only does the Holy Scriptures sometimes speak of the idols of the Gentiles as gods, e.g. when they forbid us to have other gods before us, Exodus 20:3; it also calls Moses a God before Aaron, Exodus 4:16, and before Pharaoh, Exodus 7:2; it designates the judges as Gods, Psalms 82:1, Psalms 82:6, and Christ invokes them in his self-defence, John 10:33-35. But this speech is transitive and derivative. The name of God belongs originally and essentially only to God. With this name we always associate the idea of an infinite power, personal but still elevated above all creatures. God alone is God. As such, the indivisible qualities belong to Him. They are His alone, occur in no creature, and cannot even be communicated to any creature. For all creatures are dependent, changeable, compound, subject to time and space. But God is independent, so that He is not determined by anything, everything is determined by Him in a perfect sense, Acts 17:25, Romans 11:36; unchangeable, so that He remains the same forever and all change falls on the side of the creature and in the relation in which this creature positions itself towards Him, James 1:17; simple, so that He is completely free of all compositions of spirit and matter, thought and extension, essence and properties, mind and will, etc., and is everything He is. He is completely free and everything He has is pure truth, life and light, Psalms 36:10, John 5:26, 1 John 1:5; eternal, so that He is above all time and yet His eternity permeates every moment of time, Psalms 90:2; omnipresent, so that He is above all space and yet carries every point of space with His omnipotent and omnipresent power, Psalms 139:7, Acts 17:27-28. In modern times there are not a few who deny all value to these incomparable qualities for religious life and see nothing but metaphysical (supernatural) subtleties in them. But the opposite is proved by the fact that the giving away of these properties immediately opens the door to pantheism (all-goddessing), and to polytheism (pagan polytheism).

If God is not independent and unchangeable, eternal and omnipresent, simple and free from all composition, He is drawn down to the creature and identified with the world as a whole or with one of its forces. The number of those who exchange the God of revelation for the immanent world force or who prefer polytheism (the pagan polygoddoms) to the confession of the one, true God, increases day by day. The unity and oneness of God are inextricably linked to the indivisible qualities, Deuteronomy 6:4, Mark 12:29, John 17:3. Only then is God the one and only God, when nobody or nothing can be above, beside or below Him, what He is. And then also only, when He is independent and unchangeable, eternal and omnipresent, can He be the God of our unconditional faith, of our absolute trust, of our complete salvation. But this is true, these incomparable qualities are not enough for us. What would it profit us to know that God is independent and unchangeable, eternal and omnipresent, if we had to lack the knowledge that He is merciful and gracious and great in mercy? The incommunicable qualities do inform us about the way in which everything in God exists in Him; but they leave us in the dark as to the content of the Divine Being. But now the communicable qualities are added; and they tell us that this God, who is so infinitely high and exalted, yet also dwells in all His creatures, is related to all His creatures and possesses all those virtues which, in a derived and limited way, are also peculiar to creatures. He is not only a God from afar, but also close by. He is not only independent and inviolable, eternal and omnipresent, but also wise and powerful, just and holy, merciful and gracious. He is not only Elohim, He is also

Jehovah. As the indivisible qualities find their expression in the name Elohim, God, so the communicable qualities are more prominent in the name Jehovah. The derivation and original meaning of this name is unknown to us. It probably existed long before the time of Moses, as appears for example from the name Jochebed, but God did not yet make Himself known to His people by this name. To Abraham He revealed Himself as El-Schaddai, God the Almighty, Genesis 17:1, Exodus 6:2, who subdues all the forces of nature and makes them subservient to the Godhead. But when hundreds of years have gone by, and God seems to have forgotten his covenant and promise to the fathers, then he makes himself known to Moses as Jehovah, that is, as that God who is the same as who appeared to the fathers, who keeps his covenant, fulfils his promise, and remains completely the same to his people throughout the ages. Jehovah now gets the meaning of: I am who I am (I will be who I will be), 'and indicates God's unchanging faithfulness in his relationship to Israel. Jehovah is the God of the covenant, who according to his free love has chosen his people and made them his property. While the name Elohim, God, indicates the Eternal Being in His sovereign highness above the world, in the name Jehovah, LORD, it is revealed that this same high and exalted God has voluntarily revealed Himself to His people as a God of holiness, grace and faithfulness.

All the spirit wrestling in Israel and up to our days has been about this question of principle, whether Jehovah is Elohim or the LORD God. The pagans and many wise men of old and new times say that Jehovah is only the God of Israel, a national, limited, lower God. But Moses and Elijah and all the prophets, Christ and all his apostles maintain against it, that the LORD alone, who entered into a covenant with the fathers and the people of Israel, is the one, eternal and true God, and that there is no God but Him, Isaiah 43:10-15, Isaiah 44:66. Therefore Jehovah is God's proper, distinctive name,Isaiah 42:88,Isaiah 48:111. The God of the covenant, who descends so lowly to his people and dwells with those who have a crushed and lowly spirit, is at the same time the High and Exalted One, who dwells in eternity and whose name is holy,Isaiah 57:155. The indivisible and the communicable qualities do not conflict in this respect, but the former serve, so to speak, to explain and strengthen the latter. Take, for example, the love of God. We would not and could not speak of it if what is truthfully called love among people were not in some respect an imprint (ectype), image and likeness of the love that is present in God. There must be some resemblance between divine and human love, for otherwise all our thinking and speaking of God's love would be untrue and nothing but a vain sound. But that similarity is by no means equality. The purest and strongest love among men is only a very weak reflection of the love that is in God. And that is what makes us understand the indivisible qualities. Through it we learn that the love in God infinitely exceeds that of all creatures. For the love in God is independent, unchanging, simple, eternal and omnipresent. It does not depend on us and is not generated by us, but springs free and pure from the depths of the divine being. It knows n change, does not descend or ascend, does not appear or disappear, but lacks all shadow even of reversal. It is not an attribute in the Divine being next to other attributes and never conflicts with them, but it coincides with the Divine Being itself: God is love, Himself, whole, perfect, with His whole being. It is not subject to time and space, but it stands above them and descends from eternity into the hearts of all God's children. Such a love is completely reliable; our soul can rest in it in all distress and death; if such a God of love is for us, who will be against us? The same can now be said of all communicable qualities. Of knowledge and wisdom, goodness and mercy, righteousness and holiness, will and power, which are God's own, there is a faint resemblance in creatures. Everything perishable is an image. The

visible things are made of things that do not appear to the eyes, Hebrews 11:3. But all these attributes are present in God in an original, independent, invariable, simple, infinite manner. The LORD alone is God, and He has made us His people, the sheep of His pasture, Psalms 100:3. The communicable qualities are so numerous, that it is not possible to enumerate and describe them all. If we wished to deal with them fully, we should describe all those names, images and likenesses which Scripture uses to give us some idea of who and what God is to His creatures, and especially to His people. If, as indicated above, Scripture ascribes to God all the members of the body, such as eyes and ears, hands and feet, etc., and if it ascribes to God all human sensations, such as the sense of smell, the sense of smell, the sense of smell, etc., then it is not true that God is God. When Scripture attributes to God all the members of the body, such as eyes and ears, hands and feet, etc.; when it attributes to God all human sensations, disorders, passions, decisions, actions; when it designates Him with the names of offices and professions, which exist among men, and calls Him a king and a legislator and a judge, a warrior and a hero, a countryman and a shepherd, a husband and a father; When she calls on the entire organic and inorganic world to bring God near, and compares him to a lion, an eagle, a sun, a fire, a skydiver, a rock, a shield, etc., then all of this is a mirage. Then all this is a means to make us know God and to give us a deep impression of the sufficiency of his being. We need the whole world outside us for our spiritual and physical existence, for we are poor and weak in ourselves and have nothing. But all that we need, in soul and body, for time and eternity, is present for us without exception, original, perfect, in infinite abundance, in God. He is the highest good and abundant fountain of all good. The first thing which the Scriptures aim to do with all these names and descriptions of the Divine Being is to give us an unshakeable impression that Jehovah, the God who was manifested to Israel and in Chris, is the true, the essential, the living God. The idols of the heathen and the idols of the (pantheistic and polytheistic, deistic and atheistic) philosophers are the work of man’s hands; they do not speak, they do not see, they do not hear, they do not feel, they do not walk. But Israel’s God is in heaven and does everything that pleases Him. He is the only one, Deuteronomy 6:4, the true one, John 17:3, the eternally living God, Deuteronomy 5:26, Joshua 3:10, Daniel 6:27, Acts 14:15, 2 Corinthians 6:16, 1 Timothy 3:15, 1 Timothy 6:17. People want to make God a dead God, in order to be able to do with Him as they please. But the Holy Scriptures cry out to man: you are mistaken, God exists.

He is the true God, He lives now and forever. And dreadful is it to fall into the hands of the living God, Hebrews 10:31. As such a living God, who is only life and the fountain of all life, Psalms 36:10, Jeremiah 2:13. He is further Spirit, John 4:24, without body, although all kinds of bodily limbs and actions are attributed to Him, Deuteronomy 4:12, Deuteronomy 4:16 and therefore invisible, Deuteronomy 4:15-19 and invisible, Exodus 33:20, John 1:18, John 6:46, 1 Timothy 6:16. As a Spirit He then further has consciousness, perfect knowledge of Himself, Matthew 11:27, 1 Corinthians 2:10, and from and through Himself also perfect knowledge of everything that is or will be in time, however hidden or void it may be, Isaiah 46:10, Jeremiah 11:20, Matthew 10:30, Hebrews 4:13; will, by which He Himself does everything that pleases Him (hidden will or will of decision), Psalms 115:3, Proverbs 21:1, Daniel 4:35, and also determines what is to be the rule for our conduct (revealed will or will of command), Deuteronomy 29:29, Matthew 7:21, Matthew 12:50; and power, by which He can perform, in spite of all opposition, what He has resolved to do and no thing is impossible for Him, Genesis 18:14, Jeremiah 32:27, Zechariah 8:6, Matthew 19:26, 1 Timothy 6:15. But this knowledge, will and power are not arbitrary, but are in all parts morally

determined. This is already evident in the wisdom which is attributed to God in Scripture, Proverbs 8:22-31, Job 28:20-28, Romans 16:27, 1 Timothy 1:17, and by which He arranges and governs everything in accordance with the purpose which He intended at creation and re-creation, Psalms 104:24, Ephesians 3:10, Romans 11:33. But furthermore this is clearly expressed in the goodness and mercy, which on the one hand, and in the holiness and righteousness, which on the other hand, are attributed to God. God is not only the All-Mighty and the Almighty, but He is also the All-Good, only good, Matthew 10:18, perfect, Matthew 5:48, and the source of all that is good in creatures, Psalms 145:9. This goodness of God extends over the whole world, Psalms 145:9, Matthew 5:45, but changes according to the objects at which it is directed, and then takes different forms, as it were. It is called meekness, when it is shown to the punishable, Romans 3:25; mercy, when it is shown to the guilty, who receive forgiveness of sins, Ephesians 2:8; love, when God out of mercy communicates and gives Himself to the creatures, John 3:16, 1 John 4:8; kindness, when it is shown to the poor, who receive forgiveness of sins, and to the poor, who receive forgiveness of sins, and to the poor, who receive forgiveness of sins. 1 John 4:8; benevolence, when the goodness of God shows itself to his favored ones, Genesis 39:21, Numbers 14:19, Isaiah 54:10, Ephesians 2:7; pleasure, when it is emphasized that this goodness with all its benefits is a free gift, Matthew 11:26, Luke 2:14, Luke 12:32, 2 Thessalonians 1:11. His holiness and justice go hand in hand with this goodness and grace of God. God is called the Holy One, not only because He is exalted above all creatures as a creature, but above all because He is separated from all that is sinful and impure in the world; and therefore He demands that His people, whom He elected as His property by free grace, should be holy, Exodus 19:5-6, Leviticus 11:44-45, 1 Peter 2:9, and He sanctifies Himself in her through Christ, Ephesians 5:26-27, who sanctified Himself for her, that she too might be sanctified in truth, John 17:19. Because as the Holy One He cannot have any fellowship with sin; He hates it, Psalms 45:8, Job. His holy nature demands that He maintains justice also outside Himself in the world of creatures, and without respect rewards everyone according to their works, Romans 2:2-11, 2 Corinthians 5:10. Nowadays people make it clear to themselves and to others that God is not concerned about such trifles as the sinful thoughts and deeds of man. But the true, living God, whom the Scriptures make known to us, thinks quite differently about it. He is horribly wroth at both congenital and actual sins, and wants to punish them temporarily and eternally by means of a righteous judgement, Deuteronomy 27:26, Galatians 3:10.

According to that righteousness, however, He not only punishes the wicked, but according to the remarkable teaching of Scripture, it is according to that same righteousness that He grants salvation to the pious. It is true that the pious, considered in themselves, are sinners and no better than the others. While the wicked hide or disguise their sins, they are the ones who acknowledge and confess their guilt. But this is what makes the difference. Although personally guilty and impure, they are nevertheless, as far as the matter is concerned, on the side of God and against the world. So they may plead on the promise of His covenant of grace, on the truth of His word, on the righteousness which God Himself has wrought in Christ.

According to that righteousness, we may respectfully say, God Himself is obliged to forgive the sins of His people and to grant them eternal life, Psalms 4:2, Psalms 7:10, Psalms 31:2, Psalms 34:2-3, Psalms 35:23, Psalms 51:16, Psalms 103:17, 1 John 1:9. And if God often waits and the pious are tested in their faith for a long time, then after that the truthfulness and faithfulness of God

comes to light more and more in their complete salvation, Genesis 24:27, Genesis 32:10, Joshua 21:45, 2 Samuel 7:28, Psalms 57:4, Psalms 105:8. The Lord will complete for his people, his mercy is forever, Psalms 138:8. He is merciful and gracious, longsuffering and great in mercy and truth, Exodus 34:6, Psalms 86:15, Psalms 103:8, Psalms 145:8.

These speak of chariots and those of horses, but we shall speak of the name of the Lord our God, Psalms 20:8, Jeremiah 9:23-24, 1 Corinthians 1:31, 2 Corinthians 10:17. For such is the God of ours forever and ever: he will lead us to death, Psalms 48:1-5. He is a blessed and a glorious God, 1 Timothy 6:15, Ephesians 1:17. And blessed is the people whose God is the Lord, Psalms 33:12

01.10. The Trinity of God.

10. The Trinity of God.

Richer and more vivid still than in its characteristics, the Eternal Being comes to us in the revelation of its triune existence. In the holy trinity, the Divine Being and every perfection in that Being, so to speak, first comes into its own, unfolds its richest content, receives its deepest meaning. Only then do we know who and what God is; only then, above all, do we understand who and what God is for the guilty and lost child of man, when we know and can confess Him as the Triune God of the covenant, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In dealing with ■ this part of our confession, a holy reverence and a childlike fear should be the mood of our mind more than ever. For Moses it was an awe-inspiring and unforgettable hour, when the Lord appeared to him in the desert, in a flame of fire, out of the midst of the bramble. When Moses saw the blazing fire from afar, which burned but did not consume, and wanted to rush towards it, the Lord stopped him and called out to him: Do not come any closer; take off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy land. And when Moses heard this, he was greatly afraid; he hid his face and feared to look upon the Lord, Exodus 3:1-6.

Such a holy fear is also fitting for us, when God reveals Himself to us in His Word as the Triune One. We must always remember that we are not dealing here with a doctrine about God, with a deductive concept of God, with some philosophical system about God. We are not dealing with a human proposal about God, which we or others have invented, and which we are now trying to dissect in detail and understand logically. But we are dealing with God Himself, the one and true God, who has revealed Himself in His Word, when He speaks of the Trinity. Just as He said to Moses: I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, Exodus 3:6, so He also reveals Himself to us in His Word and makes Himself known to us as Father, Son and Spirit. In this sense the Christian church has always accepted and confessed the revelation of God as the Triune. Just look at our Twelve Articles of Faith. The Christian does not say therein that he thinks this way and that about God. He does not give a conception of God, nor does he declare that he believes that God has such and such characteristics and that such and such exists. But he confesses: I believe in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, and in the Holy Spirit; I believe in the Triune God. And with this he expresses that God, the living and true God, God as Father, Son and Spirit, is the God of his trust, to whom he has surrendered himself completely, in whom he trusts with his whole heart; God is the God of his life and of his salvation. As Father, Son and Spirit, God has created him, saved him, sanctified him and glorified him. The Christian owes everything to Him. And it is his joy and consolation that he may believe in that God, trust in Him, expect everything from Him.

What the Christian furthermore confesses about God is not enumerated by him in some abstract terms, but described as a series of deeds, wrought by God from time immemorial and in the present and in the future. These are works, these are miracles, which constitute the Christian's confession; it is a long, broad, grand history, which he recounts in his confession; a history which

comprises the whole world, in its length and breadth, in its beginning and progress and end, in its origin, development and destination; from its creation to the end of the ages. The church's confession is a proclamation of God's great works.

All these works are many in number and characterized by great diversity. But they also form a strict unity; they are connected to each other, give each other hands, prepare each other and flow into each other. There is order and progress, development and ascension in them. It goes from creation through redemption to sanctification and glorification. The end point returns to the starting point and is at the same time a pinnacle, which is elevated above the point of beginning. The works of God form a circle that aims upwards in spiral form; they are a connection between the horizontal and the vertical line: they move simultaneously forwards and upwards. Of all these works, God is the artist and the builder, the origin and the final goal; from and through and to Him are all things. He is the Creator and the Rescuer and the Finisher of them all. The unity and diversity in the works of God proceed from and refer to the unity and diversity that exist in the Divine Being. That Being is one and unique and simple; and yet it is at the same time triune in its persons, in its manifestations, in its operations. The whole work of God is one unbroken whole, and yet it contains the richest variety. The church's confession covers the entire history of the world and includes all moments of creation and fall, of reconciliation and forgiveness, of renewal and restoration. It proceeds from God the triune and leads everything back to Him. That is why the Article of Faith of the Holy Trinity is the heart and core of our confession, the distinguishing mark of the Christian religion, the fame and the consolation of all true Christ-believers.

It has been the subject of battle and of spiritual wrangling throughout the ages. It is the precious jewel entrusted to the Christian church for preservation and defense.

If this confession of the Trinity of God occupies such a central place in the Christian faith, it is important to know on what basis it rests and from what source it has flowed to the church. There are not a few in our time who consider it the fruit of human reasoning and scholastic learning and therefore deem it of no value in religious life. They propose that the original Gospel, as proclaimed by Jesus, knew nothing of this doctrine of the Trinity of God, not only because of the word that later came to be used to designate this article of faith, but also because of the matter that this word sought to express. It was only when the original and simple Gospel of Jesus was brought into contact with Greek philosophy and falsified by it that the Christian church took hold of it. The Christian Church took the person of Christ according to his divine nature and also the Holy Spirit into the divine being, and came to a being, and came to a confession of three distinct persons in the one divine being. But the Christian church itself has always had a different idea about this. It did not see in the doctrine of the Trinity an invention of shrewd theologians, nor the product of Greek philosophy wedded to the Gospel, but a confession which was actually contained in the Gospel and in the whole Word of God, and which the Christian faith derived from the Revelation of God. To the question: Since there is only one divine being, why do you call the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? the Heidelberger Catechism gives this short and conclusive answer: Because God has revealed Himself in His Word, v.25. God's revelation is the solid ground on which this church confession rests; it is the principle from which this doctrine of the one, holy, universal, Christian church has grown and been built up. God has revealed Himself in this way; and He has revealed Himself in this way, as a triune God, because He exists in this way, and He exists in this way because He has revealed Himself in this way. The Trinity in God's revelation points back to

the Trinity in His existence. This revelation did not happen all at once; it was not brought about and completed in a single moment. But it has had a long historical course, and has extended over centuries. It began at creation, continued after the fall in the promises and acts of salvation to Israel, reached its culmination in the person and work of Christ, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the founding of the church; and it now stands firm throughout all ages and in the face of all opposition in the indestructible testimony of Scripture and in the rock-solid confession of the church. Because revelation has thus had a long history, the confession of God's Triune existence has also progressed and developed. God does not change by it and remains eternally the same, but in the progress of revelation He always makes Himself more clearly and wonderfully known to men and angels; with His revelation our knowledge increases. When God begins to reveal Himself in the days of the Old Covenant, then at the outset the unity of God is certainly at the forefront of that revelation. For through the sin of mankind the pure knowledge of God was lost; the truth, according to the profound word of Paul, was suppressed in unrighteousness; even that which is evident of God in His creatures was thwarted by deliberations and darkened by the illumination of the heart; mankind everywhere fell into idolatry and iconoclasm, Romans 1:18-23. That is why the revelation had to begin by putting God's unity in the foreground. It called out to mankind, as it were: the gods to whom you bow down are not the true God. There is only one true God, namely the God who created the heavens and the earth and all their host in the beginning, Genesis 1:1, Genesis 2:1, who made himself known to Abraham as God the Almighty, Genesis 17:1, Exodus 6:2,'who appeared to Moses as Jehovah, as the I am who I am, Exodus 3:14, and who, of his own free will, is the true God. Genesis 3:14, and who of free favour chose the people of Israel, called them and included them in his covenant, Exodus 19:4. The revelation thus had first of all the content: Jehovah alone is Elohim, the LORD alone is God, there is no other God but He, Deuteronomy 4:35, Deuteronomy 4:29, Deuteronomy 23:3-9, Joshua 22:22, Joshua 23:3-9, Joshua 22:22, 2 Samuel 22:32, 1Ki 18:39, Isaiah 45:5, Isaiah 45:18, Isaiah 45:21 etc.

Also for the people of Israel the revelation of the unity of God was urgently needed. For not only were they surrounded on all sides by Hebrew peoples, who continually tried to seduce them into apostasy and unfaithfulness to the Lord; but even in the Exile a large part of the people felt drawn to pagan idolatry and statuary and fell into it again and again, despite the prohibition of the Law and the warning of the prophets. That is why God Himself emphasized that He, the Lord, who now appeared to Moses and through Moses wanted to redeem His people, was the same God who had made Himself known to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as God the Almighty (Exodus 3:6, Exodus 3:15). When He gave His law to Israel, He wrote above it: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and He strictly forbade in the first and second commandment all idolatry and idolatry, Exodus 20:2-5. As the Lord our God is one and only Lord, Israel must love Him with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength, Deuteronomy 6:4-5. The Lord alone is Israel's God, and therefore they may serve Him alone.

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the unity of God is so strongly emphasized, and forms, as it were, the first article of Israel's constitution, with the progress of revelation in the fullness of the divine nature the diversity, in the unity of God the personal self-distinction comes to light. The name with which God is usually referred to in Hebrew already has some significance here. For this name, Elohim, is a plural form, and although it does not indicate the three persons in the divine being, as was often thought in the past, it does indicate, as a so-called intensive plural, the fullness

of life and power, which is present in God. Undoubtedly the plural form is also related to this, of which God sometimes makes use when speaking of Himself and through which He makes distinctions in Himself that carry a personal character, Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 3:22, Isaiah 6:8. Of more significance is the doctrine of the Old Testament, that God brings about all things in creation and maintenance by His Word and Spirit. He is not a man who, with great effort, creates something else out of an existing substance; but He brings all things into being out of nothingness, simply by speaking. In the first chapter of Genesis this is depicted in the most exalted manner, and elsewhere it is no less wonderfully expressed and sung -. God speaks and it is there, He commands and it is there, Psalms 33:9. He sends His word and melts the ices, Psalms 147:18. His voice is on the waters, makes the desert tremble, makes the mountains prance like a calf, and bares the forests, Psalms 29:3-10. In this exalted description of God's works there are two things - firstly, that God is the Almighty, that God alone by speaking brings all things into being, that his word is a commandment, Psalms 33:9, that his voice is with power, Psalms 29:4. But then, secondly, also that God does not accomplish all his works unconsciously and without thought, but with the greatest wisdom. The word that God speaks is power, but it is also the bearer of thought; He made the earth by His power, prepared the world by His wisdom, and expanded the heavens by His understanding, Jeremiah 10:12, Jeremiah 51:15. All his works are made with wisdom, the earth is full of his good works, Psalms 104:24. And that wisdom did not come to God from outside; but it was with Him from eternity, He possessed it as the principle of His way, before His works. And when He created the heavens, traced a circle over the surface of the earth, established the clouds from above, fixed the fountains of the earth, gave the sea its course and laid the foundations of the earth, then wisdom was already there, it was a fodder with Him, daily entertaining Him and always playing before Him, Proverbs 8:22-31, Job 28:20-28. God delighted in wisdom, by which He created the world.

Next to the word and wisdom, the Spirit of God acts as the mediator of creation. Just as God is Wisdom and at the same time has Wisdom, so that He can communicate it and show it off in His works; so He Himself is in His essence the Spirit, Deuteronomy 4:12, Deuteronomy 4:15, and has the Spirit, through which He can dwell in the world and be present in it at all times, Psalms 139:7. Without anyone having been his counsel, the Lord has produced everything by his own Spirit, Isaiah 40:13 f. That Spirit hovered over the waters at the beginning, Genesis 1:2, and remains active in all created things. By that Spirit God adorns the heavens, Job 26:13, renews the face of the earth, Psalms 104:30, makes man alive, Job 33:4, maintains the breath in his nostrils, Job 27:3, gives him understanding and wisdom, Job 32:8, and also makes the grass wither and the flower fall off, Isaiah 40:7. In a word: by the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the Spirit of His mouth all their host, Psalms 33:6. This self-distinction of God is even more richly expressed in the works of re-creation. Then it is not Elohim, but Jehovah, not God in general, but the Lord, the God of the covenant, who reveals Himself and makes Himself known in miracles of redemption and salvation; as such He does not save and lead His people solely by the word that He speaks to them or has them speak to Him, but He also sends them the Angel of the covenant (the Angel of the Lord), who already appeared in the history of the patriarchs, with Hagar, Genesis 16:6 ff, Abraham, Genesis 18:1-33 ff, and the Holy Spirit. Abraham, Genesis 18:1-33 ff, and Jacob, Genesis 28:1-22/Genesis 13:1-18 ff, but especially in the deliverance of Israel from the house of Egypt He reveals His grace and power, Exodus 3:2, Exodus 13:21, Exodus 14:19, Exodus 23:20-23, Exodus 32:34, Exodus 33:2, Numbers 20:16. This Angel of the Lord is not on a par with

the created angels, but' is a special revelation and appearance of God. On the one hand he is clearly distinguished from God, who speaks of him as his angel, and on the other hand he is one with God himself in name, in power, in salvation and blessing, in worship and honor. He is called the God of appearance, Genesis 16:13, the God of Bethel, Genesis 31:13, alternates with God or the Lord Himself, Genesis 32:28, Genesis 32:30, Exodus 3:2, Exodus 3:4, carries the name of the Lord in his heart, Exodus 23:21, delivers Israel from all evil, Genesis 48:16, rescues Israel from the hand of the Egyptians, Exodus 3:8, cleaves the waters from the earth, and is the God of the Lord. Exodus 3:8, cleaves the waters and dries up the sea, Exodus 14:21, guards the people of God on the way, brings them safely to Canaan, makes them triumph over their enemies, Exodus 3:8, Exodus 23:20, must be obeyed completely as God Himself, Exodus 23:20, and always keeps himself in order around those who fear the Lord, Psalms 34:8, Psalms 35:5. And just as Jehovah, in the re-creation, carries out his redeeming work through the Angel of the Covenant, so, through his Spirit, he dispenses all kinds of gifts and powers to his people. In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God is the source of all life, salvation and ability. He gives courage and strength to the judges, Othniel, Richt. 3 :10, Gideon, Richt. 6 : 34, Jephta, Richt. 11 :29, Samson, Richt. 14:6, 15:14; skill to those who fashioned the garments of the priests, and the tabernacle and temple, Exodus 28:3, Exodus 31:3-5, Exodus 35:31-35, 1 Chronicles 28:12; understanding and wisdom to the judges who, with Moses, bore the burden of the people, Numbers 11:17, Numbers 11:25; the gift of prophecy to the prophets, Numbers 11:25, Numbers 11:29, Numbers 24:2-3, Micah 3:8, etc.; and the gift of the Holy Spirit to the righteous, renewal and sanctification and guidance to all God's children, Psalms 51:13, Psalms 143:10. In a word: the Word, the promise, the covenant, which the Lord made with Israel at the exodus from Egypt, and the Spirit, which He gave to Israel, existed throughout all ages and still existed after the Exile in the days of Zerubbabel in the midst of the people, so that they did not need to fear, Haggai 2:5-6. When the Lord brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, then He became to him a He-land. And this disposition of God towards His people was manifested in the fact that in all their distress He Himself was distressed (the suffering of his people as his own suffering); that he therefore He sent them the angel of His face to save them; that He redeemed them by His own hand.

He redeemed them by His love and mercy, and took them up and carried them throughout all the days of old; and that He also gave them the Spirit of His holiness to guide them in the ways of the Lord, Isaiah 63:9-12. The Lord in the days of the Old Covenant the Lord, through the High Priest, laid His threefold blessing upon the people of Israel, the blessing of the guardianship, of mercy and of the peace of the Lord, Numbers 6:24-26.

Thus already in the history of God's leadership with Israel, and more and more clearly, the threefold distinction in the divine nature and works comes to the fore. But the Old Testament also contains the promise that a higher and richer revelation will follow in the future. Israel rejected the Word of God and blasphemed His Holy Spirit, Isaiah 63:10, Psalms 119:130. The revelation of God in the Angel of the Covenant and in the Spirit of the Lord proved to be insufficient; if God wanted to confirm His covenant and fulfil His promise, another, higher revelation was needed. And this was announced by the prophets. In the future, in the last days, the Lord will raise up from among Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord will put into his mouth, Deuteronomy 18:18; a priest, who shall be a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchizedek, Psalms 110:4; a king, of the house of David, 2 Samuel 7:12-16; a child of the hewn tree of Isai, Isaiah 11:1; a son, who

shall reign as king and shall do justice in the earth, Isaiah 23:5. He will be a human being, the son of a woman, Jeremiah 7:14, without form or glory, Isaiah 53:2 f.; but at the same time he will be Immanuel, Isaiah 7:14, the Lord our righteousness, Isaiah 33:16, the Angel of the covenant, Malachi 3:1, the Lord Himself, who appears to His people, Psalms 45:8, Psalms 110:1, Hosea 1:7, Malachi 3:1, bearing the name of Wonderful, Counselor, Strong God, Father of eternity, Prince of Peace, Isaiah 9:5. And this appearance of the servant of the Lord will be followed by a richer dispensation of the Holy Spirit. In an extraordinary measure this Spirit, as the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, of counsel and of strength, of the knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, will rest upon the Messiah, Isaiah 11:2, Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 61:1; but then, moreover, it will be poured out upon all flesh, upon your sons and daughters, your old and young people, your servants and maids, Joel 2:28-29, Isaiah 32:15, Isaiah 44:3, Ezekiel 36:26-27, Zechariah 2:10, and He will give all a new heart and a new spirit, that they may walk in His statutes and keep and do His rights, Ezekiel 11:19-20, Ezekiel 36:26-27, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Jeremiah 32:38-41.

Thus the Old Testament itself indicates that the full revelation of God will be in the revelation of His triune nature. This promise and prediction is fulfilled in the New Testament. Here, too, the unity of God is the starting point of all revelation, John 17:3, 1 Corinthians 8:4, 1 Timothy 2:5. But out of this unity the diversity in the divine nature now emerges much more clearly; first of all in the great salvific events of the conception of the flesh, the fulfilment and the outpouring, and then also in the teaching of Jesus and his Apostles. The work of salvation is one whole, a work of God from beginning to end. But it still has three main moments: election, forgiveness, and renewal, and in these it points back to a threefold cause in the divine nature, to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The conception of Christ already shows us a threefold activity of God. While the Father gives the Son to the world, John 3:16, and the Son Himself descends from heaven, John 6:38, He is received in Mary by the Holy Spirit, Matthew 1:20, Luke 1:35. At His baptism Jesus is anointed with the Holy Spirit and openly declared by the Father to be His beloved Son, in whom He has all His good pleasure, Matthew 3:16-17, Matthew 12:28. The resurrection is a resurrection by the Father, Acts 2:24, and at the same time Jesus' own act, through which He is powerfully proved to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of sanctification, Romans 1:3. And after his resurrection he ascended into heaven on the fortieth day in the Spirit which quickened him, and made himself subject to the angels, powers and forces, 1 Peter 3:19, 1 Peter 3:22. The teaching of Jesus and the Apostles is consistent with this.

Jesus came to earth to declare the Father and to make His name known to mankind, John 1:18, John 17:6. The Father's name for God as Creator of all things was also used by pagans and has support in this sense in Scripture, Luke 3:38, Acts 17:28, Ephesians 3:15, Hebrews 12:9. Moreover, the Old Testament repeatedly refers to God as Father in His (theocratic) relationship with Israel, because He created and preserved it by His wonderful power, Deuteronomy 32:6, Isaiah 63:16. But in the New Testament a new, glorious light is shed on this Father Name of God. Jesus always makes an essential distinction between the relationship between Himself and others, the Jews or the disciples, to the Father. When, for example, He puts the Lord's Prayer on the lips of His disciples at their request, He says explicitly: when you pray, speak thus, Luke 11:2; and when, after the Resurrection, He announces His imminent ascension to Mary Magdalene, He says: I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God, John 20:17. He knows and loves the Son in such a way and to such an extent that only the Son knows and loves the Father,

Matthew 11:27, Mark. With the Apostles God is therefore always called in a special sense the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Ephesians 1:3. This relationship between Father and Son (Christ) did not begin in time, but is eternal, John 1:1, John 1:14, John 17:24. God is therefore Father in the first place, because He is Father to the Son in a completely unique sense; this fatherhood is His original, special, personal quality. In a derived sense, God is also called Father of all creatures, because He is their Creator and Sustainer, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Ephesians 3:15, Hebrews 12:9, of Israel, because it is the work of His hands through election and calling, Deuteronomy 32:6, Isaiah 64:8, and of the church and all believers, because the love of the Father for the Son passes to them through Christ, John 16:27, John 17:25, and they are adopted as His children and born of Him by the Spirit, John 1:12, Romans 8:15.

Thus the Father is always the Father, the first person from whom the initiative emanates in the essence of God, in the counsel of God, and in all outward works, in creation and maintenance, redemption and sanctification. He gave the Son to have life in himself, John 5:26, and makes the Spirit proceed from him, John 15:26. His is the intention, the election and the good pleasure, Matthew 11:26, Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 1:9, Ephesians 1:11. In a special sense He has power and strength and glory, Matthew 6:13.

He especially bears the name of God, in distinction to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 8:6, 2 Corinthians 13:13. Yes, Christ Himself as Mediator calls Him not only His Father, but also His God, Matthew 27:46, John 20:17, and is Himself called the Christ of God, Luke 9:20, 1 Corinthians 3:23, Revelation 12:10. In a word, the first person in the Divine Being is the Father, because from Him are all things, 1 Corinthians 8:6.

If God is Father, this implies that there is also a Son, who received life from Him and shares in His love. Now the name of son of God was already in the Old Testament for the angels, Job. 38 : 7, for the people of Israel, Deuteronomy 1:31, Deuteronomy 8:5, Deuteronomy 14:1, Deuteronomy 32:6, Deuteronomy 32:18, Hosea 11:1, and especially also for the theocratic king, 2 Samuel 7:11-14, Psalms 2:7, in use. But in the New Testament this name acquires a much deeper meaning. For Christ is Son of God in a completely unique sense; He is exalted above angels and prophets, Matthew 13:32, Matthew 21:27, Matthew 22:2, and He Himself says that no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, Matthew 11:27. In distinction to angels and men He is the own Son, Romans 8:32, the beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased, Matthew 3:17, the one-born Son, John 1:18, whom the Father gave to have life in Himself, John 5:26. This wholly unique relationship between Father and Son did not arise in time, through the supernatural reception from the Holy Spirit, or through the anointing at baptism, or through the resurrection and ascension, as many have claimed, but it exists from all eternity. After all, the Son, who assumed human nature in Christ, existed as the Word in the beginning with God, John 1:1, was then already in the form of God, Php 2:6, richly and gloriously clothed, John 17:5, John 17:24, the reflection of God’s glory and the expressed image of his independence, Hebrews 1:3, and therefore in the fullness of time could he be sent, given, brought into the world, John 3:16, Galatians 4:4, Hebrews 1:6. Hence also creation, John 1:3, Colossians 1:15, and maintenance, Hebrews 1:3, and the acquisition of all salvation, 1 Corinthians 1:30, are ascribed to Him. He is not, as the creatures, made or created, but is the first-born of all creatures, that is, the Son, who has the preeminence and the rights of the first-born over all creatures, Colossians 1:15. Just as He is the firstborn from the dead, the firstborn among many brothers, and therefore the first among all

and in all, Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:18. Although, therefore, in the fullness of time He took on the form of a servant, He was nevertheless in the form of God; and He is in all things like unto God the Father, Php 2:6, in life, John 5:26, in knowledge, Matthew 11:27, in power, John 1:3, John 5:21, John 5:26, in honor, John 5:23. He himself is God, above all things to be praised for ever, John 1:1, John 20:28, Romans 9:5, Hebrews 1:8-9. As all things are of the Father, so are they all through the Son, 1 Corinthians 8:6.

Both, Father and Son, are united and joined together in the Holy Spirit, and through him dwell in all creatures. God is Spirit according to his nature, John 4:24, and also holy, Isaiah 6:3; but the Holy Spirit is clearly distinguished from God as Spirit. Just as man, according to his invisible side, is spirit and also has a spirit by which he knows himself, so God himself is Spirit according to his being and also has a Spirit who explores the depths of that being, 1 Corinthians 2:11. As such it is called the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit, Psalms 51:13, Isaiah 63:10-11, in distinction to the spirit of an angel or a human being or any other creature. But although separated from God, from the Father and the Son, He nevertheless has the most intimate fellowship with both. He is called the breath of the Almighty, Job 33:4, the Spirit of His mouth, Psalms 33:6, is sent by the Father and the Son, John 14:26, John 15:26, and proceeds from both; not only from the Father, John 15:26, but also from the Son, for He is called the Spirit of Christ or the Spirit of the Son as well as the Spirit of the Father, Romans 8:9.

Because the Holy Spirit is given or sent, poured out or tortured out of the Father and the Son in this way, He is often seen as a power or a gift which equips people for their calling and ministry; thus, for example, the Holy Spirit in Acts 8:15, Acts 10:44, Acts 11:15, Acts 19:2, comes to mind as the gift of glossolalia or prophecy. But many people wrongly deduce from this that the Holy Spirit is nothing but a gift or power of God. Because elsewhere He clearly appears as a person, who bears personal names, has personal qualities and does personal works. Thus in John 15:26 and John 16:13-14, although the Greek word for Spirit is neuter, Christ uses a masculine pronoun: He will testify of me and glorify me; and in the same place he also calls him by the name of Comforter and other Comforter, that is, the same name that is used for Christ in 1 John 2:1 and which has been translated in Dutch as Voorspraak.

Besides these personal names, all kinds of personal characteristics are also attributed to the Holy Spirit, such as selfhood, Acts 13:2, self-consciousness, Acts 15:28, self-determination or will, 1 Corinthians 12:11, and all kinds of personal activities, such as investigating, 1 Corinthians 2:11, hearing, John 16:13, speaking, Revelation 2:7, teaching, John 14:26, praying, Romans 8:27, etc. While all this is most clearly and magnificently expressed in the fact that He is placed on the same level with the Father and the Son, who are undoubtedly persons, Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:13.

This, however, already contains more, and points to the fact that the Holy Spirit is not only a person, but also truly God. And also in this respect the Scriptures offer all those data which are necessary for this important confession. One only has to note that, in spite of the above-mentioned distinction between God and his Spirit, the two are constantly alternating in Scripture, so that it is absolutely the same whether God or his Spirit says or does something. In Acts 5:3-4 lying to the Spirit is called lying to God; in 1 Corinthians 3:16 the believers are called the Temple of God, because the Spirit of God dwells in them. In addition, various divine attributes, such as eternity,

Hebrews 9:14, omnipresence, Psalms 139:7, omniscience, 1 Corinthians 2:11, omnipotence, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, and also various divine works in creation, Psalms 33:6, maintenance, Psalms 104:30, and re-creation, John 3:3, are attributed to the Holy Spirit as much as to the Father and the Son. And with them He shares the same honour; He occupies a place next to the Father and the Son as the cause of salvation, 2 Corinthians 13:13, Revelation 1:4. In His name we are baptized, Matthew 28:19, and blessed, 2 Corinthians 13:13. And blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is even an unforgivable sin, Matthew 12:31-32. While all things are of the Father and through the Son, they all exist and rest in the Holy Spirit.

All these elements of the doctrine of Trinity, which are spread throughout Scripture, are summarized by Jesus in his baptismal commission and by the Apostles in their benediction. After his Resurrection and before his Ascension, Christ commands his Apostles to go and make disciples of all nations and to baptize them in the one name, in which, nevertheless, three different subjects have been revealed. Father, Son and Spirit are in their unity and distinction the complete revelation of God. And likewise, according to the Apostles, all salvation and blessedness for mankind lies in the love of the Father, the grace of the Son and the communion of the Holy Spirit, 2 Corinthians 13:13, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 John 5:4-6, Revelation 1:4-6. The pleasure, foreknowledge, power, love, kingdom and strength is the Fathers. The Mediatorship, the atonement, the grace, the redemption is the Son. The regeneration, the renewal, the sanctification, the communion is of the Spirit. The relationship of Christ to the Father is fully matched by the relationship of the Holy Spirit to Christ. Just as the Son speaks and does nothing of himself, but receives everything from the Father (John 5:26, John 16:15, so the Holy Spirit receives everything from Christ, John 16:13-14. As the Son testifies of the Father and glorifies the Father, John 1:18; John 17:4, John 17:6, so the Holy Spirit testifies of the Son and glorifies Him, John 15:26, John 16:14. Just as no one comes to the Father except through the Son, John 14:6, so no one can say that Jesus is Lord except through the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:3. Through the Spirit we have fellowship with the Father and the Son Himself. In the Holy Spirit, God Himself dwells in our hearts through Christ. If all this is so, then the Holy Spirit with the Son and the Father is the only true God, eternally to be praised. The Christian church has said yes and amen to this teaching of Scripture in her confession of the Trinity of God. It has not come to this rich and glorious confession without a long and fearful spiritual struggle. For centuries, the deepest experience of the spiritual life of God’s children and the boldest thinking of the Church’s fathers and teachers have been working hard to fully understand the revelation of the Holy Scriptures on this point and to reproduce it purely in the confession. And the church would undoubtedly not have succeeded in this fundamental work, nor would it have achieved any good results, if it had not been led by the Holy Spirit into the truth, and had not received in Tertullian and Irenaeus, Athanasius and the three Cappadocian monks, Augustine and Hilarius and so many others those men who, equipped with extraordinary gifts of Godliness and wisdom, had directed their steps along the pure path.

Nothing less than the very essence of Christianity was at stake in this battle of minds. And from two sides the congregation was exposed to the danger of being torn away from the solid foundation upon which it had been built and of itself being swallowed up by the world. On the one side was the direction of Arianism, so named after an Alexandrian presbyter Arius, who died in 336. He held the Father to be the only true and eternal God, because in the full sense He was unregenerate; but with regard to the Son, the Logos, who had become flesh in Christ, he taught

that, because He had been generated, He could not be God, but was a creature, who, although before all other creatures, was like them brought forth from nothing and by the will of God; likewise with regard to the Holy Spirit, He was thought to be a creature, or only a power or gift of God. On the other side was the party of Sabellianism, thus named after a certain Sabellius, who lived in Rome at the beginning of the third century. He considered the Father, Son and Spirit to be three names of one and the same God, who, as his revelation progressed, had successively made himself known in various forms and guises(1). In the form of the Father, God first worked as Creator and Lawgiver; then He worked in the form of the Son as Redeemer, and now He works in the form of the Holy Spirit as the Redeemer of the church.

While Arianism seeks to maintain the unity of God by placing the Son and the Spirit outside the Divine Being and reducing them to mere creatures, Sabellianism seeks to achieve the same goal by robbing the three persons of their independence and transforming them into three successive manifestations of the same Divine Being. In the first direction, the Jewish, deistic, rationalistic way of thinking is expressed; in the second direction, the ideas of Pagan pantheism (algodism) and mysticism are expressed. As soon as the church began to consider with some clarity the truth which later was laid down in the profession of the Trinity, these directions emerged on the left and right of it, and they continue to accompany it to this day. The congregation and each of its members must always be on the alert, on the one hand not to give short shrift to the one essence of God, and on the other hand not to the three persons in that divine essence. Neither unity nor diversity should be sacrificed to unity. To maintain both in their indissoluble connection and in their pure relationship, not only theologically in thought but also practically in life, is the vocation of all believers. In order to meet this calling, the Christian Church and theologians have begun to make use of various words and expressions which do not occur literally in Scripture. They have begun to speak of the one essence of God, and of three persons or modes of functioning in that essence; of trinity and triplicity; of essential and personal characteristics; of the eternal generation of the Son and of the descent of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, etc.

There is no reason why the Church and theology should not use such words and expressions. For the Holy Scriptures were not given by God to the congregation simply to imitate them, but to experience them in all their fullness and richness, to absorb them into our consciousness and reproduce them in our own language, so that we may proclaim the great works of God. Moreover, such terms and expressions are necessary to maintain the truth of Scripture against its opponents and to safeguard it against all misunderstanding and error. History has shown throughout the centuries that lightly rejecting and dismissing these names and ways of speaking leads to various deviations in the confession.

Yet on the other hand, when using these names, we must always remember that they are of human origin, limited, imperfect, fallible. The Fathers of the Church have always recognized this; they said, for example, of the word persons, by means of which the three modes of existence in the Divine Being are indicated, that this word did not express the matter in an equivalent way but served as an auxiliary to maintain the truth and to cut off error. This word was chosen, not because it was correct in all respects, but because no other and better one could be found. So here again the word remains far behind the thought, and the thought again far behind the matter. Although we cannot keep the matter except in its imperfect form, we must never forget that it is not the word that matters in the first place, but the matter. In the dispensation of glory other and better

names will certainly be put on our lips. The matter itself, what the confession of the holy trinity is about, is of the greatest importance, for mind and heart both. For by that confession the congregation upholds in the first place both the unity and the diversity of the essence of God. The Divine Being is one; there is only one Being, who is God and who may be called God. In creation and re-creation, in nature and grace, in church and world, in state and society, everywhere and always we have to do with the one, identical, living, true God. The unity of the world, the unity of humanity, the unity of truth, of virtue, of justice and of beauty, depends on the unity of God. As soon as this unity of God is denied or weakened, the door is open to polytheism. But this unity of God, according to the revelation of Scripture and the experience of the congregation, is not a subtle, empty unity, but a fullness of life and power. It includes diversity. And this diversity is expressed in the three persons or modes of existence of the Divine Being. These three persons are not merely forms of manifestation, but modes of existence in the Being of God. Father, Son and Spirit share the same divine nature and attributes; they are one being. But they each have their own name; they each have a special quality which distinguishes them from one another: the Father alone is the father, the Son the generation, and the Holy Spirit the output of both. The order of the three persons in all divine works corresponds to this order of existence in the Divine Being. It is the Father, from whom; it is the Son, through whom; and it is the Spirit, in whom all things are. From the Father, through the Son and the Spirit, all things originate in creation and re-creation; and in the Spirit and through the Son, they all return to Him. So we thank the Father especially for His electing love; the Son for His redeeming grace; the Holy Spirit for His regenerating and renewing power.

Secondly, with this confession the congregation is strongly opposed to the errors of deism (belief in one God without revelation), pantheism (idolatry), Judaism and paganism. There is always a twofold tendency in the human heart: a tendency to think of God as being far away and to detach oneself from God with the whole world, and also a tendency to draw God into the world, to identify Himself with the world and thus to deify oneself with the world. If the first tendency dominates in us, we are led to believe that in nature, in our profession, in our business, in our science, in our art or in the work of salvation, we can spare God and save ourselves. If, on the other hand, the second inclination is the strongest in our hearts, we change the glory of God into the image of some creature, we deify the world, the sun, the moon and the stars, or art, science and the state, and in the creature, in the creation of ourselves, we often pray for our own greatness. There God is only from afar, here only close by. There He is above, outside, separate from the world; here He is alone inside and united with the world. But the church confesses both: God is above the world, distinct from it in essence, and yet with his whole being in it at the present time and nowhere, in no point of space and for no moment of time separated from it. He is both distant and near; highly exalted and at the same time deeply ingrained in all His creatures. He is our Creator, who, distinct from his being, brought us forth by his will. He is our Redeemer, who saves us, not by our works, but by the riches of His grace. He is our Sanctifier, who dwells in us as in His temple. As a triune God He is a God above, and for and in us.

Finally, thirdly, this confession of the congregation is also of the utmost importance for the spiritual life. It is sometimes claimed, quite wrongly, that the doctrine of the Trinity is only a philosophically derived dogma and has no value for religion or life. The Dutch Confession of Faith saw it quite differently; it expressed it in Article IX: that God is one in Being and three in persons, all this we

know, as well as from the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures, as from their effects, and especially from the one we feel in ourselves. It is true that we do not ground our belief in the Trinity on feeling and experience; but if we believe it, we perceive that it is closely related to the spiritual experience of God's children. For believers learn to know within themselves the workings of the Father, the Creator of all things, who also gave them life and breath and all things. They come to know Him as the Lawgiver, who gave His holy commandments so that they might walk in them. They came to know Him as the Judge, who takes terrible pleasure in all the iniquity of mankind and never holds the guilty guiltless. And finally they get to know Him as the Father, who for Christ's sake is their God and their Father, in Whom they trust in such a way that they do not doubt that He will take care of all their bodily and soully needs, and also turn all the evil that He grants them in this vale of woe to their best advantage; because He can do this as an all-powerful God and also wants to do this as a faithful Father. And so they confess: I believe in God, the Father, the Almighty, Creator of the heavens and the earth.

Thus they also learn to know within themselves the workings of the Son, who is the only begotten of the Father and who was received in Mary by the Holy Spirit. They are learning to know Him as their highest Prophet and Teacher, who has completely revealed to them God's hidden counsel and will for their salvation. They have come to know him as their only High Priest, who redeemed them with the only sacrifice of his body and who always intercedes for them with his intercession with the Father. They get to know Him as their eternal King, who rules them with His Word and Spirit and protects and preserves them in their acquired redemption. And so they confess: I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, our Lord.

They also get to know the workings of the Holy Spirit, who resurrects them and leads them into all truth. They are learning to know Him as the Employer of their faith, who through that faith makes them partakers of Christ and all His benefits. They come to know him as the Comforter, who prays in them with unspeakable sighs and testifies with their spirit that they are the children of God. They get to know Him as the pledge of their eternal inheritance, which keeps them safe until the day of redemption. And they confess: I also believe in the Holy Spirit.

Thus the confession of the Trinity is the core and the main element of the entire Christian religion. Without it, neither creation, nor redemption, nor sanctification can be purely maintained.

Any deviation in this confession leads to an error in the other doctrines, just as, conversely, any misrepresentation of these articles of faith leads to a misunderstanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. We can then only proclaim God's great works truthfully, when we acknowledge and confess them as the one great work of the Father, Son and Spirit. In the love of the Father, the grace of the Son and the communion of the Holy Spirit lie all the salvation and blessedness of mankind.

01.11. Creation and Providence.

11. Creation and Providence. The practical significance of the doctrine of the Trinity for the life of the Christian makes it beyond all doubt that Scripture does not wish to give us a deductive concept of God, but to bring us all personally into contact and fellowship with the living and true God Himself. It breaks down our ideas and concepts and leads us back to God Himself. And that is why it does not speak about God, but lets us see Him and shows Him in all the works of His hands. Lift up your eyes and see who created all these things. From among the creatures His unseen things, His eternal power and Divinity, are thought to be seen from the beginning. Not without His works, by reflection and reasoning, but from His works in nature and grace, God is known and glorified. That is why Scripture constantly points out to us the great works of God. It is both a description and a song of praise of the works of God. Precisely because it wants us to know the living, true God, it mentions His mighty deeds on almost every page. As the living God, He is also the working God; He cannot but work, He is always working, John 5:17; for all life, and therefore especially the perfect, infinite life of God, is power, energy, activity. According as the Maker is, His work is. As God is the Maker, the Creator of all things, His works are great and victorious, Psalms 92:6, Psalms 139:14, Revelation 15:3; true and faithful, Psalms 33:4, Psalms 111:7; just and merciful, Psalms 145:17, Daniel 9:14. These works include the creation and maintenance of all things, the heavens and the earth, mankind and his people, the miracles performed on Israel and the works which he accomplishes through his servant, Genesis 2:2-3, Exodus 34:10, Job 34:19, Isaiah 19:25, John 9:4 etc. And all these works praise him, they praise him for his work. And all these works praise Him, Psalms 145:10; yes the Lord rejoices in them, Psalms 104:31. He is the rock, whose work is complete, Deuteronomy 32:4.

All these works, by the way, are not thoughtlessly and forcibly brought about by God either, but at the most consciously and freely. This is already evident from the fact that He creates, maintains and governs everything through His Word. Speaking, commanding, He brings things into being, Psalms 33:9. Without the Word, which in the beginning was with God and was God Himself, not even a single thing was made that was made, John 3:13. In Job 28:20 ff. and Proverbs 8:22 ff. it is thus presented that God, having created the world, first consulted it with wisdom, viewed it and searched through it, so that now everything is made with wisdom, Psalms 104:24, Jeremiah 10:12. The same idea is expressed elsewhere in Scripture, that God brings about everything according to His counsel. Only here it is more clearly and powerfully expressed that all God’s works, in creation and re-creation, are not only a revelation of His thought, but also a product of His will. That is why, in human terms, all God’s work is preceded by a deliberation of the mind and a decision of the will. Therefore the name of the counsel of the Lord, as it appears for example in Psalms 33:11, Proverbs 19:21, Isaiah 46:10, Acts 2:23, changes elsewhere with that of decision, Genesis 41:32, Psalms 2:7, Isaiah 10:23, Isaiah 14:27, intention, Jeremiah 51:12, Romans 8:28, Romans 9:11, Ephesians 1:11, Ephesians 3:11, 2 Timothy 1:9, predestination, Acts 10:42, Acts 13:48,Isaiah 60:1, Isaiah 61:2, Matthew 11:26, Acts 17:31, Romans 8:29-30, Ephesians 1:5, Ephesians 1:11, pleasure, Isaiah 49:8, Isaiah 53:10 Isaiah 60:10, Isaiah 61:2, Matthew 11:26, Ephesians 1:5,

Ephesians 1:9, and Paul speaks of the counsel and pleasure of God's will, Ephesians 1:5, Ephesians 1:11. Of this counsel of God the Scriptures further teach that it is great and victorious, Isaiah 28:29, Jeremiah 32:19, independent, Matthew 11:26, indestructible, Hebrews 6:17, indestructible, Isaiah 46:10, and that it has authority over all things, Ephesians 1:11, even, for example, over the crime of the unrighteous to hang Christ on the cross and kill him, Acts 2:23, Acts 4:28. Because things and events, even the sinful thoughts and deeds of men, are eternally known and determined in the council of God, they are not robbed of their character, but on the contrary all determined and safeguarded in their own nature and nature, in their context and circumstances. Sin and punishment, freedom and responsibility, a sense of duty and conscience, law and justice, are all contained in the council of God. Everything that is and is done, is mutually related in the counsel of the Lord, precisely in the same way in which it appears to our eyes in reality. The conditions are determined in it as well as the effects, the means as well as the ends, the ways as well as the results, the prayers as well as the hearings, the pleasure as well as the justification, the sanctification as well as the glorification. According to this counsel God gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Thus understood, in the sense of the Holy Scriptures and according to the understanding of the Spirit, the confession of the ever-wise counsel of the Lord is a source of rich consolation. For by it we know that no blind chance, no dark fate, no unreasonable and unholy will, no unavoidable force of nature governs the world and mankind, but that the government over all things rests in the hands of an all-powerful God and a merciful Father. Certainly faith is needed to understand this. For we often do not see it, and man walks around on this earth in mystery; but that faith nevertheless keeps us standing in the struggle of life and makes us face the future with confidence and hope. For the ever-wise counsel of the Lord endures forever, has everlasting power. The creation of the world was the beginning of the execution of this counsel of God. As Scripture alone makes us know the counsel of God, so it is also alone that discovers the origin of all things and speaks of God's creative omnipotence. The question of where everything comes from, man and beast and plant and the whole world, is an old one, but it will always remain on the order of the day. Because science has no answer to it. It is itself a creature and has arisen in time; it stands on the basis of the things created and presupposes the existence of the things it researches; and it can therefore, by its very nature, never go back to the time before things existed and never penetrate to the moment when they received their existence.

Experience, empirical research, tells us nothing about the origin of things. But even the thinking of philosophy has searched in vain for an explanation of the world throughout the ages. Tired of pondering, one has often finally resigned oneself to the idea that the world had no origin, but existed eternally and will exist eternally. This idea was then worked out by the philosophers in different directions.

Only a few have believed that this world, as we now know it, was eternal and would also continue to exist forever. This idea, however, meets with so many objections that it has been generally abandoned today. On the other hand there is the idea of evolution or development, according to which nothing is, but everything becomes and the whole universe with everything in it is in a never beginning and never ending process.

Now development is a wonderful thing, but it always presupposes something that develops and carries the germ of development within it. Development, of course, is not and cannot be a creative power which causes things and produces them, but at most it is an expression of the process which things go through once they are there. The theory of evolution is thus unable to explain the origin of things; it implicitly assumes that these things existed eternally in their undeveloped state. It starts with an assumption which is completely unprovable and thus rests as much on faith as the doctrine of the creation of all things by the hand of God. But the theory of evolution is not finished with this rather arbitrary assumption. It may say that things existed eternally in an undeveloped form; but it must then give some account of the original condition in which things existed and from which the present world has then been formed. There are now two answers to this question, depending on the school of thought in which one is moving. In the world we observe two groups or series of phenomena, which we commonly refer to as spirit and matter, soul and body, things unseen and things seen, psychic and physical phenomena. But this duality is not satisfactory; today we want to be monistic and derive everything from one principle. And so, naturally, one can go in two directions. On the one hand, one can say: matter was the first, it is eternal, and it has always had force as a property. That is the direction of materialism, (the doctrine of the material) which holds matter to be eternal, the original unchanging element of the world, and now seeks to explain the force out of matter, the soul out of the body, the psychological phenomena out of the physical. But one can also stand on the other side and say: no, force was the first and is and remains the basis of all that exists, and matter is a revelation, an appearance, of that force; the body does not create the soul, but the soul the body. This is the direction of pantheism, which holds the force to be eternal, the fundamental principle of all things, and from this force tries to derive the present world. This original force, present in all the world, is called by pantheism by all kinds of wonderful names: spirit, reason, will, etc. But it thinks of something quite different. But it thinks here of something quite different from what is usually understood by these names. It does not think of a personal God, who has intellect and wisdom, reason and will, but it regards that eternal power, even if it calls it spirit or reason or will, as an unconscious, reasonless and will-less urge which only in the course of man’s process lifts itself into consciousness, reason and will. This eternal force is not spirit, but is only called such because it can become spirit in the course of its development. In both directions, materialism (the doctrine of the material) and pantheism (al-Goddism), at the beginning of the development of the world, there is therefore a principle which is presented either more as matter or more as force, but of which in either case one cannot form a clear conception. It is much less something positive than something negative. It is not actually something definite, but only contains the possibility of becoming everything. It is not an entity, but only an incomprehensible thing that can be anything, an absolute potential (an infinite possibility), a deified thought-derivative; in the main, a substitute for the one true God, inventing something on which scientific man puts his trust to explain the world, but to which as little reality is ascribed as to the gods of the nations. The Scriptures take an entirely different course. What it says about the origin of things it does not offer us as the fruit of scientific research or for the sake of a philosophical explanation of the world, but so that by it we may know the one true God and place our trust in Him alone. It does not come from the world, but from God. Not the world, but God is eternal. Before the mountains were born and the earth and the world were created, yes from eternity to eternity He was and is God, Psalms 90:2. He is Jehovah, who is and was and shall be, exalted above all things, a fullness of unchangeable. And in distinction from Him the world has

become, eu ever becoming. That which the Scriptures guard against in the first place is the mixing of God with His creatures. It cuts off at the root all unbelief, but also all idolatry and superstition. God and the world, as Creator and creature, are essentially separate from one another. As a creature, the whole world has its origin in God alone. There is no substance and no eternal power apart from God, but heaven and earth and all things are called into being by Him. The Holy Scriptures express this with the word create. In a wider sense she uses this word also for the works of maintenance, Psalms 104:30, Isaiah 45:7. But in a narrow sense it means that God has brought all things out of nothing. It is true that the expression that God created all things out of nothing does not occur in Scripture, but only in the second book of the 2Ma 7:28; and this term can also give rise to misunderstanding. For nothingness is not and cannot be the principle or origin from which things have come; for out of nothing nothing can nothing become. On the other hand, Scripture says that the world was brought into being by the will of God, Revelation 4:11, and that the things which are seen were not made from things which appear before our eyes, Hebrews 11:3. But still the expression: out of nothing, can be understood in a good sense, and also be of great service against all sorts of errors, as if the world were formed out of some substance or force which eternally existed beside God. According to Scripture, God is not merely the Former, but also the Creator of the world. Humanly speaking, He existed first alone and then the whole world came into being according to His counsel and will. The being of the world was preceded by a complete non-being, and to that extent one can rightly say that God created the world out of nothing. This is the explicit teaching of Scripture, that God existed from eternity, Psalms 90:2, but that the world had a beginning, Genesis 1:1. It is often said that God has done something, e.g. chosen and loved, before the foundation of the world, John 17:24, Ephesians 1:4. He is so powerful that He only needs to speak to make something be, Psalms 33:9, and can call things that are not, as if they were, Romans 4:17. Only by his will does he give birth to the world, Revelation 4:11; he made everything, the heaven and the earth with all that is in them, Exodus 20:11, Nehemiah 9:6; everything is of and through him, Romans 11:36. Therefore He is also the Almighty Possessor of heaven and earth, Genesis 14:19, Genesis 14:22, who does everything that pleases Him, to Whose power there is no limit, upon Whom all creatures are dependent in an absolute sense, so that they cannot move or stir without His will, Psalms 115:3, Daniel 4:35. Scripture knows nothing of an unformed, eternal substance apart from God; He is the sole, absolute cause of all that is and is done; visible things were not made from things that appear, but the whole world was prepared by the word of God, Hebrews 11:3.

If God, who is the eternal and perfect being, has created the world by His will, the question naturally arises as to why and for what purpose He has called it into being. To find an answer to this question, science and philosophy have always tried to make the world necessary and thus to deduce it from the essence of God. And in doing so, they have taken two different directions. Some have suggested that God is so overflowing and overabundant that He cannot control Himself, that He lacks the power over His own being, and that therefore the world has flowed out of Him, like the stream from the well, or like the water from a vessel that overflows. Others, on the contrary, have thought that God was poor and empty in Himself, nothing but a hungry, wanting will, and that He brought forth the world to replenish Himself and meet His need. In both cases the world is necessary to God, either to relieve Him of His abundance, or to meet His need.

Both ideas are completely alien to Scripture. It takes an entirely different, diametrically opposed position. According to these two ideas, the center of gravity is shifted from God to the world, and God is there for the sake of the world; God is the lesser and the world is the greater, because the world serves to redeem and sanctify God, who through excess or lack is unsatisfactory in himself. Although this thought is also expressed by men of renown today, it is indeed blasphemous. Scripture, which is the Word of God and stands up for God from beginning to end, expresses on the contrary decidedly and forcefully and loudly that God is not there for the sake of the world, but that the whole world with all its creatures is there for God, for His sake and to His honor.

God is the sufficient and complete one in Himself. He needs the world and no creature in any way for His perfection. Will a man be of benefit to God? Is it profitable for the Almighty that you are righteous, or profitable that you are perfecting your ways? Job 22:2-3. Man's righteousness gives him nothing, and his wickedness takes nothing from him. He is not served by the hands of men, as if in need of anything, since He gives to all life, breath and all things, Acts 17:25. There was no compulsion or necessity in the nature of God to create the world. Creation is entirely a free act of God. It cannot be explained by the righteousness of God, although that righteousness is also revealed in the world, for to whom could God be indebted? Nor is it to be deduced from the goodness and love of God, although both also appear in the world, because the life of love of the triune God needed no object of love outside of Him. The creation rests solely on God's power, on His eternal good pleasure, on His absolute sovereignty, Revelation 4:11.

This, however, does not at all imply that the creation of the world was a senseless act of arbitrariness. Here, as elsewhere, we must resign ourselves to God's sovereignty as the end of all contradiction, and are thereby trained in quiet confidence and filial obedience. But nevertheless God has had His wise and holy reasons for this act.

Scripture shows this first of all in that it describes the creation to us as a work of God triune. When God creates man, He first consults with Himself and says: Let us make men in our image and after our likeness! Genesis 1:26. And so all God's work rests outwardly on a counsel of God. Before the creation He consulted wisdom, Job 28:20 ff, Proverbs 8:22 f. And in time He "created all things by the Word, which in the beginning was with God and was God Himself, John 1:1-3, Ephesians 3:9, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 1:2, and in the Spirit, who searches the depths of God, quickens the creatures and adorns the heavens, Job 26:13, Job 33:4, 1 Corinthians 2:10. Thou hast made them all with wisdom, the earth is full of thy goods, Psalms 104:24. In addition, Scripture also teaches us that God has created, maintains and governs all things to His own honor. The end with which the creatures were created cannot, of course, lie in them, because the determination of the end precedes the means. Scripture therefore says in general, that as all things are of God, so also all things are through Him and unto Him, Romans 11:36. And it elaborates on this, when it mentions that the heavens honour God, Psalms 19:1, that God glorifies Himself in Pharaoh, Exodus 14:17, and in the blind man, John 9:3, that He does all the good in the world, and that He is the greatest of all. John 9:3, that He gives all the benefits of grace for His name's sake, Isaiah 43:25, Ephesians 1:6, that Christ came to glorify the Father, John 17:4, and that one day all knees will bow and acknowledge His glory, Php 2:11. It is God's desire to bring the virtues of his triune being to light in the creatures, and thereby to obtain glory and honor from all creation. For this glorification of Himself God does not need the world either, because it is not the creature that independently and autonomously increases His honor, but it is always Himself, who without or

through the creature glorifies His own name and delights in Himself. God therefore never seeks the creature, as if it could give Him something He lacks, or could take away something He possesses. But the whole world in its width and length is a mirror to Him in which He reflects His own virtues. He always remains at rest in Himself as the highest good, and remains eternally blessed through His own salvation.

Scripture not only tells us that God by his will created the world out of nothing, but it also tells us something of the way in which this creation took place.

It begins by saying that God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning (Genesis 1:1). This beginning is the moment from which the things which received creation, existed. It was the beginning when God, who has no beginning nor can have the Word, which is with God and God Himself, was already of eternity, John 1:1, but in which all created things began to exist. Time and space also began then. It is true that these two are not independent creatures, produced by a special act of God's power; in the creation story there is not a single word about them. But time and space are the necessary forms of existence of created things. God alone is eternal and omnipresent, but all creatures are as such subject to time and space, although in very different ways. Time makes it possible for a thing to exist in a succession of moments and therefore for things to exist one after the other; and space makes it possible for a thing to expand in all directions and therefore for things to exist side by side. Thus, in the same moment, time and space began to exist as their essential forms of being. They did not exist beforehand, as empty forms, to absorb the creatures; for if there is nothing, there is no time and space either. Nor were they created separately, alongside and with the creatures, and added to them from outside. But they were created in and with the creatures as the forms, in which they necessarily exist as limited, finite beings. That is why Augustine rightly said that God did not create the world in time, as in an already existing form or condition, but that He created it at the same time as time and time with the world.

Furthermore, the first verse of Genesis tells us that God created the heaven and the earth in the beginning. By heaven and earth the Scriptures mean here, as elsewhere in Genesis 2:1, Genesis 21:4, Exodus 20:11, etc., the whole world, the whole universe, which from the beginning according to God's will is divided into two parts: the earth with all that is upon and in it, and the heaven, which comprises all that is outside and above the earth. So to heaven in the sense of Scripture belongs the firmament with the sky and the clouds, Genesis 1:8, Genesis 1:20, furthermore the stars, which are the host of the heavens, Deuteronomy 4:19, Psalms 8:4, and finally also the third heaven or the heaven of the heavens, which is the dwelling place of God and the angels, 1 Kings 8:27, Psalms 2:4, Psalms 115:16, Matthew 6:9, etc. When Genesis 1:1 says that God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning, then on the one hand this must not be interpreted as if this verse were only a heading above and a short summary of everything that follows, and on the other hand this must not be interpreted as if, with the act of God described in Genesis 1:1, heaven and earth had already been created in a perfect state. The first interpretation is contradicted by the fact that the second verse begins with and: and the earth (in the Dutch translation: de aarde nu) was desolate and empty. By this conjunction the story is continued, and to the first fact narrated in Genesis 1:1 a second one is added. The second explanation is therefore not plausible, since the heaven as sky and cloud only comes into being in Genesis 1:8, and both heaven and earth are only mentioned as accomplished and completed in Genesis 2:1.

Although we cannot speak with absolute certainty, it is nevertheless probable that the heaven of the heavens, the dwelling place of God, was already established at the first act of creation in Genesis 1:1, and that the angels were already given birth at that time. For in Job 38:4-7 the Lord replies to Job in a storm, that no man was present when He laid the foundations of the earth and caused it to sink to its columns, but that He nevertheless accomplished that work amidst the jubilation of the stars and the cheering of the sons of God, i.e. the angels. Thus the angels were already present at the preparation of the earth and the creation of man. But otherwise we are told very little about the creation of the heaven of heavens and its angels. After mentioning it briefly in the first verse, the narrative in Genesis immediately moves on to a broader description of the preparation of the earth in the second verse. Such a preparation was necessary because the earth, although already created, was still in a wild and empty state for a time, and was covered by darkness. It does not say that the earth was desolate or destroyed, as some have thought, who thought of a judgment pronounced by God on the already completed earth as a result of the fall of the angels. But Genesis 1:2 only says that the earth was desolate, i.e., in an unformed, formless state, in which no separation had yet been made between light and darkness, between waters and waters, between earth and seas. Only the works of God, described in Genesis 1:3-10, put an end to the desolation of the earth. And likewise it is said that the original earth was empty; it still lacked all ornamentation of plant and tree, and was not yet inhabited by any living creature; the works of God, which are enumerated in Genesis 1:11 ff, put an end to that emptiness of the earth, for God did not create the earth to be empty, but that people should dwell in it, Isaiah 45:18. The first group of works begins with the creation of light and introduces distinction and separation, form and shape, color and tone. The second group of works begins with the creation of the bearers of light, the sun, the moon and the stars, and then serves to populate the earth and provide it with inhabitants, birds and fish, animals and men.

According to the repeated testimony of Scripture, Genesis 2:1-2, Exodus 20:11, Exodus 31:17, the entire work of creation was completed in six days. Nevertheless, there has always been great freedom of thought and a remarkable difference of opinion regarding the conception of these days. No one less than Augustine was of the opinion that God had created everything at once and at the same time, and that the six days were not successive parts of time, but only points of view from which the rank and order of the creatures could be considered. On the other hand, there are not a few people who think that the days of creation are much longer than twenty-four hours.

Now Scripture speaks very definitely of days, counting from morning to morrow, which form the basis of the division of the week and of the feast days among Israel. But nevertheless they themselves contain data which oblige us to think of days other than our ordinary days, worked out by the rotation of the earth. In the first place, it is not certain whether what is told in Genesis 1:1-2 precedes the first day, or is included in the first day. In favor of the first opinion is, that the first day according to Genesis 1:5 begins with the creation of light and ends after the evening and the night on the following morning. But even if one includes the events of Genesis 1:1-31, Genesis 2:1-25 in the first day, one obtains nothing but a very unusual day, which was first darkness for a while; while the duration of that darkness, which preceded the creation of light, is not specified in any way. In the second place, the first three days, Genesis 1:3-13, were certainly very dissimilar to ours. For our days of 24 hours are worked by the rotation of the earth on its axis, and by the consequent different position opposite the sun. But the first three days cannot have been formed in

this way, for they did alternate with the appearance and disappearance of light; but Genesis itself informs us that the sun, moon and stars were not formed until the fourth day. In the third place it is certainly possible, that the second series of three days were formed in the ordinary way. But if we take into account that the fall of angels and men and also the later deluge have caused all kinds of changes, also in the cosmos, Genesis 3:14 f., Matthew 4:8-9, Romans 8:20 f. and considering also, that in every field the period of creation differs in a remarkable way from the period of normal growth, then it may not be improbable, that also the second series of three days were in many respects unequal to ours.

Finally it also deserves consideration, that all that according to Genesis 1:1-31 and Genesis 2:1-25 took place on the sixth day, can hardly be limited within the boundaries of a time which is completely equal to our day. On this one day, Scripture records the creation of the animals, Genesis 1:24-25, and the creation of Adam, Genesis 1:26, Genesis 2:7; the planting of the garden, Genesis 2:8-14, and the proclamation of the test commandment, Genesis 2:16-17; the leading of the animals to Adam and his naming, Genesis 2:18-20; the sleep of Adam and the creation of Eve, Genesis 2:21-23.

However, the six days remain the creation week, in which the heaven and the earth and all their host are completed. They indicate the temporary order in which the creatures received existence one after the other, but at the same time they contain an indication of the rank relationship in which they stand to one another. And this corresponds to reality, as we still observe it daily. No scientific research can overturn it. Because in rank and order, the shapeless precedes the shaped, the inorganic precedes the organic, the plant precedes the animal, the animal precedes man. And man is and remains the crown of creation; the preparation of the earth ends with him. That is why Scripture says so little about the creation of the heavens and the angels, and confines itself principally to the earth. In the astronomical sense *) the earth may be small and insignificant; in mass and gravity it may be surpassed by thousands of planets and suns and stars; in the religious and moral sense it remains the center of the universe. It and it alone is chosen as a dwelling place for mankind; as a battleground, in which the great struggle is fought against all evil power; as a place of settlement for the kingdom of heaven.

All created things are summarized in Scripture under the name of heaven and earth and all their host, Genesis 2:1, or also under the name of world. The original words, which are represented in our Bible by world, sometimes refer to the earth as a globe or circle of the earth, 1 Samuel 2:8, Proverbs 8:31, and then again more to the earth as the dwelling place of mankind and in so far as it is inhabited by mankind, Matthew 24:14, Luke 2:1; sometimes they draw more attention to the world in its temporary, changing, transient form, Psalms 49:2, Luke 1:70, Ephesians 1:21, and then again more to the world as the unity and totality of all creatures together, John 1:10, Acts 17:24. Especially these last two meanings have a rich content. One can, as it were, always look at the world from two points of view; one can see it in its width and one can see it in its length. In the first case it is a unity, one coherent whole, but in that unity it shows an incalculably rich diversity. From the beginning, that it was created and formed, it contains within itself heaven and earth, visible and unseen things, and narrow. From astronomy = astronomy and human beings, animals and plants, living and lifeless, animated and inanimate beings. And all these creatures are in turn infinitely varied among themselves; among the angels there are thrones and powers, dominions and forces; among the human beings there are men and women, parents and children, authorities

and subjects, peoples and nations, tongues and languages; and in a similar way plants and animals, and in a certain sense also minerals, are again divided into classes and groups, families and genera, species and varieties. All these creatures have and preserve, within certain limits, their own nature, which they have received from God, Genesis 1:11, Genesis 1:21 ff, and are therefore all subject to their own laws. They do not only exist one after the other in the sense that they were created one after the other and continue to exist in their lower or higher ranks, but they also exist side by side and continue their existence side by side up to the present day. Creation is not unified but multiform, and in its entirety and in all its parts it displays the richest and most beautiful variety. At the same time, the world continues its existence and development throughout time. Although everything God created was very good, Genesis 1:31, this does not mean that it was already everything it could and should be. Just as man, although created in God's image, received a calling and a destiny, which he had to fulfill in the way of works, so the world, when it was created, was not at the end but at the beginning. It had a long history, a history of centuries before it, in which it had an ever richer and ever clearer revelation of God's virtues. Creation and development are therefore not mutually exclusive; creation is the beginning and the starting point of all development. Because God created a world with an incalculably rich diversity, in which the different kinds of creatures have their own nature and in that nature received their own thought and power and law, only that is why development is possible. All development derives its starting point and at the same time its direction and its goal from this creation. Even though sin has interfered with and destroyed this development, God nevertheless fulfills His counsel, upholds the world and leads it to its final destination. When Scripture speaks of the world in this way, it implicitly assumes that there is only one world. In the systems of the philosophers this has often been thought of differently. Not only were and are many still of the opinion that there are several worlds apart, and that not only the earth but also other planets are inhabited by living and thinking beings. But the idea that different worlds existed one after the other was especially popular. The present world was therefore not the only one, but had been preceded by countless others and would be followed by many more. Some have even connected it with the idea that everything that is today existed in exactly the same way before and will return again later. Everything that exists is in a constant process; everything is subject to the eternal law of appearance and disappearance, shine and sink, rise and fall. The Scriptures pass over all these conjectures and imaginations in silence. It tells us that this world was created by God in the beginning, that it goes through a history of centuries, and that at the end of it there is the eternal sabbath rest which remains for the people of God. And likewise, it knows nothing about the habitability of planets other than the earth. She does learn that the world is infinitely diverse, that there are not only human beings but also angels, that there is a heaven as well as an earth. But it also maintains that only man was created in God's image, that the Son of God did not take on the nature of angels but of man, and that the kingdom of heaven is spread and realized on this earth. In the same way, Scripture teaches us that the world is finite. This means, first of all, that it had a beginning and was created at the same time as time. Here the question of how long the world has existed is irrelevant. Even if it had existed thousands or millions of years longer than is actually the case, it would still never become or be able to become eternal, just as God is eternal; in that case it would also remain finite, limited and created in and with time. It is important to note this, because Scripture, which teaches a beginning of the world, also maintains that it will not have an end. Of course, in its present form, because the form of this world passes away, but not in its substance and essence. But even if the

world, even if mankind and angels continue to exist indefinitely in the future, they remain creatures and will never be partakers of eternity, as God possesses them. The world exists in time and continues to exist in it, even if in another dispensation time is calculated according to a completely different standard than it is here on earth today. And just as with time, the world remains bound to space. It is true that the newer science has extended our circle of vision endlessly; the world has become much larger for us than it was for our ancestors; we dizzy over the number and size of the stars, each of which is a world in itself, and the distances at which these stars are situated from our earth are far beyond our imagination. Yet the world cannot be thought of as infinite, as God alone is infinite. It may be infinite, so to speak; but infinite and infinite are not different in degree, but in essence. We cannot think of time and space outside the world; we cannot imagine that we could reach the boundary of the universe somewhere, and then stare out into the void. But time and space stretch out as far as the world, and as far as they exist, they are also filled with the things created. But everything together, even if it goes far beyond our intellect and our imagination, is finite, because a sum of finite parts, however unspeakably great, never gives infinity. Eternal and omnipresent and infinite is God alone.

Finally, Scripture also teaches us to believe that the world is good. It takes some courage to pronounce this today. For although the eighteenth century was very optimistic, looked at everything from the best side and therefore taught that God had created the best of all worlds and that no better world was possible, the nineteenth and also this twentieth century have taken an entirely different look at life, the world and society. Poets, philosophers and artists teach us today that everything is misery, that the world is as bad as it can be, and that if it were just one degree worse, it could not be bad enough to exist. Whatever exists, so many think and speak, is only worth destroying. And while some therefore still want to enjoy life for what it is worth and chant the slogan: let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die; others surrender to fatigue and an idleness of life, or hope fervently for the future, for the socialist utopia, for the other side of the grave, for nirvana, which the present does not give them.

Scripture again takes its own stand on this question. It says, first, that the world was good, very good, as it first came into being by the hand of God, Genesis 1:31. Nowhere is the fragility and transience of life, the smallness and insignificance of all that exists, the depth and pain of suffering more poignantly and movingly described than in the Holy Scriptures. But it does not stop there, but continues in the third place, and declares that not in this fallen and guilty and vain world the good pleasure of God is accomplished; and from the destination towards which the world is led, this world may also be called good again; it is and becomes and remains, in spite of sin, a means through which God glorifies His virtues, an instrument which He makes available to the honour of His name. And finally, Scripture concludes its teaching with the wonderful promise that this world, with all its suffering and pressure, will become good again for us, if we submit our will to the honor of God and make it subservient. To those who love God all things work together for good," Romans 8:28; they even learn to glory in tribulation, Romans 5:3; their faith is the victory of the world, 1 John 5:4.

All these considerations already lead involuntarily from creation to Providence. From the very first moment that the world as a whole or each of its creatures is brought into being by the creative act of God, it passes immediately and at once into the hand of God’s providence. There is no gradual transition here, much less a separation or cleavage. For just as the creatures, precisely because

they are creatures, cannot exist by themselves, so they cannot exist for a single moment by themselves. Providence immediately joins Creation, and Creation passes directly into Providence. This shows the intimate connection and close relationship that exists between the two. It is of the utmost importance to maintain this indissoluble connection between creation and providence in the face of all deism. Deism is to be understood as that school which still assumes creation in the beginning, but which furthermore believes that immediately after creation God withdrew from the world entirely and left it to its own devices. Creation serves only to give the world its independent existence, and in this sense was even accepted by Kant and Darwin. But in the creation God had equipped the world itself with complete autonomy and with a fullness of gifts and powers, so that it can continue to exist completely of and by itself and can also fully save itself in all cases. The world was thought of here, according to the usual image, as a clock, which once wound up, goes its own way and expires by itself. Of course it follows that man's mind never needed any revelation, but could find all the necessary truth itself, by its own power and means. Deism naturally brings with it rationalism, that is, the direction in which reason can discover all truth from and through itself. And from deism for the will of man follows the doctrine of Pelagianism, which ascribes to the will of man the power to lead him to salvation.

According to deism, the will of man, like his reason, is created to be independent and is equipped with such gifts and powers that it does not need a mediator to do its work of salvation.

Opposed to this direction, it is therefore important to maintain the link between creation and providence. The Scriptures do so, when they call the work of providence a making alive, Job 33:4, Nehemiah 9:6, a renewing, Psalms 104:30, a preserving, Psalms 36:7, a speaking, Psalms 33:9, a will, Revelation 4:11, a working, John 5:17, a carrying by the word of His power, Hebrews 1:3, a caring, 1 Peter 5:7, yes even a creating, Psalms 104:30, Isaiah 45:7, Amos 4:13. In all these expressions it is clear that after the creation God did not leave the world to itself and does not just watch it from afar. The word 'providence' must not be interpreted in this way and must never be used to push the living God and His activity aside or into the background. Providence does not only mean that God foresees things, that He anticipates and foresees them, although they go their own way, but it also implies that God provides all that is necessary for the world, Genesis 22:8, 1 Samuel 16:1, Ezekiel 20:6, Hebrews 11:40. It is an act, not only of God's intellect, but also of His will, an execution of His counsel; an activity by which He sustains the world from moment to moment.

Maintenance, which is usually considered to be the first activity of providence, is therefore not a passive observance, not a leaving in place, but a making in place, a keeping in the most real sense of the word. The Heidelberger Catechism very beautifully describes providence as that omnipotent and omnipresent power of God by which He maintains heaven and earth, as well as all things, as with His hand. From God emanates power, almighty and divine power, as much for the continuation of the world as for its creation in the beginning. Without such power no creature could exist for a moment; in the same instant in which God withdrew His hand and withheld His power, it would sink into nothingness. Nothing comes into being and nothing exists except by God sending forth his Word and his Spirit, Psalms 104:30, Psalms 107:26, speaking and commanding and will, Psalms 33:9, Psalms 147:15, Revelation 4:11. And that power does not work from afar, but from near; it is an omnipresent power. God is present with all His virtues, with His entire being in the entire world and in all creatures. In Him we live and move and are, Acts 17:28. He is not far from

every one of us, Acts 17:27; He is a God of nearness; no one can hide in a corner, that the Lord should not see him; He fills the heavens and the earth, Isaiah 23:2-3. Who can go before his Spirit and who can flee before his face? He is in heaven and in the realm of the dead, at the end of the sea and in the depths of darkness, Psalms 139:7 f. His providence, his sustaining power extends to all creatures, to the lilies of the field, Matthew 6:28, the birds of the air, Matthew 6:26, and even the hair of the head, Matthew 10:30. All creatures exist according to their nature, as long as they exist, and as they exist, by the power of God; as they are of Him, so they are through Him, Romans 11:36. The Son, through whom God made the world, continually carries all things by the word of His power, Hebrews 1:2-3; all things exist together through Him who was before all things, Colossians 1:17, and are created and renewed by His Spirit, Psalms 104:30.

Because of this close relationship between creation and providence, the latter has sometimes been called a continuous or ongoing creation. The term can be understood in a very good sense, but then it must be protected from misunderstanding. For with the same seriousness with which we must maintain the connection and similarity between creation and providence, the distinction between the two should also be recognised and respected. Just as in the first case we would fall into deism (belief in one God, without revelation), so in the second case, if we ignore both distinctions, we land on the cliff of pantheism (idolatry). This is the direction which erases the distinction between God and the world, identifies the two as two sides of the same thing; God is then thought of as the essence of the world and the world as the manifestation of God; they are related as the ocean and its waves, as being and its forms, as the invisible and the visible side of the same whole.

Scripture avoids this error with no less care than that of deism. This is immediately evident in the fact that God is not only presented as having begun the work of creation in the first place, but as having come to rest after the work of creation is completed, Genesis 2:2, Exodus 20:11, Exodus 31:17. In the creation something is accomplished, which then comes to an end. As was clearly shown above, resting with God is not an end to all work, because providence is also a work, John 5:17, but it is an end to that particular work, which is indicated by creation. If creation and providence can be placed in relation to each other like work and rest, then this implies beyond any doubt that both, however related and connected they may be, are still distinct. Creation is the bringing forth of nothing, but the maintenance is the enduring of the existence that was once given. Therefore, although the world does not become independent through creation, for an independent creature is an inner contradiction, it still receives a being and existence distinct from the essence of God. God and the world are not distinguished from one another in name or form, but in essence; they differ from one another as eternity and time, as infinity and finitude, as Creator and creature. ’ In itself it is already of the greatest importance to hold on to this essential distinction between God and the world. For he who misunderstands or denies this distinction falsifies religion, reduces God to the creature, and in principle makes himself guilty of that same sin of which Paul accuses the Gentiles when he says that, knowing God, they have not glorified or thanked Him as God. But there is also another consideration, which makes it necessary never to lose sight of the distinction between God and the world, between creation and providence. For if God is alone with the world, and therefore not really distinct from mankind, then all man’s thoughts and actions are immediately and directly attributable to God; then sin is His work, and there is no longer any sin.

Now the Scriptures, on the one hand, express it as strongly as possible, man with all his thoughts and deeds and also with all his sins is under God's control; man is never independent of God. The Lord looks from heaven and sees all children of men, Psalms 33:13; He forms all their hearts and watches over all their works, Psalms 33:15; He determines all their homes, Deuteronomy 32:8, Acts 17:26. directs all their steps, Proverbs 5:21, Proverbs 16:9, Jeremiah 10:23, and does with the host of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth according to his pleasure, Daniel 4:35; they are in his hands as clay in the hand of a potter, and as a saw in the hand of one who draws it, Isaiah 29:16, Isaiah 45:9, Jeremiah 18:5, Romans 9:20-21. When man becomes a sinner, he does not thereby make himself free from God, but his dependence merely takes on a different character; it loses its reasonable and moral nature and becomes creaturely subjection; man, who becomes a slave to sin, reduces himself in God's hand to a mere instrument. And so the Scriptures also say that God makes man stiff-necked, hardens and blinds him, Exodus 4:21 ff, Deuteronomy 2:30, Joshua 11:20, Romans 9:18, that He sends a spirit of lies in the mouth of the prophets, 1 Kings 22:23, that He invites David through Satan to count the people, 2 Samuel 24:1, 1 Chronicles 21:1, that He commands Simei to curse David, 2 Samuel 16:10, that He gives men over to their sins, Romans 1:24, that He sends a power of error, 2 Thessalonians 2:11, and makes Christ not only a resurrection, but also a fall for many, Luke 2:34. And yet, however much God's providence is concerned with sin, the Scriptures maintain just as firmly and decidedly that sin has its origin not in God, but in man, and that it is not the fault of God, but of man alone. The Lord is just and holy and far from ungodliness, Job 34:10, Job 34:4; a light without darkness, 1 John 1:5, tempting no one, Mark 1:13, abundant fountain of all that is good and pure, Psalms 36:10, Mark 1:17. He forbids sin in His law, Exodus 20:1-26 and in the mind of every man, Romans 2:14-15, has no pleasure in godlessness, Psalms 5:5, but hates it and is wrathful against it, Romans 1:18, and threatens it with temporal and eternal punishment, Romans 2:8.

These two lines of Scripture, according to which sin is under God's control from beginning to end and yet is the responsibility of mankind, can only be connected if God and the world are not separated from each other and yet are essentially distinct. This is what theology tries to do when it mentions cooperation in God's providence as the second part, after maintenance. For by this it tries to show that God is the first cause of all that is and is done, but that the creatures under and in and through Him also act as second causes, cooperating with the first cause. Already with the inanimate and inanimate creatures we can speak of second causes, because even though God lets the light rise over the bad and the good and rains over the righteous and the unrighteous, He still uses the sun and the clouds as means by which He lets light and rain down on earth. But of much greater importance is this distinction with the reasonable creatures. For they have received from God a mind and a will, with which to lead and govern themselves. Now, in the reasonable creatures, too, all existence and life, all gift and power, come from God, and they remain, however they use that gift and power, under the control of God's providence. Nevertheless, there is a difference between the first and second cause, between God and man. Just as it is God who works in mankind to will and accomplish good things according to His will, and yet man himself wills and acts; so, and to an even greater extent, it is God who gives life and power to evil, but it is man and man alone who commits sin and is guilty of it. We cannot solve the riddles that God's providence places before us in life; but the confession that God and the world are never separate but always distinct still points in the direction in which the solution must be sought, and saves us from wandering either to the right or to the left. And so understood, the doctrine of creation and of

providence is rich in encouragement and comfort. There is so much that depresses and takes away the power to live and to act. Not only the adversities and disappointments that we encounter on our life's journey, not only the terrible disasters and calamities that sometimes cause hundreds of human beings to perish in unutterable fear, but also life in its normal course often raises doubts about God's providence. Isn't mystery the life and destiny of all human children? Is there not a worm of anxiety and fear gnawing at everyone's existence? Is it not true that God has a quarrel with his creator, and that we perish through his wrath and are terrified by his wrath? No, not only the unbelievers and the simpletons, but also the children of God, and they the most profound and the most serious, are seized by the awesome gravity of reality. And sometimes the question is forced from the heart to the lips, whether mankind might have been created by God on earth in vain. But out of that doubt, they raise their heads again through faith in God's creation and providence. Not the devil, but God, the Almighty, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ created the world. It is in its entirety and in all its parts the work of His hands and of His hands alone. And having created it, He has not let it go. He upholds it by His omnipotent and omnipresent power; He intervenes with His power in all creatures, and He governs and governs them in such a way that they all lead to and cooperate with His appointed end. God's providence, together with its maintenance and cooperation, takes up the third part of government. God rules; He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, 1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 19:6, and His kingdom lasts forever, 1 Timothy 1:17. Neither chance nor fate, neither arbitrariness nor constraint, neither capricious whim nor iron necessity, govern nature and history, the life and fate of mankind's children. But behind all secondary causes lies and works the almighty will of an all-powerful God and a faithful Father.

It goes without saying that no one can truly believe this with his heart and confess it with his mouth, except those who know themselves to be children of God. The faith in providence is closely related to the faith in salvation. Of course, God's providence is one of those truths that can be partially recognised by His general revelation in nature and history. Pagans have often spoken and described it in beautiful ways; one of them said that the gods see and hear everything, are present everywhere and take care of everything at the same time; and another testified that the order and arrangement of the universe is maintained by God and for God's sake. But none of them knew the Christian's confession that the God who maintains and governs all things is his God and Father for his Son Christ's sake. Faith in the providence of God was therefore shaken by doubt, and often proved unable to withstand the vicissitudes of life. The eighteenth century, was very optimistic and thought, that God had created the best of all worlds. But when the city of Lisbon was largely destroyed by a terrible earthquake in 1755, many began to blaspheme God's providence and to deny His existence. But the Christian, who has experienced the love of God in the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation of his soul, boasts with the apostle Paul, that no tribulation or distress or persecution, no hunger or danger or sword, shall separate him from that love. Romans 8:31. Though the fig tree shall not flourish, nor shall there be fruit on the vine; though the olive tree shall lie down, and the field shall not bring forth food; though the flock shall be torn from its cage, and there shall be no cattle in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation, Habakkuk 3:17-18. In that joy of heart he even calls upon the whole earth to praise the Lord; the Lord reigns, the earth rejoices, the islands rejoice! Psalms 97:1.

01.12. Origin, Being and Destiny of mankind.

12. Origin, Being and Destiny of mankind. The story of the origin of heaven and earth ends in the first chapter of Genesis with the creation of mankind. The creation of the other creatures, of heaven and earth, of the sun and moon and stars, of plants and animals, is only briefly recorded, and the creation of the angels is not even mentioned. But when the Scriptures have come to man, they dwell at length on him, describing not only the fact but also the manner of his creation, and return to it at length in the second chapter of Genesis. This special attention devoted to the origin of man is in itself proof that man is the end and goal, the head and crown of the whole work of creation. But there are several other elements which highlight man's rank and value, which transcends all creatures. In the first place, there is the special counsel of God, which precedes the creation of man. When the other creatures were created it is only said that God spoke and thus called the various creatures into existence. But when God creates mankind, He first consults with Himself and arouses Himself to make man according to His will. This indicates that the creation of mankind in particular rests on deliberation, on Divine wisdom and goodness and omnipotence. Nothing is created by chance. But with mankind the counsel and the decision of God is even more clearly revealed in man than in other creatures.

Furthermore, in this counsel of God special emphasis is placed on the fact that man is created in God's image and likeness, and therefore has a completely different relationship to God than all other creatures. No other creature, not even angels, are ever said in Scripture to be created in the image of God and to bear His image. They may contain indications of one or more of God's attributes, but man alone is called created in God's image and likeness. The Scriptures also emphasize that God did not create just one man, but that He created men in His image. And in the end of Genesis 1:27, those human beings are referred to as man and woman. Not the man alone, nor only the woman, but both, and both in relation and covenant with each other, are bearers of the image of God. And they are therefore not only so for themselves, but, according to the blessing of multiplication which is pronounced upon them in -

Genesis 1:28, they are so also in and with all their offspring. The human race in each of its members and as a whole was originally created in the image and likeness of God. And finally there is explicit mention of the fact that this creation of mankind in the image of God must above all be reflected in the dominion over all living beings and in the subordination of all living beings to God. Because man is the son of God, he is also king of the earth. The childhood of God and the inheritance of the world are already inseparably connected in the creation. The story of the creation of mankind in the first chapter of Genesis is expanded and completed in the second chapter, Genesis 2:1-25. Wrongly this second chapter of Genesis is sometimes called the second story of creation. For the creation of heaven and earth is presupposed, and in verse 46 only remembered with a single word, to indicate the occasion on which God formed man from the dust of the earth, Genesis 3:7. And all the emphasis in this second chapter is on the creation of man and the manner in which it took place. In these particulars, which are given concerning the formation of man, lies the great difference between the first and second chapters of Genesis.

Genesis 1:1-31 of the creation of heaven and earth and ends with man. Man is here the last creature to be brought into existence by God's omnipotence; he is the end of the series of creatures, the ruler of nature, the king of the earth. But the second chapter, Genesis 2:1-25, begins with man, takes him as its starting point, puts him in the center and now recounts what happened at the creation of man, how it took place in both man and woman, where man received his residence, what vocation he was given, what destiny he was given. The first chapter speaks of mankind as the end of creation; the second of him as the beginning of history. The contents of the first chapter can be summarized under the name of the work of creation; the title of Genesis 2:1-25 can easily be called Paradise.

Three particulars are communicated in this second chapter concerning man's origin, and serve to supplement what the first chapter has told in general terms.

First, there is a fairly extensive discussion of man's first place of residence. The first chapter only stated in general terms that man was created in the image of God and was the ruler over the world. But it said nothing about where on the great earth man first saw the light of day or where he first lived. But now the second chapter completes the creation story on this point. When God created the heavens and the earth and gave birth to the sun and the moon and the stars, to plants and birds, and to animals of the water and land, there was not yet a particular place reserved for mankind where he was to live. That is why God, before creating mankind, prepares a garden, a paradise, in the landscape of Eden, to the east of Palestine. And this garden is laid out in a special way. God caused all kinds of trees to sprout from the ground there, which were desirable for looks and useful for food; of these trees two are specifically named, the tree of life, which was planted in the center of the garden, and also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The garden was finally situated in such a way that a river, which originated higher up in the Eden landscape, flowed through it and then split into four arms, the Pison, Gihon, Tiger and Euphrates.

Over the centuries, much effort and work has gone into determining the location of Eden and the Garden of Eden. Various hypotheses have been formed, about the one stream that flowed through the garden and out of Eden, about the four rivers into which the one stream split, about the name of the Eden landscape and the garden, which was a special area within it. But all these hypotheses have remained hypotheses; none of them can be conclusively proven. Two views, however, are undoubtedly preferable. The first is that according to which Eden was located more to the north, in Armenia; the other is that according to which this landscape must be sought more to the south, in Babylonia. Between these two, the decision is difficult; the data contained in Scripture are no longer sufficient for us to indicate the exact location with certainty. But if we consider that mankind, which sprang from Adam and Eve, although banished from Eden, nevertheless continued to live in the vicinity, Genesis 4:16, that Noah's ark rested on the Ararat mountain in eastern Armenia after the flood, Genesis 8:4, and that the new mankind spread from Babel over the earth, we can conclude that the place of the new mankind is in Babylon, Genesis 11:8-9; then there is no doubt that the cradle of mankind was in that region, which is defined by Armenia in the north and Sinear in the south. And science has recently reinforced this teaching of Scripture. It is true that in the past she made all sorts of guesses about the original place of residence of mankind and looked for it in all parts of the world in turn, but she is reconsidering this more and more. Ethnology, the history of civilization, language and history point to Asia as the continent where once mankind was born. A second peculiarity, which draws attention in Genesis

2:1-25, is the trial commandment, which is given to the first man. This first man was simply called man, ha-adam, because for a long time he was alone and had no one like him; not until Genesis 4:25 does the name Adam appear without an article and thus becomes a proper name. This clearly shows that the first man, who for a time was the only man, was the origin and the principle, the head of the human race. As such, he received a double task: 1°. to cultivate and guard the Garden of Eden, and 2°. to eat freely from all the trees in the Garden, except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The first task describes his relationship to the earth, the second his relationship to heaven. Adam must subdue and control the earth, and he must do so in two senses: he must cultivate it, extract from it all the treasures that God has placed in it for mankind, down to the very bowels; and he must also guard it, secure it, protect it from all evil powers that threaten it, he must make it safe from the servitude of destruction, under which the whole of creation now groans. But man can only fulfill his vocation toward the earth if he does not break the bond with heaven, if he takes God at his word and, despite all temptations, continues to obey his commandment. The twofold task is in principle only one. Adam must rule, rule over the earth, not by idleness and idleness, but by the work of his head and heart and hand. But to be able to rule, he must serve God, who is his Creator and Lawgiver. Work and rest, dominion and service, earthly and heavenly calling, civilization and religion, culture and cult, go together from the beginning, belong together and both encompass the great, holy, glorious destiny of mankind. The entire culture, that is, all the work man undertakes to subjugate the earth, agriculture, animal husbandry, industry, trade, science and whatever else one can think of, all that work is the fulfilment of a divine calling. But if it is to be and remain so, it must be undertaken in dependence on and in obedience to God’s Word. Religion must be the principle that inspires and sanctifies the whole life in the service of God. The third special feature is the gift of women and the institution of marriage. Adam had received much. Although formed from the dust of the earth, he was nevertheless a bearer of the image of God. He was placed in a garden that was a place of beauty and abundant with everything that was desirable to the eye and good for food. He was called to cultivate the garden and subdue the earth by pleasant labor, and to walk in accordance with the commandment of God to eat freely of all the trees except one tree. But however richly endowed, the first man was grateful, yet not satisfied. And the cause is discovered in him by God Himself; it lies in his loneliness. It is not good for man to be alone. He is not built for it, he was not created for it; his nature is of a sociable nature; he must be able to express, reveal and give; he must be able to pour out his heart, translate his afflictions, communicate his sensations to a being who can understand him, sympathise with him and empathise with him. Solitude is poverty, desolation, slow languishing and collapse. How lonely it is to be alone! And He, who created mankind in such a way, with such a need for communication and expansion, can only satisfy that need to the extent of His favour and power. He can only make a home that is opposite to him, that is related to him and suits him. And now it is presented like this, Genesis 2:19-21, that the Lord created all the animals of the earth and all the birds of the air and brought them to man, to see if there was not a creature among all these creatures that could be a companion and support for Adam. The purpose of these verses is not to indicate the temporal order in which the animals and mankind were created, but to show the factual order, the relation of rank, the degree of kinship between the two types of creatures. This rank relationship is indicated by the first man in that he gave names to the animals.

Adam therefore knew all these creatures, he understood their nature, he could arrange and classify them and assign to each of them its rightful place in the scheme of things. Therefore, if later on he did not discover a creature among all those creatures that was related to him, this was not a result of ignorance or of foolish self-assertion and pride, but it was due to the fact that between him and all the other creatures there was a specific difference, not only a difference in degree but in essence. There are all sorts of similarities between animals and man; both are physical beings, share all kinds of earthly needs and desires for food and drink, for procreation and expansion; both have the senses of smell, taste, touch, sight and hearing and are also familiar with the lower activities of the cognitive faculty, perception, representation and the connection of ideas. But man is still a different being than the animal; he has reason and will and, as a result, language and religion, morality and law, science and art. He is formed from the dust of the earth, but still he received the breath of life from above. He is a physical being, but also a spiritual one, a reasonable and moral one. That is why Adam did not find any one among all those creatures that was related to him and could be his helper. He gave them all names, but none was worthy of the exalted, royal name of man. And when man could not find what he sought, God gave him, without his knowledge or will, and through no fault of his own, that which he could not provide. The best gifts fall into our lap as gifts without labor and without price. We do not earn and acquire them, we receive them freely. The richest and most precious gift that can be given to a man on earth is the woman; and he receives it in his deep sleep, unconscious, without effort of will or fatigue of hand. Searching, looking, asking, realizing the need, praying precede it; but then God gives the gift freely, alone, without our help; He leads the man to the woman as if by His own hand. And the first sensation Adam feels when he wakes up and sees the woman standing before him is one of admiration and gratitude. He does not feel strange towards her, but immediately recognizes her as being of the same nature as him. His recognition was a re-acknowledgement of that which he felt he missed and sought, but could not provide himself. And his admiration gives itself air in the first wedding song that resounded over the earth: this one is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Mannina, because she was taken from the man. Adam thus remains the principle and head of the human race; the woman is not created beside him, but from him, 1 Corinthians 11:8. Just as the material for Adam’s body is taken from the earth, so Adam’s side forms the basis for Eve’s existence. But as the first man was first made man from the dust of the earth by the breath of life from above, so the first woman was first made man from the side of Adam by the creative omnipotence of God. She is of Adam and yet different from him; she is related to him and yet different from him; she belongs to the same species and yet has her own place in it; she is dependent and yet free; she is after Adam and from Adam, but still owes her existence to God alone. And so she serves as a helper for man, to enable him to fulfil his calling to rule over the earth; as a helper, not as a mistress and much less as a slave, but as an independent and free being, who did not receive existence from man but from God, is responsible to Him, and was added to man as a free, undeserved gift. This is how Scripture tells the story of the origin of man, both man and woman; and this is how it conceives the institution of marriage and the beginning of the human race. But nowadays, under the name and authority of science, we are given an entirely different picture of all this. And since this is penetrating more and more into the circles of the people and has the greatest significance for the whole consideration of the world and life, it is necessary to devote a few moments to it and to examine the grounds on which it is based.

If one rejects the Scriptures' account of the origin of mankind, one must, of course, try to give a different explanation. Man exists; we cannot therefore evade the question of where he came from. If he does not owe his origin to the creative omnipotence of God, he must have come into existence in some other way. And then there is not much else left, but to imagine that man gradually developed from the previous lower creatures and thus worked his way up to his present high position. Development (evolution) is therefore the magic word, which nowadays must serve as the solution to all questions about the origin and nature of creatures. Of course, since the doctrine of creation is rejected, one must assume that something existed in the beginning, for nothing can be created out of nothing; but then one starts from the completely arbitrary and impossible assumption that matter and power and movement have been eternal, and adds that our solar system was preceded by a situation in which the world was nothing but a chaotic, gaseous mass. And from there the development began, which gradually gave birth to our world with all its creatures. Through development the solar system and the earth came into being; development formed the layers of the earth and the minerals; through development, in an endless series of years, the living arose from the inanimate; development gradually gave birth to the plants, the animals and the human beings ; and in the world of mankind it is again the same development that has brought about gender division, marriage, the family, society, the state, language, religion, morality, law, science, art and all other goods of civilization in a regulated order. If one may start from this single assumption that matter and power and movement were eternal, one also believes that God is not needed at all. The world contains its own explanation; science, it is believed, has made God entirely superfluous. The origin of mankind is then further explained by development theory, in essence as follows. When the earth cooled down and was suitable for the creation of living beings, life probably arose under the conditions then prevailing, in that first lifeless protein compounds were formed, which through various influences acquired different qualities, and that these protein compounds then through connection and mixing produced the protoplasm, the first life germ. Thus began biogenetic development, the development of living beings, which may have lasted a hundred million years. This protoplasm forms the protein-like independence of the cell, which is now generally considered the basic component of all living beings, plants, animals and mankind. Single-celled protozoa or moners (the name for the very first living creatures) were thus the oldest organisms. As they became motionless or mobile, they gradually developed into plants or animals. Of the animals, the infusions (the smallest worms) are the lowest, but from these, through various transitions and intermediate forms, the higher types of animals gradually developed, which are known as vertebrates, articulates, molluscs and rays. The vertebrates are in turn divided into four classes: fish, amphibians, birds and mammals; the latter in turn are divided into three orders: platypuses, marsupials and mother mammals, and the latter in turn into rodents, hoofed mammals, predators and beasts of prey. The animals or primates again have three classes: half-monkeys, real monkeys and apes. When mankind is compared to these various animals in terms of its body structure, it appears, according to the theory of evolution, that he is successively more closely related to the vertebrates, mammals, mother beasts, gentleman beasts and most closely related to the great apes, which are represented by the orang and gibbon in Asia and by the gorilla and shimpanzee in Africa. These are also the next of kin to man; they differ from man in size, shape etc., but are similar to him in the basis of his physique. Yet man does not derive from the same species of monkey, which are still alive, but from a long-extinct species of man-monkey, which is either thought of as more like a man or more like an ape, and which is the

common ancestor of monkeys and men. So apes and humans exist in blood, belong to the same family, but in relation to each other they should not be considered brothers and sisters, but cousins. This is the idea behind the development theory. This is how she imagines the course of events to have been. But of course it was also called upon to explain in some way how it all happened. One could say that plants, animals and human beings formed an unbroken, ascending series, but one still had to demonstrate to some extent that such a development was indeed possible, that for example an ape had gradually transformed into a human being. To give such an explanation Charles Darwin made an attempt in 1859. He observed that plants and animals, e.g. the roses and the pigeons, can be significantly modified by artificial choice of cultivation, and this gave rise to the idea of whether such a choice of cultivation could not also be at work in nature, albeit not an artificial one, guided by the hand of man, but at least an unconscious, involuntary, natural choice of cultivation. This thought lit a fire for him. For by adopting such a natural choice of cultivation he considered himself in a position to explain that plants and animals gradually change and transform themselves, that they could overcome disadvantages in their organization and gain advantages, and that in so doing they could equip themselves ever better for the struggle for existence and persevere above others. For life is everywhere and always in the whole of creation a struggle for existence. On the surface there seems to be peace in nature, but appearances are deceptive. On the contrary, everywhere there is a struggle for life and the necessities of life, because the earth is too small and too poor to provide all living creatures that are born with sufficient food. Millions of organisms die of want; only the strongest remain. And these strongest, who stand out from the rest due to one or another characteristic, inherit the advantageous characteristics they have gradually acquired from their offspring.

Thus there is progress and ever higher development. According to Darwin, natural choice of cultivation, struggle for existence and inheritance of old and newly acquired characteristics explained the emergence of new species, and also the transition from animal to man. In judging this theory of development it is necessary, first of all, to make a sharp distinction between the facts on which it relies and the philosophical considerations which it attaches to them. The facts all consist of the fact that man has all kinds of characteristics in common with the other living creatures, especially with the higher species and among these especially with the apes. Of course, these facts were largely known before, for the similarity in physique, in the various organs of the body and their functions, in the senses, in the sensations and perceptions, in the representations and in their connections, etc. is immediately obvious to everyone and cannot be denied. But the dissecting sciences, the sciences of life, the phenomena of life and life’s functions and also spiritual science have in recent times investigated all these features much more deeply and accurately, and have thereby increased their number and strengthened their significance. Various other sciences have also contributed to confirm and extend these similarities between man and animal. The study of the human body in the mother’s womb, before birth, showed that in the very first stages of its existence, man showed a resemblance to fish, amphibians and lower mammals. Palaeontology, which studies the conditions of ancient times, discovered human remains such as skeletons, bones, skulls, tools, decorations, dwellings, etc., which indicated that centuries ago man lived in a very simple way in some regions of the earth. Ethnologists have learned about tribes and peoples who are spiritually and physically separated from the civilized nations by a great distance, When these facts, brought together from different quarters, became known, philosophical thought hastened to relate them to each other and merge them into one system, the

system of slow development of all things, especially mankind. This idea of development did not arise only after and because of the facts, but it had existed for a long time, had been advocated by various philosophers and was now applied to the partly new found facts. The old system was now, it was believed, resting on established facts; and a cry of joy went up that all the riddles of the world except one, that of eternal matter and power, had been solved and all secrets discovered. But scarcely had this proud edifice of developmental theory been completed when the attack and the demolition began. Darwinism, said a famous philosopher, emerged in the sixties, held its triumphal march in the seventies, was at its height in the eighties, was then doubted by a few in the nineties and since the end of the last century strongly opposed by many. The first and sharpest attack was directed against the explanation which Darwin had tried to give of the way in which the various species had originated. The struggle for existence and the natural choice of cultivation were unable to provide the service to which they had been called. It is true that in the world of plants, animals and mankind there is often a fearful struggle that has an important 'influence' on their nature and existence. But it is by no means proven that this struggle can produce new species. It can help to strengthen aptitudes and abilities, organs and powers through exercise and effort; it can develop what is, but it cannot produce what does not exist. It is also an exaggeration, as everyone knows from his or her own experience, that there is always conflict everywhere and that there is nothing but conflict.

There is not only hatred and enmity, there is also love and cooperation and helpfulness in the world. The doctrine that nowhere is there anything but war of all against all is as one-sided as the idyllic view of the eighteenth century, which found peace and tranquility everywhere in nature. There is room for many at the great table of nature, and the earth, which God gave to mankind as a dwelling place, is inexhaustibly rich. Many facts and phenomena have nothing at all to do with a struggle for existence. No one can say what the colors and shapes of snail skin, the black color of the belly skin of many vertebrates, the graying of hair in old age, the reddening of leaves in autumn have to do with the struggle for life. It is also not true that in this struggle the strongest specimens always and exclusively win, and the weakest always perish. A so-called coincidence, a happy or unhappy circumstance, often mocks all our calculations. A strong man is sometimes snatched away in his prime, and a weak and infirm man or woman extends life into old age. A Dutch scientist has therefore substituted Darwin's natural choice of cultivation with another theory, that of mutation, according to which changes in the species do not occur regularly and slowly, but sometimes suddenly and leaps and bounds; but the question is whether such changes are only changes within the species, or whether they give rise to new species. And the answer to this question is, in turn, related to the definition of the concept of species. And not only the struggle for existence, the natural choice of cultivation and the survival of the fittest, but also the inheritance of acquired characteristics, which Darwin assumed to be necessary in order to increase the rate of development, has lost its credit with many. The passing on of the natural, innate qualities of the parents to the children argues from the nature of the case more against than for Darwinism, because it includes the constancy of the species; from humans, for centuries on end, only humans have emerged. But about the inheritance of characteristics acquired later in life there is nowadays so much difference of opinion that nothing can be said with certainty. What is certain is that acquired characteristics are often not passed on from parents to children. Circumcision, for example, has been used for centuries by some peoples and yet it leaves no trace on the children; it always has to be done to each child. Inheritance takes place only within certain limits and does

not change the species. If the change has been produced artificially, it must also be maintained artificially or else it will be lost. Neither heredity nor mutability are explained by Darwinism; both are facts whose existence is not in doubt, but whose coherence and connection lie as yet beyond our knowledge.

More and more, therefore, the men of science have abandoned Darwinism proper, Darwinism in the narrow sense, namely the attempt to explain species change by struggle for existence, natural choice of cultivation and inheritance of acquired characteristics. The prophecy of one of the first and most important opponents of Darwin's theory has literally been fulfilled, that this attempt to explain the mysteries of life would not reach the end of the (nineteenth) century. But of much more importance is the fact that criticism has not only raised its voice against Darwin's method of explanation, but also against development theory. Of course, facts remain facts and cannot and should not be denied. But it is something else with the theory, which is built on those facts by thinking. And it now appeared more and more that the development theory did not fit the facts and was even in conflict with them.

Geology (the science of the earth's strata) brought to light that the lower and higher animal species did not appear one after the other, but have existed side by side since the oldest times. Palaeontology did not provide any conclusive proof for the existence of transitional forms between the various species of organic beings, which, according to Darwin's theory of extremely slow development through extremely minor changes, should have been present in large numbers; also the much desired and diligently pursued transitional form of monkey and man has so far not been found anywhere. The study of the development of the human body in the mother's womb does show some external similarity to the development of other animal bodies before birth; but this similarity is external, because from an animal body in the mother's womb a human being never develops, and conversely from that of a human being an animal never develops; from the moment of conception, therefore, human beings and animals already diverge, although the inner difference is not perceptible to us. Biology, the science of life and life-phenomena, has so far provided so little support for the assumption that life arose spontaneously that many now even accept the impossibility of this and have renewed the earlier idea of a special life force. As they continue their research, physics and chemistry have uncovered more and more mysteries and wonders in the world of the infinitely small, and have led many people back to the view that the last constituents of things are not substances but forces. And - to mention no more - all the attempts that have been made to explain consciousness, freedom of will, reason, conscience, language, religion, morality, etc., solely from development, have as yet met with none of them with a favorable outcome. The origins of all these phenomena, as well as those of all things, are shrouded in mystery to science. For it is important to note that when man appears to us in history, he is already a man in body and soul, and he already possesses, everywhere and at all times, all those human qualities and activities whose origins science is investigating. Nowhere are people found that they do not have a mind and will, reason and conscience, thought and language, religion and morality, marriage and family, etc.? If all these characteristics and phenomena were to have developed gradually, then that development certainly took place in pre-historic times, that is to say, in those times of which we know nothing directly and which can only be traced back to later times on the basis of a few pieces of information. Science which wants to penetrate to that prehistoric time and find the origins of things must therefore, by its very nature, resort to guesses, conjectures and suppositions.

These are not susceptible of strict proof. The theory of development, and in particular the theory of the descent of man from animals, is in the least unsupported by facts from the historical period. Of all the elements of which it is composed, only a philosophical world view remains, which seeks to explain all things and phenomena without God, only from and through itself. One of its advocates expressed it openly: there remains only the choice between the theory of descent and the miracle; since the latter is absolutely impossible from a scientific point of view, we are forced to take our stand in the first. But this also shows that the theory of descent is not the result of accurate science, but a postulate of materialistic or pantheistic philosophy. It is not, as someone expressed it years ago, a hypothesis to explain facts, but it constructs facts to confirm a hypothesis. The idea of the origin of man is most closely related to his being. Many people nowadays speak differently, suggesting that the world and mankind, however they may have been conceived of and developed in the past, are what they are today■ and remain the same for all mankind. The latter is, of course, perfectly true; reality remains absolutely the same, whether we form a correct or incorrect conception of it. But the same is true, in the same sense, of the origin of things. Whether we imagine that the world and mankind have become this way or that way, for example, have gradually developed from themselves over the course of centuries through minor changes, the origin of things is not changed in the slightest. The world has become as it has become, and not as we would think or wish it to be. But the idea of the origin of things is inseparable from the idea of the nature of things.

If the first is wrong, the second cannot be right. If we think that the earth and all the kingdoms of nature, that all creatures and in particular mankind, came into being without God, solely as a result of the development of forces that lie in the world, then it goes without saying that such a thought must have the greatest influence on our conception of the nature of the world and of mankind.

World and man remain completely the same in themselves and are independent of our conception; but for us they change, increase or decrease in value and significance, as we think differently about their origin and creation. This is so obvious that it needs no further explanation or confirmation. But since the opinion that we can think whatever we like about the origin of things, because their essence remains the same for us, recurs again and again, e.g., in the teaching of Scripture, the religion of Israel, the person of Christ, religion, morality, etc., it may be useful to demonstrate the falsity of this opinion a little more fully in the teaching of the nature of man. This is not difficult. For if man has gradually developed from the animal, without God, solely by blindly working natural forces, it goes without saying that he cannot essentially differ from the animal and remains an animal even in his highest development. There is then no place left for a soul distinct from the body, for moral freedom and personal immortality; and religion, truth, morality and beauty lose their absolute character.

These conclusions are not imposed by us on the proponents of the evolution theory, but are derived from it by them. Darwin, for example, says himself that our unmarried women, if mankind had been brought up in exactly the same conditions as the honeybees, would consider it a sacred duty, like the worker bees, to kill their brothers, and mothers would try to kill their fertile daughters, without anyone thinking of intervening. Good and evil, like true and false, are relative concepts, whose sense and value, like fashion, are subject to the changing of times and places. Likewise, according to others, religion has only been a temporary help, which mankind has used in its powerlessness in the struggle against nature and which now still serves as a sleeping potion for

the people, but which in time, when mankind has attained full freedom, will naturally die out and disappear. Sin and crime, fornication and murder, do not make man guilty, but are after-effects of the uncivilized state in which mankind has lived in the past, and diminish as mankind develops and society improves; the criminals are to be considered as children, as animals or as mentally ill, and must be treated accordingly; the prisons must make way for institutions of improvement. In a word, if man is not of divine but of animal origin and has gradually raised himself above it, he owes everything to himself, is his own legislator and master and lord. All these conclusions of the (materialistic or pantheistic) theory of development are very clearly revealed in contemporary science, as well as in literature, art and the practice of life. But reality teaches quite differently. Man may well imagine that he has become everything himself and is bound by nothing. But he remains a dependent creature in all respects; he cannot do what he wants. In his physical life he remains bound to the laws governing respiration and circulation, digestion and reproduction. If he goes against these laws and does not pay attention to them, he damages his health and undermines his own life. And the same is true of his soul and spirit life. Man cannot think as he pleases, but is thereby bound by laws which he has not devised and not given himself, but which are embedded in his thinking and come to manifestation. And if he does not abide by these laws, he will be trapping himself in error and lies. Man also cannot will and act as he wishes; his will is subject to the discipline of reason and conscience; and if he disregards this discipline and reduces his will and action to an arbitrary level, self-accusation and self-reproach, regret and remorse, gnawing and remorse of conscience will follow. The life of the soul, therefore, is not built on arbitrariness any more than the physical life is. It is not a state of lawlessness and anarchy, but is governed by laws from all sides and in all its activities. It is subject to rules of truth and goodness and beauty and thus proves that it did not create itself. In a word, man brings with him his own nature, his own essence, which can never be violated with impunity. And so much is nature stronger than doctrine in this respect, that even the adherents of the theory of evolution continue to speak of a human nature, of uniquely human characteristics, of man’s prescribed laws of thought and conduct, of an innate religious disposition. The idea of the nature of man then conflicts with that of his origin. In Scripture, however, there is perfect agreement between the two. Man’s being corresponds to his origin. Because man, although formed according to his body from the dust of the earth, received the breath of life from above and was created by God Himself, he is an individual being, he has an individual nature. And that essence lies in the fact that he is the image of God and shows His likeness.

Through this image of God mankind is distinguished both from animals and angels. He has traits in common with both of them, but he differs from them in his own nature.

Like all creatures, animals were also created by God; they did not come into existence by themselves, but by a special word, by an act of God. And they were also created in different species, just like the plants. All human beings descend from one pair of parents and therefore form one family. But that is not the case with animals; they have, so to speak, different progenitors. It is therefore remarkable that zoology (zoology) has so far not been able to reduce all animals to a single type; it immediately starts dividing them into seven or four main groups or basic forms (or types). In connection with this it is also certain, that most animals are not spread over the whole earth, but live in certain regions; the fish live in the water, the birds in the air, and the land animals are for the most part bound to certain countries: the polar bear is only found in the far north and

the platypus only in Australia. In Genesis it is therefore specifically said that God created the plants, Genesis 1:11, and also the animals according to their nature, that is, in species. Of course this does not mean that the species originally created by God were exactly the same as those into which animals are now divided by science, for example by Linnaeus. For in the first place, our classification is always fallible and open to revision, because our zoology is still imperfect and because we do not know how to classify the species. The artificial, scientific concept of species is very difficult to establish and is completely different from the natural concept of species, which we are still searching for. Secondly, in the course of time a large number of animals have become extinct or extirpated. From the remains, which have been preserved intact or damaged in the earth's strata, it appears that various animal species, such as mammoth, cave hyaene, fish lizard, which no longer exist, lived in large numbers in earlier times. And thirdly, it is certain that, as a result of various influences, the animal world has undergone major modifications and changes which often make it difficult or impossible for us to reduce it to its original form. But then, moreover, it is remarkable in the creation of animals, as it is in that of plants, that, although they come into being by a special act of power, nature indirectly plays a part. The earth brings forth plants, seed-sowing crops and fruit trees, it is said in Genesis 1:11, and the earth did so, Genesis 1:12. And likewise the message in Genesis 1:20 the waters bring forth a multitude of living souls in sorts, and so it came to pass, Genesis 1:21; and in Genesis 1:24, the earth brings forth living souls, cattle, and creeping and wild beasts in sorts, and so it came to pass. With all plants and animals, therefore, nature itself is used by God as an instrument; it is she who, although naturally enabled and made fit for the task by God's Word, brings forth all these living creatures in great variety of species.

Now this peculiar origin of animals also throws light on their being. That origin shows, namely, that the animals are much more closely connected with the earth and nature than mankind. The animals are living beings, and as such are distinguished from inorganic, lifeless creatures; they are therefore often called living souls, Genesis 1:20-21, Genesis 1:24; in the general sense of the principle of life, animals also have a soul, Genesis 2:19, Genesis 9:4, Genesis 9:10, Genesis 9:12, Genesis 9:16. But this vital principle of the soul is with the animals so closely bound to nature, to metabolism, that they cannot attain independence and autonomy and cannot continue to exist independently of metabolism.

Therefore, the soul of the animal dies with death. And from this it further follows, that the animals, at least the higher species, have the same senses as man and that they can perceive (hear, see, smell, taste, touch), form ideas and can connect these ideas with each other, but the animals have no reason, they cannot detach the ideas from the special, individual and concrete, which clings to them; They cannot convert them into concepts, raise them to concepts, link these concepts to judgements, draw conclusions from these judgements, and execute these conclusions by a will. Animals have perceptions, representations and connections of representations; they have instincts, desires and drives. But they lack the higher faculty of knowledge and desire that is characteristic of man; they have no reason and no will. And all this is reflected in the fact that animals have no language, no religion, no morality and no sense of beauty; they have no conception of God, of the unseen, of the true, the good and the beautiful. In all these things man is far superior to the animal; there is no gradual transition between the two but a cleft; that which constitutes man's actual being, his reason and will, his thought and language, his religion and

morality, etc., is alien to the animal. That is why the animal cannot understand man, but man can understand the animal. Nowadays psychology seeks to explain the soul of man from that of the animal, but in doing so it takes the opposite path. The soul of man is the key to explaining the soul of the animal; the animal lacks what man possesses, but man also shares what is typical of the animal. This is not to say that man already knows the animal through and through. The whole world is a problem for man, a solution to which he seeks and can seek, and likewise every animal is a living riddle. The meaning of the animal, therefore, by no means only consists of being useful to man and providing him with food and shelter, clothing and ornaments. There is much more to the subjugation and domination of the earth than the fact that mankind, rather selfishly, uses everything to his advantage. The animal world also has significance for our science and art, for our religion and morality. God has something, and a lot, to say to us. His thoughts and words speak to us from the whole world, from the world of plants and animals; and when botany and zoology trace these thoughts, they are, like those of the whole of nature, wonderful sciences, which no man, and above all no Christian, may despise. And then again, how rich is not the ethical (maritime) significance of the animal world for mankind! The animal shows us the boundary below which man must raise himself up and to which he may not sink back. Man can become an animal and less than an animal if he numbs the light of reason, breaks the link with heaven and seeks all his lust and pleasure in the earth. The animals are symbols of our virtues and vices; the dog shows us the image of loyalty, the spider of diligence, the lion of courage, the sheep of simplicity, the dove of sincerity, the stag of the soul that thirsts after God; But likewise the fox is the image of cleverness, the worm of misery, the tiger of cruelty, the swine of meanness, the serpent of the devil’s trickery, and the monkey, which comes closest in stature to man, proclaims what the excellence of physical organization means and is capable of without the spirit that is from above. In the monkey man beholds his own caricature.

Just as man differs from animals in the image of God, so he is also distinguished from angels in the image of God. The existence of such beings cannot be proved by scientific means apart from the Scriptures; science knows nothing about them, it cannot argue that they exist, nor can it demonstrate the contrary. But it is noteworthy that the belief in beings who are superior to man occurs in all peoples and religions, and that after people have rejected the Scriptures’ testimony to the existence of angels, they return to believing in supernatural beings in all kinds of superstitious forms. Our present generation provides abundant evidence of this. Angels and devils are no longer believed in, but in their place has returned in many circles to the belief in silent forces, mysterious natural powers, ghosts, spirit appearances, revelations of the dead, animated stars, inhabited planets, living atoms, etc. Whether they are based on deception or reality, they forbid all soothsaying, Leviticus 19:31, Leviticus 20:27, Deuteronomy 18:10-14, sorcery, Deuteronomy 18:10, Jeremiah 27:10, Revelation 21:8, star-worship, Leviticus 19:26, Isaiah 47:13, Micah 5:11, interrogation of the dead or daemons, Deuteronomy 18:11, guile or consultation of oracles, Leviticus 19:26, Deuteronomy 18:10, conjuration with magic formulas, Deuteronomy 18:11, Isaiah 47:9 etc., and thereby puts an end to all superstition, as well as all unbelief. Christianity and superstition are sworn enemies, and not science, enlightenment or civilization, but only faith in God’s Word is the power that saves us from them. The Scriptures make man fundamentally dependent on God, but precisely because of this make him free of all creatures; they place man in the right relation to nature and thereby make possible the true science of nature. But Scripture teaches that there are angels, not mythical creations of the human imagination, not

personifications of mysterious forces, not descendants risen to a higher rank, but spiritual beings created by God, subject to His will, called to His service; beings, therefore, of whom we can form a clear conception by the light of Scripture, and who have nothing in common with the mythological figures of pagan religions. They are high above men in knowledge, Matthew 18:10, Matthew 24:36, and power, Psalms 103:20, Colossians 1:16, but they are created by the same God and through the same Word, John 1:3, Colossians 1:16, and have the same reasoning power. Colossians 1:16, and have the same reasonable and moral nature, so that, for example, it can be said of the good angels that they obey God's voice and do His good, Psalms 103:20-21, and of the evil angels that they do not stand in the truth, John 8:44, are tempted, Ephesians 6:11, and sin, 2 Peter 2:4. But in spite of this similarity, there is nevertheless a great difference between angels and men. The first difference is that the angels are not composed of soul and body, but are pure spirits (Hebrews 1:14). Revelation 18:3, Revelation 19:14, indicate that these forms were temporary forms of appearance and alternated according to the nature of the mission. The angels are therefore never called souls, living souls, like animals and men. For the soul and spirit are distinguished by the fact that the soul is spiritual by nature, incorporeal, unseen and even in man forms a spiritual independence; but the soul is always a spiritual force or a spiritual independence, which is placed on a body, fits a body and without such a body is incomplete and imperfect. The soul is the spirit that is organized into a physical life. Such a soul is characteristic of the animals and especially of mankind: if man loses his body through death, he continues to exist, but in a deprived, naked condition, so that the resurrection at the last day is a restoration of that loss. But the angels are not souls; they were never intended for a corporeal life and, therefore, have not received the earth but heaven as their dwelling place; they are mere spirits. This is why they have great advantages over human beings, for they are superior in knowledge and power, have a much freer relation to time and space than human beings, can move much more easily and are thus eminently suitable for carrying out God's commands here on earth. But - and this is the second difference between angels and human beings - these advantages have a reverse side. Because the angels are pure spirits, they all stand apart from each other in a relative sense. They were all created at the same time in the beginning and have lived and continue to live side by side. They do not form one organic whole, not one family. However, there is a natural order among them; for according to Scripture there are thousands upon thousands of angels, Deuteronomy 33:2, and these are divided into classes, into Cherubim, Genesis 3:24, Seraphim, Isaiah 6:1-13, thrones, powers, dominions and forces, Ephesians 1:21, Ephesians 3:13, Colossians 1:16, Colossians 2:10, and also distinguished among themselves in rank ; Gabriel and Michael occupy among them a special place, Daniel 8:16, Daniel 9:21, Daniel 10:13, Daniel 10:21, Luke 1:19, Luke 1:26. But nevertheless, they do not form one family, they do not exist in each other's blood, they did not spring from each other. We may speak of a single humanity, but not in that sense of an ■angeliness. When Christ assumed human nature, then He was at once related to all men, their blood relative, their brother in the flesh. But the angels live side by side, each on his own account, so that one part of them could fall and another part could remain faithful to God.

Now there is a third difference in connection with this: since the angels are spirits and therefore not related to the earth, and since they are not related by blood to one another and therefore do not know men and women, fathers and mothers, parents and children, brothers and sisters, etc., there is a complete separation of angels and angels. They may be more powerful than human beings, but they are not so versatile, they have far fewer relationships, and the wealth and depth of their

emotional life far surpasses that of angels. It is true that Jesus says in Matthew 22:30 that marriage will end with this dispensation, but the relationships on earth have increased the spiritual treasures of mankind to a significant degree, and these treasures will not be lost in the resurrection either; they will be preserved for eternity.

If we then consider that the richest revelation which God has given us lies in his Father's name, and in the name of his Son, who became our likeness and our prophet, priest and king, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who has been poured out in the congregation and makes God himself live in us - if we consider all this, then we feel that it is not the angel, but mankind that has been created in God's image. Angels experience His power and wisdom and goodness, but human beings share in His eternal mercy. God is their Lord, but He is not their Father; Christ is their Head, but He is not their Reconciler and Saviour; the Holy Spirit is their Sender and Guide, but He never testifies with their minds that they are children and heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. It is here that the battle between heaven and hell is fought, it is here that the congregation is formed into the body of the Son, it is here that the decisive battle is fought and the final triumph over the enemies of God is won. Thus they want to see the secrets of salvation, which are revealed here, and they want to learn from the church the manifold wisdom of God, Ephesians 3:10, 1 Peter 1:12.

Angels therefore have many relationships with us and we with them. Faith in the existence and activity of angels is not of the same value as the faith with which we trust in God and wholeheartedly love, fear and honor Him. We may not put our trust in any creature, not even an angel; we may not worship them or pay them any religious tribute, Deuteronomy 6:13, Matthew 4:10, Revelation 22:9; and not even the guardian angels, who are supposed to be given to every man in particular, and the intercession of the angels on our behalf are mentioned in a single word of Scripture. But that does not make belief in the angels indifferent and worthless. On the contrary, they occupied an important place in the time of the revelation; they appear in the life of Jesus at all turning points, and they will one day appear with Him on the clouds of heaven. They rejoice at the conversion of sinners, Luke 15:10, watch over the faithful, Psalms 34:8, Psalms 91:11, protect the little ones, Matthew 18:10, follow the church through its history, Ephesians 3:10, and carry the children of God in Abraham's womb, Luke 16:22.

Therefore, we shall remember them with reverence and speak of them with honour; give them joy through our conversion; follow their example in serving God and in obeying His word; make them see the manifold wisdom of God in their own hearts and lives and in the whole congregation; be mindful of their fellowship, and together with them proclaim the great works of God. Thus there is difference between angels and men, but no conflict; diversity, but also unity; distinction, but also fellowship. When we come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, we also come to the many thousands of angels and with them re-establish the bond of unity and love that sin has broken. In the great, rich creation of God, they and we have our own place and accomplish our own task. Angels are the sons, the mighty heroes, the mighty hosts of God; men were created in His image and are God's lineage.

If the image of God is the distinguishing feature of mankind, we must have a clear idea of its content. In Genesis 1:26 we read that God created human beings in His image and likeness, so that they would have dominion over all creatures, especially over all living creatures. Three things attract attention. First, the similarity between God and man is expressed by two words: image and

likeness. These two words are not, as many have thought, objectively different in content, but serve to complement and reinforce each other. Together they indicate that man is not a more or less real, and much less a failed, portrait, but that he is a perfect, true image of God. Just as man is in miniature, so God is in large, in infinitely large, because man is like God. Man is infinitely lower than God and yet related to Him; as a creature he is completely dependent on God and yet, as a human being, an independent, free being; bondage and freedom, dependence and independence, immeasurable distance from and intimate relationship with God are combined in a wonderful, incomprehensible way in man. How a puny creature can at the same time be the image of God is far beyond our understanding.

Secondly, it is said that God created human beings in His image and likeness. From the beginning it was His intention that God should create not one single human being in His image, but a multitude of human beings. That is why He created man and woman right from the start, neither separate from the other, but in relationship and in fellowship with each other, Genesis 1:27. Not in the man alone, nor in the woman alone, but in both together, and in each of them in a special way and according to a special side, the image of God comes out.

It has been said that the opposite is true, because in 1 Corinthians 11:7 Paul says that the man is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man; and this passage has often been misused to deny the woman the image of God and to degrade her far below the man. But the Apostle does not speak of the man and the woman in themselves, but of their relationship in marriage. And then he says that it is not the woman, but the man who is the head; and he deduces this from the fact that the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. The man was created first, he was made first in God’s image, in him God revealed his glory first. And if the woman shares in all this, it is in the second place, indirectly, from and through the man. She did receive the image of God, but after the man, in dependence on him, under his mediation. Therefore, the man is the image and glory of God directly and originally; the woman is it in a derived way, in that she is the glory of the man. What is written in Genesis 1:1-31 and Genesis 2:1-25 must be connected with each other. The way in which the woman is created in Genesis 2:1-25 is the way in which she and the man together receive the image of God, Genesis 1:27. This further clarifies that the image of God rests in a multitude of people, with different genders, gifts and powers, that is, in mankind, and that after the fall it receives its full development in the new mankind, in the church of Christ. And thirdly, Genesis 1:26 teaches us that God had a purpose in creating man in his own image, namely that man should have dominion over all living creatures and should fill and subdue the earth in the way of multiplication and expansion. If we summarize this subjugation of the earth under the now common name of culture, then this is, in the broadest sense, the purpose with which God created man in His image. So little do cult and culture, religion and civilization, Christianity and humanity conflict with one another, that the image of God was given to man for that purpose, that he might manifest it in his dominion over the whole earth. And it is not only the oldest professions, such as hunting and fishing, agriculture and stock-breeding, that serve this dominion over the earth, but also trade and industry, finance and credit, the exploitation of mines and mountains, science and the arts. And all this culture does not end in man, but through man, who is the image of God and who imprints his spirit on all his work, returns to God, who is First and Last. The content of this image of God is unfolded more fully in the rest of Revelation. It is worth noting that even after the fall man continues to be called the image of God.

In Genesis 5:1-3 it is remembered that God created man and woman together in His image and blessed them, and that Adam thereby begot a son, who was His likeness and image. In Genesis 9:6 the killing of man is forbidden, because God made him in His image. The poet of the beautiful eighth psalm sings the praises of the glory and the majesty of the Lord, which is most splendidly manifested in heaven and earth, above all in the void man and in His sovereignty over all the works of God's hands. When Paul spoke to the Athenians on the Areopagus, he adopted the words of one of their poets with approval: For we are also the family of God. In James 3:9 the apostle, as proof of the evil of the tongue, makes this contradiction, that through it we praise God and the Father and curse those who are made in His image. And Scripture not only calls fallen man the image of God, but it also continues to regard and treat him in this way; it always sees in him a reasonable, moral being, responsible to God for all his thoughts, words and deeds, and obliged to do his service.

Nevertheless, we also find the idea that man has lost the image of God through sin. Although this is not stated anywhere directly and in so many words, it can be clearly deduced from the entire teaching of Scripture concerning sinful man. As will be shown later, sin has robbed man of innocence, righteousness and holiness; it has corrupted his heart, darkened his mind, inclined his will to evil, transformed his mind and body with all its members into the service of unrighteousness. Thus he must be changed, born again, justified, washed and sanctified. He can only partake of all these benefits in the fellowship with Christ, who is the Image of God, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:15, and whose image we must be conformed to, Romans 8:29. The new man, put on by faith in his fellowship, is therefore created according to God's will in true righteousness and holiness, Eph. The virtues of knowledge, righteousness and holiness, which the believer acquires through the fellowship of Christ, have their origin, example and ultimate goal in God and make man partakers of the divine nature again, 2 Peter 1:4. This teaching of Scripture is the basis for the distinction which is usually made in Reformed theology between the image of God in a wider and a narrower sense. If, on the one hand, after his fall and disobedience, man still retains the image and the lineage of God, and if, on the other hand, man has lost those virtues which in particular conform him to God through sin and only receives them back in communion with Christ, then the one and the other are in harmony only if the image of God includes something else and something more than exclusively the virtues of knowledge, righteousness and holiness. This was recognized by the Reformed and upheld by them against the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics. The Lutherans do not distinguish between the image of God in a wider and a narrower sense; and if they make the distinction at all, they attach little value to it and do not see its significance. For them the image of God coincides with the original righteousness, that is, with the virtues of knowledge, righteousness and holiness. They know only the image of God in a narrower sense, and feel no need to relate this image of God to the whole of human nature. The religious and moral life of man forms its own, separate field; it is not connected with and has no influence on the work which man is called to do in society and state, in art and science. If the Lutheran Christian partakes of the forgiveness of sins and communion with God through faith, then this is enough for him; he rests and enjoys in this and does not worry about relating this spiritual life back to God's counsel and election, and forth to mankind's entire earthly vocation.

It follows, therefore, in the opposite direction that man, having lost the original righteousness through sin, is deprived of the whole image of God; he has nothing left of it, not even minor

remnants; he is like a stick and a block, and is thus short-changed and misunderstood in the rational and moral nature which is still his own. On the other hand, the Roman Catholics do distinguish between the image of God in a broader and a narrower sense, although they usually do not use these terms correctly; and they are also careful to establish some connection between the two. But with them this connection is not internal, but external; it is not grounded in both natures, but artificial; not organic, but mechanical. The Roman Catholics propose that without the virtues of knowledge, righteousness and holiness (the image of God in the narrow sense), man is conceivable and can exist in reality. In that case man still has a religious and moral life, but only to the degree and extent that can flow from natural religion and natural morals; it remains, as it were, limited to and within this earth, and can never pave the way for him to heavenly bliss and the direct vision of God. Moreover, although it is possible in the abstract that such a natural man, without the image of God in the narrow sense, can fulfil the duties of natural religion and of the natural moral law as required, in reality this is extremely difficult, because man is a material, bodily, sensual being. This sensual nature of man is always accompanied by lust, and although this lust in itself is not yet a sin, it is nevertheless a very easy occasion for sin. For by its very nature it is opposed to the spirit, being fleshly, and is a constant danger to it, that reason and will may be overpowered by the power of the flesh. For these two reasons God has freely added to natural man the image of God in the narrow sense. God could have created man without this image; but because He foresaw that man would then very easily become a prey to fleshly lusts, and because He also wanted to bring man to a higher state of salvation than is possible here on earth, namely, to heavenly glory in His immediate presence;

Therefore God added to man the original righteousness and thereby raised him from his natural state to a higher, supernatural position. This achieved two goals. Firstly, with the aid of this supernatural addition man could very easily restrain, control and suppress his natural lust for the flesh; and secondly, by fulfilling the supernatural duties prescribed by the original righteousness (the image of God in a narrower sense) he could also acquire a corresponding supernatural blessedness. The supernatural addition of original righteousness thus serves two purposes for Rome: it serves as a rein for the flesh, and at the same time it paves the way of merit to heaven.

Between the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics, the Reformed take their own position. According to the Holy Scriptures, the image of God is broader and more extensive than the original righteousness; for while the latter has been lost through sin, man still bears the name of the image and family of God; there are still small remnants in him of the likeness of God, according to which he was originally created. The original righteousness, therefore, could not have been a gift that was entirely separate from itself and in no way connected to human nature. Man did not first exist, whether in thought only or also in reality, as a naked natural being, to which later the original righteousness was imposed from without or added from above. But man was conceived and created at one and the same time with that original righteousness; it is inherent in the idea of man; man without it is neither conceivable nor existent; the image of God in the narrower sense is closely related to the image of God in the wider sense; man does not bear the image of God, but he is the image of God. The image of God is part of man himself; it extends as far as the human being in man. Insofar as man has remained a man in the condition of sin, he has also retained remnants of the image of God, and to the same degree as he has lost the image of God, he has also ceased to be man, truly and completely. The image of God in the narrow sense is nothing

more than man's spiritual health. If man becomes sick in body and soul, even if he becomes insane, he still remains a man, but he has lost something that belongs to man's harmony, and in its place he has gained something that is contrary to that harmony. Likewise, when man has lost his original righteousness through sin, he has remained a man, but he has lost something that is inseparable from the idea of man, and he has received in its place something that is excluded by that idea. Man, having lost the image of God, did not therefore become a stick and a log, but he retained his reasonable and moral nature. And he did not lose something that did not really belong to his nature, but received something in its place, which affected and destroyed his entire nature. Just as the original righteousness was man's spiritual health, so sin is his spiritual infirmity; sin is moral corruption, spiritual death, death in sins and crimes, as Scripture describes it. This conception of the image of God does full justice to all the teaching of Scripture; it maintains at the same time the connection and distinction between nature and grace, between creation and re-creation. She gratefully and wholeheartedly acknowledges the grace of God, which enabled man to remain a man even after the fall and continues to regard and act upon him as a reasonable, moral, responsible being; and she also maintains that this same man, deprived of the image of God, is totally corrupted and inclined to all evil. Life and history are there to confirm this. For in the deepest recesses man's nature is still preserved; and whatever summit of earthly greatness man may reach, even there he remains small and weak, guilty and impure. Only the image of God makes man a true and complete man.

If we now try to give a brief overview of the contents of the image of God, we must first consider the spiritual nature of man. Man is a physical being, but he is also a spiritual being; he shares a soul, which at its core is spirit. This is clear from what the Scriptures teach about the origin, nature and longevity of the human soul. With respect to the origin, we read that, unlike the animals, Adam received the breath of life from above (Genesis 2:7), and this is certainly true of all human beings. For it is God who gives each man his spirit, Ecclesiastes 12:7, and forms the spirit of man within him, Zechariah 12:1, and therefore, in distinction to the fathers of the flesh, can be called the Father of spirits, Hebrews 12:9. This special origin of the human soul also determines its being. It is true that the Scriptures several times attribute a soul to animals as well, Genesis 2:19, Genesis 9:4, etc., but then the word is used in the broader sense of life principle. Man, however, possesses another, higher soul, a soul whose core and essence is spirit. This is reflected in the fact that the Holy Scriptures attribute a spirit of their own to man, but never to animals. The animals do share a spirit in the sense that they, along with all other creatures, are supported and sustained by the Spirit of God (Psalms 104:30), but they have no independent spirit of their own. On the other hand, the human beings each have their own spirit, Deuteronomy 2:30, Richt. 15:19, Ezekiel 3:14, Luke 23:46, Acts 7:59, 1 Corinthians 2:11, 1 Corinthians 5:3-4. Because of this spiritual nature, the soul of man is also immortal; it does not die with the body as with animals, but returns to God, who gave it spirit, Ecclesiastes 12:7, cannot be killed as the body by men, Matthew 10:28, and continues to exist as the spirit, Hebrews 12:13, 1 Peter 3:19. This spirituality of the soul elevates man above the animal and makes him equal to the angels. He belongs to the sensuous world and is earthly in origin, but he rises above the earth through the immortal spirit that has been implanted in him, and enters royally free into the realm of the spirits. Through his spiritual nature man is related to God, who is Spirit, John 4:24, and dwells for ever, Isaiah 57:15.

Secondly, the image of God is manifested in the faculties and powers that have been given to man's spirit. The higher animals are able to obtain images through perception and to link these to one another, but they do not get any further than this. Man, on the other hand, elevates himself above conceptions and ascends into the realm of concepts and ideas. By thinking, which cannot be understood as a movement or separation of the brain but is a spiritual activity, he derives the general from the particular, ascends from the visible to the invisible, forms the ideas of the true, the good and the beautiful, and learns to understand God's eternal power and divinity from the creatures. By the will, which is also distinguished from sensual desire, he separates himself from the material world and reaches out to unseen and transcendental goods. His affections are by no means only set in motion by useful and pleasant things within the circle of the material world, but they are also aroused by ideal, spiritual goods which cannot be calculated in numbers. All these forces and activities have their starting point and center in the self-awareness through which man knows himself and carries within him an inextinguishable awareness of his own existence and of the peculiarities of his rational and moral nature. And all these special faculties are outwardly manifest in language and religion, in morality and law, in art and science, all of which, with many others, are phenomena in the human world and do not occur in animals.

All these forces and activities are traits of the image of God. For, according to the revelation in nature and Scripture, God is not an unconscious, blind force, but He is a personal, self-conscious, knowing and willing being. Even affections and passions, such as wrath, jealousy, hatred, vengeance, mercy, love, etc., are attributed to God in Scripture without hesitation, not as disorders which He patiently undergoes, but as actions of His all-powerful, holy and loving being. Scripture could not speak of God in this human way if man had not been created in His image in all these powers and effects.

Thirdly, this even applies to man's body. This too is not completely excluded from the image of God. Scripture does say explicitly that God is Spirit, John 4:24, and nowhere does it attribute a body to Him. Yet God is also the Creator of the body and of the whole visible world; all things, including material things, have their origin and substance in the Word, which was with God, John 1:3, Colossians 1:15, and therefore rest in thought, in spirit. Furthermore, although the body is the instrument, it is not the cause of all those activities which man performs; it is not the ear that hears, but the soul of man that hears through the ear. The Scriptures speak of his hands and feet, his eyes and ears, and so much more, to show that whatever man does and does by means of his body, originally and perfectly belongs to God. Should He who plants the ear not hear? Should He, who forms the eye, not behold? Psalms 94:9. So, inasmuch as the body serves as an instrument for the work of the spirit, it bears some resemblance and gives us some idea of the way God works in the world.

All this still belongs to the image of God in the wider sense. But the resemblance of God and man is much stronger in the original righteousness with which the first man was endowed and which is called the image of God in the narrow sense. When Scripture emphasizes this original righteousness, it indicates that the image of God is not only and not primarily about the that, but primarily about the what. It is not that we think and will, love and hate, but that man's likeness to God has its primary meaning therein, which is the content of our thought and will, the object of our hate and our love. The formal faculties of position and will, of affection and aversion, were given to man for that very purpose, that he might use them in the right way, according to God's will and to

His honor. The devils have also retained the faculties of knowledge and willingness, but they use them only in the service of their hatred and enmity against God; even belief in God's existence, which is in itself something good, produces in them nothing but trembling and fear of His judgment, (James 2:19). But because they did just the opposite, and sought to kill Jesus, they betrayed that they were of the devil's father, and wanted to do his will (John 8:39-44). The desires of the Jews and the works they did, in spite of all their cleverness and zeal, made them equal to the devil. And so, conversely, man's likeness to God is not expressed chiefly in his having an intellect and a reason, a heart and a will; but it is manifested chiefly in pure knowledge and in perfect righteousness and holiness, which together constitute the image of God in the narrow sense, and with which man was favoured and adorned at his creation. The knowledge given to the first man did not mean that he knew everything and could no longer learn anything about God, himself and the world; for even the knowledge of the angels and the blessed is still there, and the knowledge of Christ on earth was open to increase until the end of his life. But this means that Adam received a knowledge that was sufficient for his situation and calling and that this knowledge was pure. He loved the truth with all his soul; the lie, with all its pitiful consequences of error, doubt, unbelief and uncertainty, had not yet taken root in his heart; he stood in the truth, and saw and knew and appreciated everything as it really was. This knowledge of the truth brought with it righteousness and holiness. Holiness indicates that the first man was created free from all the stain of sin; his nature was undefiled; no evil thought, deliberation or desire came out of his heart; he was not dumb as an ignoramus, but knew God, and he also knew the law of God, which was written in his heart, and loved it with all his soul; because he stood in the truth, he also stood in love. And righteousness indicates that man, who thus knew the truth in his mind and was holy in his will and in all his affections, thus fully agreed with God's law, fully satisfied the demands of his right, and stood before Him guiltless; truth and love bring peace, peace with God and with ourselves and with the whole world. Man, who stands in the right place, where he ought to stand, also automatically stands in the right relation to God and all creatures. A head and a heart, a mind and a will that are completely pure and free from all sin are far beyond our experience. When we consider how sin is woven into all our thinking and speaking, all our will and action, then even the doubt may arise in our hearts as to whether such a state of truth, love and peace is possible for mankind. But the Scriptures overcome and dispel that doubt. For first of all, not only at the beginning, but also in the middle of history, it presents us with a man who could quite rightly ask his adversaries: Who among you convinces me of sin? John 8:46. Christ was a true and therefore perfect man, who committed no sin, and no guile was found in his mouth, 1 Peter 2:22. And secondly, it teaches that the first human couple was created in the image of ■God, in righteousness and holiness as the fruit of known truth. In addition, Scripture maintains that sin is not part of the nature of man, and that it can therefore be removed from that nature.

If sin has clung to man from his earliest origins, by virtue of his inherent nature, then, by its very nature, no deliverance from sin is possible; deliverance from sin would be tantamount to the destruction of human nature. But not only is a man without sin conceivable in the abstract, but such a holy man has actually existed. And when he fell and became guilty and unclean, then another man, the second Adam, rose up without sin, to free fallen man from all guilt and to cleanse him from all stain. The creation of man in God's image and the possibility of his fall include the possibility of his redemption and re-creation; but he who denies the first cannot maintain the second, and the denial of the fall has as its flipside the dismal preaching of man's irredeemability.

To fall, however, man must first have stood; to lose the image of God, he must first have possessed it. The creation of man in the image of God had, according to Genesis 1:26, Genesis 1:28, the immediate goal of fulfilling, subduing and ruling the earth. This dominion is not a constituent part of the image of God and much less, as is sometimes claimed, makes up its entire content, but it is also by no means an arbitrary and incidental addition. On the contrary, the emphasis placed on it and its close connection with the creation in God's image prove conclusively that the image of God comes out in that reign and must unfold and expound its content more and more. Furthermore, in the description of this dominion it is clearly expressed that, to a certain extent, it was given to the first couple immediately, but that it had to be acquired in the future to a very significant degree. After all, God not only says in general terms that He wants to create ■humans' in His own image and likeness, Genesis 1:26, but when He created the first couple of men and women, He blessed them and said to them: Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, Genesis 1:28, and even more specifically He gave Adam the task of cultivating the garden and keeping it in order, Genesis 2:15.

All this teaches us as clear as day that man was not created to be idle, but to work. He was not to rest on his laurels, but was to go out into the wide world and submit it to the power of his word and will. He was given a large, extensive, rich task to do on earth. He was entrusted with a work that would require centuries of effort. A road was pointed out to him, of immense length, which he had to follow and which he had to travel to the end. In a word, there is a great difference and a long distance between the situation in which the first man was created and the destination to which he was called. Although this destiny is closely connected with his being, just as this being is closely connected with his origin, it is nevertheless distinct from it. The essence of mankind, that is, the image of God, after which he was created, had to develop its content ever more richly and fully in the pursuit of his destiny; it had to be extended, so to speak, by mankind to the ends of the earth and pressed into all the works of his hands. The world had to be worked by man so that it became more and more a revelation of God's virtues.

Dominion over the earth was therefore the nearest, but not the last goal to which man was called. The nature of the matter already indicates this. Work, which is true work, cannot rest and does not have a final goal in itself, but always aims to accomplish something and stops when this goal is reached. Work, merely for the sake of work, without consultation, without a plan, without a purpose, is without hope and unworthy of a reasonable man. Development that always continues is not development; to say development is to say progress, course, order, final goal, destination. If man was called to work when he was created, this implies that after completing his work, he should enter into rest for himself and for the human race that is to come from him. The institution of the seven-day week confirms and strengthens this consideration, which stems from the nature of the matter. God worked six days in His creation and rested on the seventh day from all His work. Man, having been created in God's image, receives the right and privilege to follow God's example in this right from the moment of creation. The work entrusted to him, namely the fulfillment and subjugation of the earth, is a faint imitation of God's creative activity; his work, too, is undertaken with deliberation, proceeds in a regular order, and has a definite purpose. Man is not a machine that moves forward unconsciously; he does not turn with unchanging uniformity on a treadmill; but he is also in his work a man, the image of God, a thinking, willing, acting being, who with his work seeks to create something and who at the end looks down with satisfaction on the work of his

hands. His work ends, as with God himself, in resting, enjoying, in pleasure. The six-day week with the Sabbath at the end, nobles human work, elevates it above the monotonous work of inanimate nature, and gives it the stamp of a divine profession. Therefore, whoever enters God's rest on the Sabbath day in accordance with his purpose, rests in the same joyful manner on his works, as God rests on his own, Hebr. 4:10. This applies to the individual human being, but also to the church and to mankind. The world also has its work, which is followed and concluded by the Western Sabbath. There remains a rest for the people of God, of which every Sabbath day is merely an example and foretaste, but also a prophecy and a guarantee (Hebrews 4:9). That is why the Heidelberg Catechism rightly says that God created man good and in His image, so that he might know God his Creator, love Him with all his heart and live with Him in eternal bliss, to praise and glorify Him. Man's final destination lay in eternal bliss, in the glorification of God, in heaven and not on earth. But in order to reach this final destination, he must first fulfill his calling on earth. To enter God's rest, he must first complete God's work. The way to heaven lay through and over the earth; the entrance to the Sabbath is opened up by six days' work; eternal life is attained in the way of works. This teaching on man's destiny rests entirely on thoughts expressed in Genesis 1:26-31, Genesis 2:1-3. But the remainder of the second chapter adds another important aspect. When God places man in paradise, He gives him the right to eat freely from all the trees in the garden; but He excludes one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, from which man may not eat, for if he eats it, he will die, Genesis 2:16-17. To all the commandments a single prohibition is added. The commandments were known to Adam partly from his own heart, partly from the spoken word of God. They were not invented by him, but were inculcated and communicated to him by God. Man is not religiously and morally autonomous; he is not his own lawgiver and cannot do what he likes; but God is his only Lawgiver and Judge, Isaiah 33:22, John 4:12. All those commandments which Adam received came down to this: , that he, who was created in the image of God, should remain God's image in all his thinking and doing, in all his life and work. He had to remain so personally for himself, but also in his married life, in his family, in his six days' work, in his rest on the seventh day, in his expansion and multiplication, in his subjugation and control of the earth, in his cultivation and guarding of the garden. Adam did not have to go his own way, but had to walk in the way that God showed him. But all these commandments, which, as it were, left Adam full scope for movement and indicated the whole earth as his field of activity, were increased by one prohibition, or rather limited by one prohibition. For the prohibition against eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil does not belong to the image of God, is not a constituent part of it, but on the contrary is the limitation of it. If Adam violates this prohibition, he loses the image of God, places himself outside the community of God, and dies. Man's obedience is thus tested against this prohibition. It will become evident from this prohibition whether man will follow the way of God or his own way; whether he will keep to the straight path or go astray; whether he will remain a son of God in the Father's house, or whether he will travel away to a distant country with the share of good that has been given him. That is why this prohibition is usually called the trial commandment. Adam and Eve could find no reason why the eating of this one tree in particular was forbidden; they had to obey the prohibition, not because they saw and understood its rational content, but simply because God had said so, on the basis of His authority, out of pure obedience, out of pure regard for duty. That is why the tree whose fruit it was forbidden to eat was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That tree would show whether mankind would arbitrarily and of its own accord determine and decide for

itself what was good and what was evil, or whether he would be entirely led by and abide by the commandment that God had given him. So the first man was given something and much to do, but he was also given something to leave behind, little but still something. The latter is usually much more difficult than the former. There are many people who, for example, want to do a great deal for their health, but they are not willing to sacrifice much or anything for it; they cannot bring themselves to do anything and consider the smallest act of self-denial to be an unbearable burden. The forbidden exerts a mysterious attraction; it raises questions about the why, the what and the how, it awakens doubt and stimulates the imagination. The first man had to resist this temptation that emanated from the prohibition; this was the battle of faith which he had to fight; but in the image of God, in which he was created, he also received the strength with which he could stand and overcome.

Yet this trial commandment shows even more clearly than the institution of the seven-day week that man's destiny is different from his creation. Adam was not yet in the beginning what he could and should become at the end. He lived in paradise, but not yet in heaven. He had a long way to go before he reached his final goal. He had to acquire eternal life by doing and by leaving. In a word, there is a great difference between the state of innocence in which the first man was created, and the state of glory for which he was destined. What this difference consisted of is further elucidated in the remainder of the Revelation.

While Adam was dependent on the alternation of day and night, of waking and sleeping, we are told of the heavenly Jerusalem that there will be no night there, Revelation 21:25, Revelation 22:5, and that the redeemed will stand before the throne of God through the blood of the Lamb and serve Him day and night in His temple, Revelation 7:15. The first man was bound by the division of the week into six working days and one day of rest, but for the people of God there remains an eternal, undisturbed rest afterwards, Hebrews 4:9, Revelation 14:13. In the state of innocence man had a daily need for food and drink, but in the future God will destroy both food and drink, 1 Corinthians 6:13. The first man and woman were man and woman, and they were blessed to be fruitful and to multiply; but in the resurrection they do not take in marriage, nor are they given in marriage, but they are like angels of God in heaven, Matthew 22:30, The first man Adam was earthly, had a natural body and became a living soul, but the believers receive a spiritual body in the resurrection and will then bear the image of the heavenly man, of Christ, the Lord from heaven, 1 Corinthians 15:45-49. Adam was created in such a way that he could still err, sin, fall and die; but in principle the believers are already here on earth above all of that: they can no longer sin, because everyone who is born of God does not sin, because his seed remains in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God (1 John 3:9). 1 John 3:9; they cannot fall away to the end, for they are preserved by faith in the power of God unto salvation, which is ready to be revealed at the last time, 1 Peter 1:5; neither can they die, for they who believe in Christ already have eternal, undefiled life here on earth; they do not die in eternity, and even live though they die, John 11:25-26. In considering the first man we must therefore be on our guard against two extremes. On the one hand we have to maintain, on the basis of the Holy. On the one hand, we have to maintain, on the basis of the Holy Scriptures, that he was created at once in God's image and likeness, in true knowledge, righteousness and holiness; that he was not at first a small, insignificant child who had to develop on his own; that he was not a human being who, being mature in body, was spiritually without substance and neutral between truth and falsehood,

between good and evil; and much less that he was originally an animal being who had gradually evolved from the animal and now had to become a human being through struggle and effort. This whole idea is irreconcilably at odds with Scripture and with common sense.

Yet, on the other hand, the state of the first man must not be exaggerated, as is often done in Christian teaching and preaching. However high Adam was placed by God, he did not yet possess the highest; he possessed the ability not to sin, but was not yet a partaker of the inability to sin; he did not yet possess eternal life, which can never perish and never die, but received a provisional immortality, whose existence and duration depended on the fulfilment of a condition; He was created in the image of God, but could still lose this image with all its glory; he lived in paradise, but this paradise was not heaven and could even be forfeited by him with all its beauty. All the spiritual and physical riches Adam possessed were lacking in one thing: absolute security. As long as we do not have this, our peace and enjoyment are not yet complete; the present time, with its many attempts to insure all that man possesses through societies or the state, provides sufficient proof of this. The believers are insured for this life and for the life to come, for Christ stands surety for them and will not allow one of them to be torn out of His hand and perish, John 10:28; perfect love therefore casts out the fear in them, 1 John 4:18, and makes them feel assured that nothing will separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord, Romans 8:38-39. But man still lacked this absolute certainty in paradise; he was not, at the same time as he was created in God’s image, immutably secured in the good; however much he possessed, he could still lose everything for himself and his descendants. His origin was divine; his nature was akin to God; his destination was eternal bliss in the immediate presence of God. But whether he would reach that destination was left to his own choice and depended on his own will.

01.13. Sin and Death.

13. Sin and Death.

Already Genesis 3:1-24 tells us of man's fall and disobedience. It was probably not long after his creation that he was guilty of violating the divine commandment. Creation and fall do not coincide and must not be equated; they are distinct in nature and essence, but in terms of time they are not far apart. This was the case with mankind, and it has probably also been the case with the world of angels. The Scriptures do not give us a detailed account of the creation and fall of the angels; they only tell us what we need to know to understand mankind and his fall, but they refrain from all further discussion and do not for a moment seek to satisfy our curiosity. But we do know that there are angels, that a great many of them have fallen, and that this fall also took place at the beginning of the world. Some have placed the creation and fall of the angels much more forward, in the time preceding Genesis 1:1, but Scripture gives no basis for this. In Genesis 1:1 falls the beginning of the whole work of creation, and in Genesis 1:31 it is perhaps still said of the whole work of creation, and not only of the earth, that God saw all the work that He had made, and saw that it was very good. In this case the rebellion and disobedience of the angels must have taken place after the sixth day of creation. On the other hand, it is certain that the fall of the angels preceded that of man. Sin did not break out first on earth, but in heaven, in the immediate vicinity of God, at the foot of His throne. The thought, the desire, the will to resist God first arose in the hearts of angels; perhaps pride was the first sin and thus the beginning and the principle of their fall. In 1 Timothy 3:6 Paul advises not to immediately elect someone who has only been a member of the congregation for a short time, because then he becomes easily inflated and falls into the devil's judgment. If, as the Cantonese note says, the judgment of the devil is meant, the judgment into which the devil fell when he exalted himself against God because of his wisdom, then we have a clue here that the devil's sin began with self-exaltation and pride.

However, the fall of the angels preceded that of man. For man did not come to transgress God's commandment all by himself, without any external cause, but the woman, being deceived and seduced by the serpent, transgressed, 2 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 2:14. With the serpent we are certainly not dealing with a symbolic embellishment, but with a real serpent, for it is expressly said that it was more cunning, more shrewd than all the beasts of the field, Genesis 3:1, Matt. 10:16. But just as certainly does the further development of revelation give us to understand that a demonic power used the serpent to deceive and mislead mankind. Already in the Old Testament Satan is mentioned several times as an accuser and seducer of mankind, Job 1:1-22, Chron. 21: 1, Zechariah 3:1-10. But the terrible power of darkness is only revealed when the divine, heavenly light has risen over the world in Christ. Then it appears that there is another sinful world than the one here on earth. There is a spiritual realm of evil, of which countless daemons, evil, impure spirits, one worse than the other, Matthew 12:45, are the subjects, and of which Satan is the head; and this Satan is called by various names. He is not only called Satan, that is adversary, but also the devil, that is the slanderer, Matthew 13:39, the enemy, Matthew 13:39, Luke 10:19, the wicked one, Matthew 6:13, Matthew 13:19, the accuser, Revelation 12:10, the solicitor, Matthew 4:3,

Belial, that is, wickedness, nothingness, 2 Corinthians 6:15, beëlzebul, or beëlzebub, which originally meant the god of flies worshipped in Ekron, 2 Kings 1:2, Matthew 10:25, the ruler of the devils, Matthew 9:34, the ruler of the power of the air, Ephesians 2:2, the ruler of the world, John 12:31, the god of this age, 2 Corinthians 4:4, the great dragon and the old serpent, Revelation 12:9. This kingdom of darkness did not exist from the beginning of creation, but came into being through the apostasy of Satan and his angels. Peter says in general that the angels have sinned and therefore are punished by God, 2 Peter 2:4, but Jude also indicates in Jude 1:6 the nature of their sin and says that they have not kept their own principle, that is, the dominion given to them by God, but have left their own dwelling place in heaven; they were not satisfied with the state in which God had placed them, and desired something else. And this rebellion took place from the very beginning, for the devil sins from the beginning, 1 John 3:8, and from the beginning he also set out to destroy mankind; for Jesus says expressly that he was a murderer of man from the beginning, and that from the beginning he did not stand in the truth, because not the truth, but the lie dwells in him, John 8:44. From him emanated the temptation of man, and he tied it to the commandment that God had given ■not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The apostle James testifies that God is above all temptation, and never tempts anyone, James 1:13. Of course this is not meant to mean that God never tests or trials anyone; after all, Scripture tells of this many times, with Abraham, with Moses, with Job, with Christ Himself and also right from the very first man. But if someone fails the test, he immediately tends to blame God for his fall and to say that God tempted him, that is, tested him in order for him to fall, or put him to a test in order for him to fail.

We see that after the fall Adam immediately proceeded in this way; and this is the secret desire of mankind. It is against this that James argues, and he opposes it as emphatically and strongly as possible, that God Himself is above all temptation and never tempts anyone. He never tries someone with the intention of making him fall, and He also never tries beyond his ability, 1 Corinthians 10:13. The trial offer, given to Adam, had the purpose to make his obedience come to light, and it did not exceed his powers at all; humanly speaking, Adam could very easily have kept it, because it was a light prohibition and did not compare with everything that was given and allowed to him. But what God thinks is for the good, Satan always thinks is for the bad. He misuses the trial commandment as a temptation, as a secret attack on the obedience of the first man, and he evidently means to use it to bring about man’s downfall. First, therefore, the prohibition given by God is presented as an arbitrarily imposed burden, as an unfounded restriction of man’s freedom, and thus the seed of doubt is sown in Eve’s soul as to the Divine origin and legitimacy of the prohibition. Next, that doubt is transformed into disbelief, the thought that God had only issued the prohibition out of fear that men would become like Him and also know good and evil as He does. This unbelief, in turn, stimulates the imagination and makes the violation of the prohibition appear to be a way that does not lead to death, but to true life, to equality with God. The imagination then exerts its influence on mankind’s inclination and striving, so that the forbidden tree is seen in a different light, becomes a joy to the eyes and a desire to the heart. And the desire, having thus received, drives the will and gives birth to the sinful deed; Eve took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave her husband with it and he ate, Genesis 3:1-6. In this simple, but profoundly philosophical manner Scripture relates the history of the fall and the origin of sin. That is how sin still originates; it begins with the darkening of the mind, continues in the excitement of the imagination, arouses desire in the heart, and finishes in the act of will. It is true

that there is a very great difference between the origin of the first and the origin of all later sins. While all later sins presuppose a sinful nature in mankind and find a point of attachment in it, there was no question of this with Adam and Eve, because they were created in God's image. But we must bear in mind that, for all their perfection, they were created in such a way that they could fall, and we must also remember that sin, by its very nature, always has a character of unreason and arbitrariness. When someone has sinned, he always tries to excuse or justify himself, but he never succeeds; there is never any reasonable ground for sin; its existence is and always will be unlawful. Likewise, nowadays people try to argue that a criminal is forced to commit a sinful act by circumstances or by his own inclination, but this external or internal necessity is forced upon the criminal and he finds the strongest contradiction in his own conscience. Neither reasonably nor emotionally can sin be reduced to a disposition and an action that has reason and right to exist. In the strongest degree this applies to the first sin, which was committed in the Papacy. For at present there are often still extenuating circumstances, which do not make the sin right, but still limit the measure of its guilt. But in the case of the sin of the first pair of men there is not a single mitigating circumstance to be pleaded; on the contrary, everything that can be added, the special revelation that made the trial commandment known to them, the contents of the trial commandment, which demanded so little renunciation, the severity of the threat attached to the transgression, the awfulness of the consequences, the holiness of their nature, all these circumstances serve only to aggravate their guilt. The possibility of the fall can be highlighted, but the transition to reality remains shrouded in darkness. Scripture makes no attempt to make this transition intelligible to us. But in so doing it also leaves sin unmolested in its sinful character; sin is there, but it was and is not allowed to be: it was and it is and it remains forever in conflict with God's law and with the testimony of our conscience. By linking these two things together, that is to say, by giving on the one hand an insight into the origin of sin, the truth of which is felt in our own lives every moment, and on the other hand by allowing sin to stand fully in its unreasonable and unknowing nature, the account of the fall in Genesis 3:1-24 is elevated to a height above all that the wisdom of mankind has thought out in the course of centuries concerning the origin of evil. That there is sin and that there is misery, we know not only from Scripture, but it is preached to us daily and every moment by the whole suffering creature; the whole world is marked by the fall. And even if the world around us did not proclaim it to us, it is nevertheless reminded to us internally from hour to hour by the voice of conscience, which continually accuses us, and by the poverty of the heart, which testifies of endless woe. That is why everywhere and at all times the question is forced upon mankind: whence comes this evil, the evil of sin and the evil of misery? That is the mystery which, even more than the mystery of the origin of being, has occupied mankind's thoughts and filled their heads and hearts hour after hour. But now compare the solutions which this human wisdom has tried with the simple answer which Scripture gives! Of course, these solutions are by no means identical, but they do show affinity and can be arranged accordingly. The most common opinion is that sin does not dwell in man and originate from him, but attaches itself to him from without, as it were; man is good by nature, his heart is undefiled; evil lies only in the circumstances, in the environment, in the society into which man is born and brought up. Take away the wrongs, reform society, introduce equal distribution of goods, for example, and man will automatically become good; all reason for him to do evil will be lost! This idea of the origin and nature of sin has always found many supporters, because man is always inclined to blame circumstances for all his sins; but it found particular favour when, since the eighteenth century,

eyes were opened to the political and social decay and a radical transformation of state and society was advocated as the only remedy for all ills. But the nineteenth century has brought some disillusionment with regard to the natural goodness of mankind; and the number of those who call mankind radically evil by nature and who despair of his redemption is not small.

Thus was honored that explanation which had traditionally sought the origin of sin in man's sensual nature. Man has a soul, but he also has a body; he is spirit, but also flesh. And this flesh always has of itself sensual inclinations, more or less impure desires, low passions, and therefore naturally opposes the spirit with its ideas, thoughts and ideals. Since man now lives only a vegetable and animal life when he is born, and for many years in succession remains a child who lives in sensual contemplation, it goes without saying that for many years in succession the flesh of man dominates and imprisons the spirit. Only very slowly does the spirit wrestle itself from the power of the flesh, but nevertheless mankind and the individual human being steadily develop.

Thinkers and philosophers have repeatedly spoken of the "origin" of sin, but in recent times they have received strong support from the doctrine that mankind is descended from animals and is actually still an animal at heart.

Some conclude from this that man will remain an animal forever, but others cherish the hope that, where man has already advanced so far, he will make much more progress in the future and perhaps even become an angel one day. Be that as it may, man's animal descent seemed to offer an excellent solution to the problem of sin. If mankind is descended from an animal, it is perfectly natural and it is not at all surprising that that animal continues to work in him and repeatedly breaks the reins of decency.

Therefore, according to many people, sin is nothing but an after-effect and a remnant of the former animal state; lust, fornication, theft, robbery, murder, etc. are habits which were common to the oldest people as well as to animals, and which now reappear again and again in backward individuals, in the so-called criminals. But these people, who fall back into the old and original habits, are actually not criminals, but backward, weak, sick, more or less insane beings, who should not be punished in a prison, but nursed in a hospital. What the wound is to the body, the criminal is to society. Sin is a disease which man brings with him from his animal state and which he only slowly overcomes.

If one extends this line of thought and thinks through the explanation of sin from sensuality, from the flesh, from animals, one automatically arrives at the doctrine, often proclaimed before, that sin has its origin in matter, or, to put it more generally, in the finite existence of all creatures. This idea was very popular in antiquity. Spirit and matter, like light and darkness, are eternally opposed and can never achieve true and complete communion. Matter was not created and could not have been created by the God of light, but it existed from eternity beside God, formless, dark, devoid of all light and life. Even if it was later formulated by God and used for building up this world, it still remains unable to absorb and express the fullness of the spiritual idea; dark within itself, it does not let the light of the idea through.

Sometimes, then, this dark matter is further reduced to its own divine origin; two Gods then stand side by side from eternity, a God of light and a God of darkness, a good and an evil God. Or one tries to reduce both these eternal principles of good and evil to one Godhead, and then makes

God a double being; in Him there is an unconscious, dark, hidden ground, from which a conscious, clear nature of light rises to the surface; this is the deepest origin of the darkness and evil in the world, and this is the source of all life and light.

If one proceeds one step further, one arrives at the doctrine, preached again by some philosophers in recent times, that God in himself is nothing but a dark nature, a blind urge, an eternal hunger, an unreasonable will, which only comes to consciousness and becomes light in mankind. This is the direct opposite of the revelation of Scripture. It says that God is pure light without any darkness, and that in the beginning all things were made by the Word. But the philosophy of the new age says that God in himself is darkness, nature, abyss, and that the light for him rises first in the world and in mankind. Man, then, is not blameless and does not need to be redeemed by God, but God is the blameless one and has his redemption to await from mankind. This extreme conclusion is not pronounced so bluntly and so directly by many, but it is nevertheless the end of the road on which all the above-mentioned considerations of the origin of sin move. However different they may be, they all have this in common: they do not seek the origin and source of sin in the will of the creature, but in the existence and nature of things, and therefore in the Creator, who is the cause of that existence and nature. If sin lies in circumstances, in society, in the senses, in the flesh, in matter, then it is on account of Him, who is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and man is free. Then sin did not begin with the fall, but dates from the moment of creation; creation and fall are then one; being, existence, is then sin; moral imperfection coincides with finitude. And salvation is then either utterly impossible, or it ends in destruction of the existing, in nirvana.

High above this thought of mankind rises the wisdom of God. The former denounces God and excuses man; the latter justifies God and blames man. Scripture is the book which, from beginning to end, vindicates God and wrongs man; it is one great and powerful theodicy, a vindication of God, of all His virtues and all His works, and it holds in its hand the testimony of the conscience of all men. The fall did not take place without His foreknowledge, His counsel and His will, and the whole development and history of sin is guided by Him and remains bound to His government to the end. Sin does not make God unguarded or powerless; also toward it He remains God, unblemished in wisdom, goodness and power.

Yes, He is so wise and good and powerful that He can make good things come out of evil and force sin, against its own nature, to cooperate with the glorification of His name and the establishment of His kingdom. But sin nevertheless retains its sinful character. If, in a certain sense, it can be said that God willed sin, because nothing can ever come into being or exist without His will, then it should never be forgotten that He always willed it to be sin, as something that should not be there and therefore always exists unlawfully, in violation of His command.

Thus justifying God, Scripture at the same time maintains the nature of sin. If sin has its origin not in the will of the creature, but in the being which precedes the will, it immediately loses its ethical and moral character, and becomes a physical, a natural, an evil inseparable from the existence and nature of things. Sin then becomes an independent being, an original principle, a kind of evil substance, just as disease was regarded in earlier days. But Scripture teaches us that sin is not and cannot be that. For God is the Creator of all things, even of matter; and when the work of creation was finished, He looked upon His creation, and behold, it was very good.

Sin, therefore, does not belong to the nature of things; it is not part of being, but it is a phenomenon of a moral nature, it belongs to the domain of morality, and it exists in deviation from the moral law which God gave to the rational creature and laid down for his will. The first sin was the violation of the precept and therein of the whole moral law, which rests with the precept in the same divine authority. The many names by which the Holy Scriptures describe sin, transgression, disobedience, iniquity, wickedness, enmity against God, etc., all point in the same direction. Paul says explicitly that through the law is the knowledge of sin, Romans 3:20, and John declares that all sin, both the smallest and the greatest, is iniquity, lawlessness, unlawfulness, 1 John 3:4.

Now if transgression is the nature of sin, it cannot lie in the essence, in the being of things, whether material or spiritual, for things owe their essence and being to God alone, who is the fountain of all good. Evil, then, can only come after good, can only exist through and on the good, and can also lie in nothing but the corruption of good. Even the evil angels, although sin has corrupted their whole nature, are and remain good creatures. Also, the good, insofar as it lies in the nature and being of things, is not destroyed by sin, but it is steered in a different direction, and used for a different purpose. Man has not lost his essence, his human nature, through sin; he still has a soul and a body, a mind and a will, and all his affections. But all these gifts, good in themselves and coming down from the Father of lights, are now used by man as weapons against God and in the service of iniquity. Sin, therefore, is not a bare loss, nor is it merely the loss of what man originally possessed, as, for example, a man who was rich and then became poor suffers a loss and has to do without much of what he used to enjoy. But sin is a deprivation of that which man, to be truly man, must possess; and at the same time it is the introduction of a defect which man was not meant to have.

According to present-day science, disease is not a special substance, but a life in changed circumstances, in such a way that the laws of life remain the same as in the healthy body, but the organs and functions of that life are disturbed in their normal functioning. Even in the dead body the workings do not cease, but the workings that then come into play are of a destructive, dissolving nature. In the same way, sin is not a substance, but is such a disturbance of all the gifts and powers that have been given to man that they now work in a different direction, not towards God but away from God. Reason, will, affections, disorders, passions, soul faculties and bodily forces, they were originally weapons of righteousness, but now, by the mysterious power of sin, they have all been transformed into weapons of iniquity. The image of God, which man received at his creation, was not a substance, but was nevertheless so intrinsic to his nature that, losing it, he was completely deformed, disfigured.

Whoever could see man internally and externally as he really is, would discover traits in his being that make him look more like Satan than like God, John 8:44. Spiritual health was replaced by spiritual sickness and death. But like that, it is not a constituent part of his being. When Scripture upholds the moral nature of sin, it upholds man’s capacity for salvation.

Sin is not part of the nature of the world, but was introduced into it by man; therefore it can be removed from it by the power of divine grace, which is stronger than all creation. The first sin of which man was guilty did not remain in itself; it was not an act which man, having committed it, could shake off; he could not thereafter behave as if nothing had happened. At the same moment that man gave a place to sin in his thoughts and imagination, in his desires and will, a startling

change took place in him. This is shown by the fact that immediately after the fall Adam and Eve sought to hide from God and from each other. Both their eyes were opened and they realized that they were naked. They saw each other as they had never seen each other before; they dared and could no longer look each other in the eye freely and without fear; they felt guilty and unclean and they attached fig leaves to each other in order to cover themselves with them. But they were still in one piece and felt themselves to be one, that they feared together and hid themselves from the face of God in the midst of the trees of the garden. With the leaves of a fig tree they could partly hide their shame and embarrassment from one another, but with these they could not exist before God, and so they fled away, deep into the midst of the trees of the garden. Shame and fear had taken possession of them, because they had lost the image of God and felt guilty and unclean before Him. And that is always the consequence of sin; we lose that inner, spiritual confidence before God, ourselves and our fellowmen, which only the consciousness of innocence can produce in our hearts. But the terribleness of the first sin becomes even more apparent in that it spreads from the first pair of human beings to the whole of mankind. The first step in the wrong direction has been taken, and all the descendants of Adam and Eve follow in their footsteps. The universality of sin is a fact which forces itself upon everyone’s consciousness, and which is indisputably established both by the testimony of experience and according to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.

It would take little effort to collect testimonies from all parts and times of the world which express this universality of sin. The simplest and most learned people agree. No one, it is said, is born without sin; everyone has his or her weaknesses and failings; the ills of sterile man include the darkness of reason, and not only the necessity to err, but also the love of error; no one is free in his or her conscience, conscience makes cowards of us all; the heaviest burden humanity has to bear is guilt. This is what we hear from all sides of the history of mankind in various tones; even those who start from the natural goodness of man are compelled at the end of their investigations to acknowledge that the seeds of all sin and crime are hidden in every man’s heart; and philosophers have complained that all men are by nature radically evil.

Scripture confirms this judgment which mankind pronounces upon itself. After recounting the fall in the third chapter of Genesis, it goes on in the following chapters to examine how sin spread and increased in the human race, and finally reached such a height that the judgment of the flood became necessary. Of the generation before the flood it is testified that the wickedness of man was manifold upon the earth, and all the thoughts of his heart were always evil; that the earth was filled with wrath by man, and was corrupt before God. But the flood makes no change in the heart of man; also after it God pronounces upon the new mankind, which will come forth from Noah’s family, the judgment that the pattern of man’s heart is evil from his youth, Genesis 8:21.

All the pious men of the Old Covenant concur with this divine testimony. No one, complains Job, can give a clean man from the unclean man, Job 14:4. There is no man," Solomon confesses in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, "there is no man who does not sin. When the Lord, as we read in Psalms 14:1-7 and Psalms 53:1-6, looks down from heaven upon the children of men to see if any of them are wise, seeking God, His eye sees nothing but waste and iniquity; they have all gone astray, together they have become stinking; there is no one who does good, not even one. No one therefore can exist before the Lord, for no one who lives is righteous before Him, Psalms 103:3, Psalms 143:2. Who can also say: I have purified my heart, I am clean from my

sin? Proverbs 20:9. In a word, there is no righteous man on earth, who does good and does not sin, Ecclesiastes 7:20.

All these statements are so general that they do not allow any exception. They do not flow from the lips of the ungodly, who often do not care at all about their own or other people's sins, but they flow from the hearts of the pious, who have learned to know themselves as sinners before the face of God. And they do not pass this judgment only and not primarily on others, on those who live in public sin or, as the pagans, are deprived of the knowledge of God; but they begin with themselves and with their own people.

Scripture does not describe the pious as people who have lived in perfect holiness on earth, but it portrays them as sinners who have sometimes been guilty of very serious offences. It is precisely the pious who, although they remain conscious of the righteousness of their case, feel their guilt the most deeply and appear before the Lord with humble confession (Psalms 6:1-10, Psalms 25:1-22, Psalms 32:11, Psalms 38:1-22, Psalms 51:1-19, Psalms 130:1-8, Psalms 143:1-12). Even then, when they act against the people and bring their apostasy and unfaithfulness to their notice, they nevertheless finally assemble with that people and make the joint confession: we lie in our shame and our disgrace covers us, because we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth to this day, Jeremiah 3:15, Isaiah 6:5, Isaiah 53:4-6, Psalms 64:6, Daniel 9:5 ff, Psalms 106:6.

Also the New Testament does not leave the slightest doubt about this sinful condition of the whole human race; the whole preaching of the Gospel is built on this assumption. When John announces the proximity of the kingdom of heaven, he demands repentance and baptism, for circumcision, sacrifice and the observance of the law have not been able to give the people of Israel the righteousness they need to enter the kingdom of God; so Jerusalem and all the Jewish nation came to him, and all were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Christ appeared with the same preaching of the kingdom of God, and He too testifies that only regeneration, faith and conversion open the way to that kingdom, Mark 1:15, Mark 6:12, John 3:3.

It is true that Jesus says in Matthew 9:12-13, that those who are healthy do not need the ministries, and that He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. But the connection shows that Jesus, with the sent ones and the righteous ones, is thinking of the Pharisees, who reproached Him for sitting down with the tax collectors and sinners, who exalted themselves above them, and who in their imagined righteousness felt no need for the searching love of Jesus.

Besides, in Matthew 9:13 Jesus says explicitly that if the Pharisees understood that God in His law does not require external sacrifices, but internal, spiritual mercy, they would come to the conviction that they too, just like the tax collectors and sinners, were guilty and unclean and needed conversion in His name. Christ himself limits his work to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matthew 15:24, but after his resurrection he gives his disciples the task of going out into all the world and preaching the gospel to all mankind, because salvation for all mankind is bound up with faith in his name, Mark 16:15-16. In accordance with this, the apostle Paul begins his letter to the Romans with a detailed argument that the whole world is damnable before God and that therefore no flesh shall be justified by the works of the law, Romans 3:19-20, Romans 1:18-32, but also the Jews, who boast of their privileges, but are basically guilty of the same sins, Romans 2:1-29,

Romans 3:1-20, they are all bound together by sin, Romans 3:9, Romans 11:32, Galatians 3:22, so that all mouths may be stopped and in their salvation only the mercy of God may be glorified.

Yes, so much is this general sinfulness in the N. Testament the basis of the preaching of the Gospel, that the word world acquires a very unfavorable meaning. Seen in itself, the world and all that it contains were created by God, John 1:3, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 1:2; but through sin it has been so corrupted that it now stands as a hostile power against God.

2: 15; he who wants to be a friend of the world is made an enemy of God, James 4:4. This terrible state in which mankind and the world find themselves raises the question as to its origin and cause. Whence not only the first sin, but also the general sinfulness, whence the guilt and depravity of the whole human race, to which every one is subject from birth, with the exception of Christ alone? Is there a connection between the first sin, committed in Paradise, and the stream of iniquity which has since poured out over the whole earth? And if so, of what kind is this connection?

There are those who, with Pelagius, categorically deny such a connection. According to them, every sinful act is an act which is completely unrelated to itself, does not bring about any change in human nature at all, and can therefore be replaced the next moment by a good, excellent act. After Adam had broken God's commandment, his inner nature, his disposition and his will remained exactly the same; and so also all the children who are born of the first human couple are born with exactly the same innocent and indifferent nature which Adam had from his origin.

There is no sinful nature, no sinful disposition or disposition, for all nature is created by God and remains good, but there are only sinful deeds, which do not form a continuous, coherent series, but which can be alternated with good deeds, and are connected with the person himself only by a completely free choice of will. The only influence these sinful acts have on the person himself or on others around him is that of the evil example. If we have committed a sinful act once, we do it again and others follow suit. The general sinfulness of the human race must therefore be explained in this way, from imitation. There is no question of original sin; every human being is born innocent; but the bad example that people usually set has a bad influence on contemporary and descendant. The bad influence on contemporary and descendant. Out of habit and routine all walk in the same sinful path, although it is not impossible, nor improbable, that here and there a few have resisted the power of habit, have gone their own way and have lived perfectly holy on earth. This attempt, however, to explain general sinfulness is not only contrary to the Scriptures on every point, but it is also so superficial and inadequate that, at least in theory, it is seldom fully and completely protected. It is refuted by facts from our own experience and life. We all know from experience that an act of sin is not outside of us and cannot, like an unclean garment, be taken off by us; but it is closely connected with our inner nature and leaves an indelible mark there; we are not the same after every act of sin as we were before it; It deprives us of peace of mind, is followed by remorse and repentance, strengthens our inclination to evil, and finally makes us unable to resist the power of sin at all and to resist even the slightest temptation.

It is also contrary to all experience that sin should only take hold in man from without. Certainly, the evil example can have a powerful influence; we see it in the children who are born of evil parents and grow up in an environment devoid of Godliness and vice versa; and conversely, the birth of pious parents and upbringing in a religious-moral environment is a blessing that cannot be

overestimated. But that is only one side of the matter. The bad environment would not be able to exert such an evil influence on the child if he himself did not have such a tendency to evil in his heart; and the good environment would not often be completely powerless against a child, if he himself had received a pure heart in his birth that was receptive to all that is good. But we all know better than that; the environment is only the trigger for sin to develop in us; the root of sin lies deeper and lurks in our hearts. From within From within a man's heart, as Jesus said, come evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, homicides and all kinds of other iniquities. Mark 7:21. And this word is confirmed by everyone's experience; almost without our knowing it or wanting to, impure thoughts and images rise up in our consciousness; on certain occasions, when we encounter adversity or opposition, the evil that is deeply hidden in our hearts comes out; sometimes it frightens us and we want to escape ourselves. The heart is evil, more than any thing, yea, it is deadly; who shall know it? Jeremiah 17:9.

Finally, if following the example of evil were the only cause of sin in mankind, its complete generality would be inexplicable. Pelagius therefore said that here and there sinless men had certainly lived. But this only exposed the ' untenability of the explanation all the more clearly. For, with the exception of Christ, there has not been one human being on earth who has been free from all sin.

We need by no means know all men head by head in order to pronounce this judgment. For the Scriptures speak unambiguously in this spirit; the whole history of mankind is proof of this; and our own hearts are the key to understanding the hearts that dwell in other men. For we are all of like mind and form not only a natural but also a moral unity. There is a human nature that is common to all human beings; and this nature is guilty and impure. The evil tree is not from the evil fruits, but the evil fruits are from the evil tree.

Others have recognized the correctness of these objections and have modified Pelagius' teaching accordingly. They admit that the absolute generality of sin cannot be inferred merely from following the evil example, and that moral decay does not enter man merely from without, and they are forced to confess that sin inhabits man from his conception and birth; he himself brings his corrupt nature from his parents. But they also maintain that this moral depravity, which is peculiar to man by nature, is not yet a real sin, which bears the character of guilt, and therefore does not yet deserve punishment. This moral depravity becomes sinful, guilty and worthy of punishment only when man freely admits it when he is growing up, takes it on his own account, as it were, and converts it into sinful acts through his own free will. This semi-Pelagian conception may make an important concession, but on reflection it proves to be very inadequate. For sin always consists in unlawfulness, in transgression and in deviation from the law which God has laid down for the reasonable and moral creature. This deviation from the law may occur in man's actions, but also in his dispositions and affections, in the nature which he brings with him at ■his conception and birth. Semi-Pelagianism recognizes this and speaks of a moral depravity which precedes man's acts of will. But if one takes this seriously, one cannot avoid the conclusion that the moral corruption which is now characteristic of human nature is also really sin and guilt, and therefore worthy of punishment. One of the two possibilities: either man's nature conforms to God's law and is as it should be, in which case it is not morally defective; or it is morally defective, in which case it does not conform to God's law either, is unlawful and unjust, and consequently makes man guilty and punishable.

Certainly there is little to be said against this rigorous reasoning; but many nevertheless try to free themselves from its constraint by using the ambiguous term 'desire' to describe the moral corruption which man brings with him at birth. Of course, the use of this word is not in itself wrong; the Scriptures also make frequent use of it, Romans 1:24, Romans 2:7, Romans 13:14, Galatians 5:16, James 1:14, 1 Peter 1:14, 1 John 2:16, etc., but under the influence of the asceticism of the world, it is not so wrong. But under the influence of the ascetic tendency which gradually developed in the Christian Church, theology often interpreted this word in a very limited sense; it thought almost exclusively of man's procreative urge, and thus arrived at the idea that, since this was given to man in creation, it was not in itself sinful, but nevertheless gave him a very easy reason for sinning.

It was Calvin who opposed this idea. He did not object to calling the moral depravity into which man is born "lust". But then this word had to be understood in a good sense. For this purpose it was necessary, in the first place, to make a distinction between desire and lust. Desires in themselves are not sinful, and were instilled by God Himself at creation; because man is a limited, finite, dependent creature, he has countless needs and therefore also countless desires. When he is hungry, he longs for food; when he is thirsty, he longs for water; when he is tired, he longs for rest. And so also in the spiritual: man's mind is created in such a way that it craves the truth, and man's will by virtue of his God-created nature has a desire for good. 11:28; when Solomon did not desire wealth, but wisdom, this was good in the eyes of the Lord, 1 Kings 3:5-14; and when the poet of Psalms 42:1-11 thirsted after God like a deer after the streams of water, this was a very good and precious desire.

Desires in themselves, therefore, are not sinful, but they, as well as the imagination and the will, have been corrupted by sin and therefore come into conflict with the Lord's law. Not the strictly natural desires, but the desires corrupted by sin, uncontrolled, exaggerated and overstrained, are sinful. And here, in the second place, it should also be noted that desires are by no means only inherent in the sensual, physical, but also in the spiritual nature of mankind. The urge to procreate is not the only natural desire, but it is one among many; nor is it in itself sinful, for it was implanted in man at creation, nor is it the only one which has been corrupted by sin, but all natural, physical and spiritual desires have become unruly and unprincipled because of it. Man's good desires have been transformed into evil desires.

If man's moral corruption is called desire in this sense, then its sinful and guilty nature is beyond all doubt. It is this desire, which in the Law of the Lord in a special commandment, Exodus 20:17. And Paul says expressly that he would not have known lust as sin, if the law had not said: you shall not lust, Romans 7:7. When Paul came to know himself, and began to test not only his actions but also his inclinations and desires against God's law, it became clear to him that these too were corrupt and impure and stretched towards what was forbidden. For Paul the Law of God is the only source and measure of sin, and it should be the same for us. No desires or imaginations determine what sin is, but only the law of God, which determines how mankind should stand before God externally and internally, physically and spiritually, in word and deed, in thought and inclination. Judged by that law, there is no doubt that man's nature is also corrupt and his desires sinful. Man not only thinks and acts wrongly, but he is wrong from the moment he was conceived.

Besides, from the point of view of philosophy it is impossible to imagine that lust in itself is not sin, but that it only becomes sin through the will. For this idea is based on the absurd idea that the will of man stands neutral outside of and in opposition to that desire, that it itself has not yet been affected by sin, and that it can now freely decide whether or not it will grant the desire of its nature. Experience shows that in many cases it is certainly possible for man, on the basis of all kinds of considerations of health, decency, civil honour, etc., to use his reason and will to resist the sinful desires which well up in his heart and to prevent them from being converted into sinful deeds; there is also a struggle in a natural man between his desire and his duty, between his inclination and his conscience, between his desire and his reason. But this struggle is fundamentally different from that which is waged between flesh and spirit, between old and new man, in the newly born; it is only a struggle that is waged from outside, against the outburst of desire, but which does not penetrate into the heart of the fortress and does not attack the root of the evil. Therefore, this battle can bind and restrain the sinful desire, but cannot cleanse and renew it internally; the sinful character of the desire is not changed by it. And not only that; but even though reason and will can sometimes restrain desire, they in turn are often controlled and employed by that desire. They do not oppose it in principle, but take pleasure in it by nature; they feed, nurture, excuse and justify it. And not seldom do they allow themselves to be so carried away by lust that they rob man of all independence and make him a slave to his passions. Evil thoughts and evil desires arise from the heart, obscuring reason and corrupting the will. The heart is so suspicious that it deceives even the wisest head.

Both attempts to explain the general sinfulness of human beings come to the conclusion that they seek the cause in the fall of each individual human being. According to Pelagianism, every man falls for himself by voluntarily following the evil example of others; according to Semi-Pelagianism, every man falls for himself by voluntarily taking into his own will an innate but not sinful lust and converting it into a sinful act. Both, however, fail to recognize the moral facts which are certain for each person’s conscience, and both fail to explain how the absolutely universal sinfulness of the human race can arise from millions upon millions of accidental decisions of the will.

Nevertheless, in recent times these attempts have once again found acceptance among many, albeit in a different, unfamiliar form. In the past, there were some who believed in the pre-existence of man; but Buddhist influences have greatly expanded this belief in recent years. It is then held that all human beings have existed eternally, or at least centuries before their appearance on earth, or that, in a more philosophical form, the sensible-perceivable life of man on earth must be distinguished from his inconceivable, but nevertheless conceivable existence. And one further connects with this the idea that the people in this real or imaginary pre-existence have all fallen head for head and, as a punishment for this, must live here on earth in gross, material bodies, in order to prepare for another life hereafter, and there too receive a reward for their efforts. So there is only one law that governs all human life before, on and after this earth, and that is the law of retribution; everyone received, receives and will receive that which he has earned by his works; everyone sows what he has sown. This Indian conception is therefore remarkable, because it tacitly assumes the recognition that there is no place in this earthly life for a fall of an individual human being. But for the rest it gives no explanation of the general sinfulness, as does the Pelagian theory. For it merely shifts the difficulty from life here on earth to a pre-existence of which no one remembers anything, for which there is no basis, and which is merely a dream.

Furthermore, the doctrine that there is only a law of retribution and that this law governs everything, for the poor and the sick, for the wretched and the needy, is a ruthless, hard doctrine which contrasts darkly with the splendor of divine grace, with which Scripture makes us acquainted. But - and this is the point which is most important - this Indian wisdom agrees fully with the doctrine of Pelagius in that it seeks the cause of the general sinfulness in the fall of each individual human being. Both ideas are based on the idea that mankind consists of an arbitrary heap of souls who have lived side by side for centuries, who have nothing to do with each other either in origin or in essence, and who each have to look after themselves. Each fell for himself, each receives his own deserved fate, and each tries as hard as he can to make the best of himself. What brings people together is really only the misery in which they all find themselves together, and compassion is therefore the most important virtue. But on closer consideration, it is even more obvious that those who lead happy lives here on earth "reward" themselves for their virtues according to the law of retribution and look down from on high upon the wretched, who after all received what they deserved according to that same law.

All this must be clearly understood in order to appreciate the Scriptures when they shed their light on the general sinfulness of the human race. It does not engage in idle contemplation, but recognizes and respects the facts which are clear to all our consciousness and conscience; it does not fantasize about a pre-existence of souls before they enter the earthly body, and it does not know of a fall which may have taken place in the life of each individual, either before or during earthly existence. Instead of the individualistic and atomistic view, she puts forward the organic view of the human race.

Humanity does not consist of a heap of souls who have come together from all sides by chance and who now, for better or worse, must find common ground through all sorts of contracts. But it is a unity, a body with many members, a tree with many branches, a kingdom with many citizens. And such a unity it will not become in the future, by external aggregation; but it was and it still is, despite all divisions and schisms, because it has one origin and one nature. Physically, humanity is one, because it springs from one blood; and judiciously and ethically it is one, because, on the basis of natural unity, it is subject to the same divine law, the law of the covenant of works. From this the Scriptures now deduce that mankind also remains one in her fall. In this manner she regards the human race, always, from its first to its last page. If there are distinctions among men in rank, position, office, honor, gifts, if Israel was elected to the Lord’s inheritance after passing other nations, it is due to God’s grace; He alone makes distinctions (1 Corinthians 4:17), but in themselves all men are alike before God, for they are all sinners, sharing in the same guilt, contaminated by the same impurity, subject to the same death, and in need of the same redemption. God has bound them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on them all, Romans 11:32. There is no reason for anyone to be proud; there is no reason for anyone to give in to despair. That this is the continuous consideration of the Scriptures concerning the human race needs no further demonstration; it appears sufficiently from what has been said above about general sinfulness. But this organic unity of the human race in a legal and moral sense finds in the Apostle Paul a deliberate and profound treatment. When in his letter to the Romans he has first exposed the damnability of the entire world before God, Romans 1:18-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-20, and then explained how all righteousness and the forgiveness of sins, all reconciliation and life are acquired by Christ and are present in Him for the believer, Romans

3:21-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-11, he summarizes at the end in Romans 5:12-21 (before describing the moral fruits of the righteousness of faith in Romans 6:1-23), he again briefly summarizes the entire salvation, which we owe to Christ, and thus places it, in a world-historical context, opposite all the guilt and misery, which came to us from Adam.

Sin entered the world through one man, and continued with death to all men. For the sin of which the first man was guilty was of a very special character; it is called an offense, different in character from the sins of men from Adam to Moses, Romans 5:12, a crime or misdemeanor, Romans 5:15 ff, a disobedience, Romans 5:19, and as such forms the sharpest contrast with the absolute and lifelong obedience of Christ, Romans 5:19. That is why sin, of which Adam was guilty, did not remain confined to his person; it worked its way through the whole human race. It was not only in his person that sin entered the world, but also in the world through one man, Romans 5:12, and as a consequence of that death, which passed upon all men and could justly continue, since all men sinned in that one man. That this is Paul's thought is proved by the fact that he derives the death of those men who lived from Adam to Moses and who could not sin with an offense like Adam's (because in those days there was no positive law, that is no law of covenant, to which a certain condition and threat was attached), precisely from Adam's offense. But if Romans 5:12 f. still leaves any uncertainty in this respect, it is completely removed by what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:22.

Here we read that all men die, not in themselves, not in their parents or ancestors, but in Adam; that is to say, men are not subject to death first, because they themselves or their parents or ancestors are guilty; but they have all died in Adam; It was already decided in Adam that they would all die; the cause and the principle of their death can already be found in Adam; in him they did not merely become mortal, but in fact all died already in an objective sense; the sentence of death was already pronounced then, although its execution followed some time later. Now Paul knows of no other death in mankind than that which results from sin, Romans 6:23. If all men have died in Adam, then all have sinned in him. Sin and death could enter the world through Adam's transgression and pass into all mankind, because that transgression had a special character, being the transgression of a special law, and was not committed by Adam exclusively as a person, but as the head of the human race.

Only when the Apostle's thought in Romans 5:12-14 is understood in this way does everything come into focus that is said in the following verses about the consequences of Adam's transgression; it is all the result of the same basic idea. The guilt (the judgment pronounced by God as judge) of one who sinned, became a condemning sentence, which extended to the entire human race, vs. 16; through the crime or misdemeanor of one man, death prevailed in the world over all men, Romans 5:17; through one crime, death came to all men, Romans 5:16; and through one man's transgression, death came to all men, Romans 7:17; through one crime it came to a condemning judgment for all people, Romans 5:18; and then finally everything is summed up in this sentence: through the disobedience of one man the many (that is, all the descendants of Adam) were made sinners, they all came to stand before God as sinners, Romans 5:19. The seal on this interpretation of Paul's train of thought is set by the comparison he draws between Adam and Christ. In the context of Romans 5:1-21, the Apostle is not talking about the origin of sin in Adam, but about the fullness of salvation acquired through Christ. In order to show this salvation in all its glory, he compares it with sin and death, which have spread from Adam through the human

race. Adam serves here as an example, as a type, of the one who is to come, Romans 5:14. In the one Adam and by his one transgression the human race was condemned; in the one man Jesus Christ it is acquitted and justified by God's one judicial sentence; through one man sin entered the world as a power and ruled over all men, and likewise one man has given to divine grace the dominion over mankind; Through one man death came into the world, as proof of the reign of sin; through one man, Christ Jesus our Lord, grace also began to reign in the way of a righteousness that leads to eternal life. The comparison between Adam and Christ is valid in all respects; there is only this difference: sin is powerful and strong, but grace far surpasses it in wealth and abundance. In the doctrine of original sin, Christian theology has summarized these thoughts of Scripture. It is possible to oppose and deny this doctrine, or even to mock it. But this does not silence the testimony of Scripture, nor does it destroy the facts on which this doctrine is based. For the whole history of the world is proof that mankind, in its entirety and therefore in all its members, stands guilty before God, is partakers of a morally corrupt nature, and is at all times subject to destruction and death. Original sin therefore includes original sin: in the first man, because of and for the sake of his disobedience, the many that came from him were made sinners by the just judgment of God, Romans 5:19.

Original sin is, secondly, original sin■, all men are received in sin and born in iniquity, Psalms 51:7, are evil from their youth onwards, Genesis 6:5, Genesis 8:21, Psalms 25:7, because from uncleanè no pure and from flesh only flesh can be born Job 14:4, John 3:6; and this impurity not only extends to all mankind, but it also extends to the whole being of every man; it affects the heart, which is more deceitful than any thing, mortally wounded, never to be fathomed, Isaiah 17:9, and as the beginning of life, Proverbs 4:23, is also the source of all iniquity, Mark 7:22; and then - from this midpoint it darkens the mind, Romans 1:21, Ephesians 2:18, inclines the will to evil and makes it powerless to do true good, John 8:34, John 8:7, stains the conscience, Titus 1:15, and makes the body with all its members, eyes and ears, hands and feet, mouth and tongue, weapons of iniquity, Rom. And this sin makes every human being subject to perdition and death, not first through his own ■deliberate' sins, but from the moment of his conception, Romans 5:14; all men have already died in Adam, 1 Corinthians 15:22.

However harsh this original sin may seem, it is based on a law that rules all human life, whose existence no one can deny and against which no one can raise a thought as long as it is to his advantage.

If parents have accumulated treasures for the children, the children never object to accepting these treasures at the death of the parents, even though they have not deserved them at all, yes or even though they are sometimes unworthy of them because of their shameful behaviour and spend them in injustice, living excessively. And if there are no children, the furthest relatives, second cousins and third cousins, show up to share, without any qualms of conscience, in the inheritance that unknown and neglected relatives have unexpectedly left them. This applies to material goods. But there are also spiritual goods, goods of rank and position, of honor and reputation, of science and art, which the children inherit from their parents, which they have not earned in any way, and yet they may accept without protest and also gratefully accept. Such a law of heredity now prevails everywhere, in families, in the lineages, in the peoples, in the state and society, in science and art, and in all mankind. The next generation lives off the goods that the generations before them have accumulated; the offspring enter into the work of their fathers in all

walks of life; and there is no one who, as long as he benefits from it, will oppose this gracious act of God. But everything changes when this same law of inheritance is used to one's disadvantage. When children are called upon to support their poor parents, they suddenly cut off all ties of community and refer them to the deaconry or the poorhouse. If relatives feel insulted, because one of them has married below his status or has committed an indecent act, they suddenly pull away from him and make him share in their disfavor. Every person has a stronger or weaker tendency to enjoy the pleasures of society, but to throw off its burdens. However, this inclination is itself a powerful proof that such a community of joys and burdens exists among people. There is a unity, a community, a solidarity whose existence and functioning no one can deny.

We do not know how it works, in what way and by what means it exerts its influence across the board or along the length, on people who live next to each other or with each other. The laws of heredity, for example, by which physical and mental properties pass from parents to children and grandchildren, are still completely unknown to us. We do not understand the secret of how an individual human being, born of a community and raised by it, later grows up to be independent and free again and assumes his own, sometimes very powerful and influential position in the community. We cannot indicate the boundary where the community ends and personal independence and individual responsibility begins. But none of this detracts from the fact that there is such a community, and that the people are bound together in solidarity, in smaller or larger circles. There are individuals, but there is also an unseen bond that binds family, relatives, gender, people, etc. together and makes them a powerful unit. There is an individual, but there is also, albeit metaphorically, a ■people's soul'; there are personal, but there are also social characteristics that are peculiar to a certain circle; there are special, and there are general, sins of the people; there is an individual and there is a common debt. This solidarity, which exists between people in a thousandfold way, always and quite naturally involves the representation of the many by the few. We cannot be everywhere ourselves and not all do everything; people are spread over the whole earth and live at great distances from each other; they do not all live at the same time, but succeed each other in the generations; also they are by no means all equally clever and wise, but infinitely varied in gifts and powers. Thus, every moment a few are called to think and speak, to decide and act in the name and in the place of many. There is even no real community possible, without inequality in gifts and calling, without representation and substitution. There is no body possible unless there are many, distinct members, and unless all these members are governed by a head who thinks for all and makes decisions in the name of all. In the same way a father acts for his family, a director for his company, the board for his association, a general for his army, the parliament for his voters, the king for his empire; and the subordinates share in the consequences of the actions of their predecessors. But all this applies only to a small, limited circle of humanity. Here, too, a single person can be a blessing or a curse for many, but the effect of this is always confined within narrow limits. Even a powerful man like Napoleon, however great his rule and influence may have been, still occupies only a small and fleeting place in the history of the world. But the Scriptures tell us of two men who occupy a wholly unique position, who are both at the head of a mankind, whose power and influence extend not to a people or a group of people, not to a country or a continent, not to a single or a number of centuries, but extend to the whole of the world and for all eternity. Those two human beings are Adam and Christ; the one standing at the beginning, the other in the midst of history; the one the head of the old, the other the head of the new mankind; the one the origin of sin and death in the world, the other the sprinkling and

fountain of righteousness and life.

Because of the unique place they occupy at the head of mankind, they can only be compared to each other. There are Analogies (similarities) of their place, significance and influence in all forms of solidarity, which occur among people in the family, household, nation, etc. And all these analogies can and may be compared to each other. And all these analogies can and may serve to clarify the effect that Adam and Christ have had on the whole human race; they can, to a certain extent, convince us that the law of heredity also applies in the highest, religious and moral life, because this law does not stand alone here but governs everywhere and is embedded in the organic existence of mankind. Nevertheless, Adam and Christ occupy a separate, entirely unique place; they have an importance for the human race which no one, no world conqueror or first-rate genius could ever attain. We are only fully reconciled to the fate that Adam shared with us through his transgression in Christ. For it is the same law that condemns us in the first man and acquits us in the second. If we could not partake of the damnation in Adam without knowing it, it would not be possible for us to be accepted into grace again in Christ in the same way. If we do not object to receive the good that is given to us through gift and inheritance without any merit on our part, we have lost the right to oppose this same law when it brings evil upon us. We accept good from God, should we not accept evil? Job 2:10. Therefore, let us not accuse Adam, but give thanks to Christ, who loved us so wonderfully. Let us not look back to paradise, but let us look forward to the Cross; behind that Cross hangs the unforgiving crown.

Original sin, into which mankind is received and born, is not a dormant, inoperative quality, but a root from which all kinds of sins spring, an unholy fountain from which sin continually gushes like surging water, a force that always drives man in the wrong direction of his heart, away from God and his community, towards his own destruction and ruin. From original sin, therefore, we distinguish those sins which were formerly known as intractable sins and which comprise all those violations of the divine law which are committed by man himself personally, with less or more consciousness, with weaker or stronger will and intention. All these personal sins have a communal origin; they come from the heart of man, Mark 7:22. And that heart is the same for all people in all places and in all times, as long as it has not been changed and renewed through rebirth. There is one human nature common to all of Adam’s descendants, and that nature is guilty and impure in all of them. Therefore, there is no reason for any human being to separate himself from all others and say: "Go away from me, I am holier than you". The pride of the self-righteous, the pride of the noble, the self-exaltation of the wise is, in view of the human nature that is inherent in all people, without foundation. Among the thousands of sins there is not one of which any man could say that he is foreign to it and has nothing to do with it. The seeds of all iniquity, even the most evil, lie in the heart that each one carries in his bosom. The criminals are not a special breed but come from the society of which we are all members; they only reveal what is going on, stirring and brewing in the hidden nature of every human being.

Because they arise from a common root, all the sins in the life of each individual human being and also in the life of a family, a family, a gender, a nation, a society and in the whole of humanity are organically connected with each other. The number of sins is immeasurably large, so that efforts have been made to classify and group them. They are referred to as the seven deadly sins (pride, avarice, intemperance, impudence, sloth, envy, wrath); or according to the instrument by which they are committed, as sins of the mind, words and works, as sins of the flesh and of the spirit; Or

according to the commandments against which they are resisted, sins against the first and second tables, against God, neighbour and ourselves; or according to the form in which they occur, sins of omission or commission; or according to the degree in which they are distinguished, hidden and public, silent and calling, human and devilish sins, etc. But however different they may be, they never stand alone as mere random acts; they always hang together at the root and have a constant effect on each other. Just as in insanity the law of healthy life is preserved but is now at work to disrupt it, so the organic life of mankind and mankind also comes out in sin, but in such a way that through that sin it now develops in a direction which is diametrically opposed to its original purpose.

We all express this thought in the well-known proverb: sin is a slippery slope; one cannot go a long way and then stand still and turn around at an arbitrary point. A famous poet spoke more profoundly and poetically of the curse of the evil deed, which consists in constantly giving birth to evil. But Scripture again gives us full light on this. It describes in James 1:14-15 how man's sinful act arises organically; if someone is tempted to evil, the cause is not in God, but in his own lust; this is the mother of sin. But this desire, without more, does not yet produce sin (the sinful act, whether of thought, word or deed). For this it is necessary that it first receives, impregnates and conceives. This happens when the mind and the will connect with it. When desire has been impregnated by the will, it gives birth to sinful acts; and when this sin lives out, develops and completes itself, it in turn gives birth to death.

Thus it is with every particular sin, but in a similar way the various sins are interrelated. The same apostle points this out when he says in James 2:10 that whoever keeps the whole law and fails in one (commandment) is guilty of all the commandments. For the same Lawgiver, who commanded the one commandment, has given them all; the transgressor attacks, in the one commandment, the Lawgiver of all commandments, and thus undermines the authority and force of all of them; the Law, by its origin and also by its essence, is one; it is an organic body which, when violated in one member, is completely disfigured; a chain, which, when one link is severed from it, falls to pieces. Man who transgresses one commandment in principle transgresses all the commandments, and thus goes from bad to worse; he becomes, as Jesus says, a servant, a slave of sin, John 8:34, or, as Paul expresses it, sold under the dominion of sin, so that he is as dependent on sin as a slave to the master who bought him, Romans 7:14. The same organic consideration applies also to the sins which are manifested in certain circles of human life. There are personal, individual sins, but there are also communal, social sins, sins of certain families, peoples, etc. Every class and position in society, and all the others, are subject to the same laws. Each class in society, each profession and business, each office and each job brings its own moral hazards and its own sins. The sins of city dwellers are different from those of village dwellers, the sins of farmers from those of merchants, the sins of the educated from those of the uneducated, the sins of the rich from those of the poor, the sins of children from those of adults. But this proves precisely that all these sins are interrelated in an oak tree. And statistics confirms this when they show that certain crimes occur with a certain rhythmic regularity in certain ages, seasons, sexes, positions and circles. Now we perceive only a very small part of this organic connection of sins with our own particular circle, and this on the surface. But if we were able to penetrate to the essence of appearances, and to trace the root of sin in the hearts of men, we should undoubtedly discover that in sin, too, there is unity, thought, plan, course; in a word, that in sin, too, there is a system.

Scripture lifts a corner of the veil when it links mankind's sin, both as regards its origin and its development and completion, with the kingdom of Satan. Since Satan seduced man and overthrew him, John 8:44, he has become in a moral sense the ruler of the world and the god of this age, John 16:11, 2 Corinthians 4:4. Although condemned by Christ and cast out, John 12:31, John 16:11, and thus working primarily in the Hebrew world, Acts 26:18, Ephesians 2:2, he nevertheless constantly attacks the church from outside, which must wage war against him with its entire armor, Ephesians 6:12, and towards the end of the days he organizes his whole power once more for a last, decisive attack on Christ and his kingdom, Revelation 12:1-17 ff. but when we survey the whole realm of sin in mankind, in the light that Scripture sheds on it, we first understand what sin's true nature and purpose are. In its principle and essence it is nothing less than enmity against God and a striving for supremacy in the world. Every sin, even the smallest, serves this end as a violation of the divine law, in the context of the whole. The history of the world is not a blindly evolving process, but a tremendous drama, a spiritual struggle that has lasted for centuries between the Spirit from above and the Spirit from below, between Christ and the Antichrist, between God and Satan.

However, although this fundamental consideration of sin must take precedence, it must not lead us to the one-sidedness of losing sight of all the distinctions that exist between different sins. It is true that sins, like virtues, are one and indivisible, so that he who has one, in principle has them all, James 2:10, but that is why not all sins are equal in measure and degree. There is a difference between sins committed by error and sins committed with a raised hand, Numbers 15:27, Numbers 15:30, between sins committed in ignorance and those committed with full knowledge and intention, Matthew 11:21, Luke 12:20, and the other sins committed with the full knowledge and intention of the sinner. Matthew 11:21, Luke 12:47, Luke 23:34, Acts 3:17, Acts 17:30, between sins against the first and against the second table, Matthew 22:37-38, between sensual and spiritual, human and devilish sins, etc. Since the commandments of the one law are different, and since their transgressions may be committed in very different circumstances and with more or less consent of conscience and will, not all sins are equally grievous or worthy of the same punishment. The sins committed against the moral law are more serious than those against the cereal commandments, for obedience is better than sacrifice, 1 Samuel 15:22; he who steals from poverty is much less guilty than he who does it from greed, Proverbs 6:30; there are degrees of wrath, Matthew 5:22; and though the desire of a married woman is already adultery in the heart, he who does not fight this desire but follows it, still commits adultery with the deed, Matthew 5:28.

If we misunderstood this distinction between the sins, we would come into serious conflict with Scripture and also with reality. For in a moral sense men are born equal; they bear the same guilt and are polluted by the same stain. But as they grow up, they are nevertheless far apart. The faithful sometimes fall into serious sin, constantly struggle against the old man, and here on earth only attain a small principle of perfect obedience. And among those who have not known the name of Christ or believed in Him there are many who give themselves over to every indulgence of wickedness and drink sin like water; but there are also many among them who distinguish themselves by a civilly honourable and high moral life and can even set an example of virtue for Christians. The seeds of all wickedness lie in every human heart; and the more we grow in self-knowledge, the more we recognize the truth of the confession that by nature we are inclined to hate God and our neighbor, that we are incapable of any good and are inclined to all evil. But this

evil inclination does not lead to evil deeds in all people to the same extent; on the broad road all do not walk at the same speed and all do not make the same progress. The cause of this difference does not lie in man, but in the restraining grace of God. The heart is the same in all men; always, everywhere, and in all, the same evil thoughts and desires arise from it; the stuff of that heart is always evil from childhood. If God were to let man loose and give them over to the desires of their hearts, it would be hell on earth and no human society and no human history would be possible. But just as the fire in the earth is kept in check by the hard crust of the earth and only erupts from time to time and in some places in the volcanoes, so the evil thoughts and desires of the human heart are suppressed and stopped from all sides by society. God has not let man go, but restrains the wild animal that lives in him, so that He may maintain and carry out His counsel for the human race. He still maintains in mankind natural love and the craving for companionship, the consciousness of religion and morality, the conscience and the sense of justice, reason and the will; and He places him in the midst of a family, a society, a state, which with their public opinion, notions of decency, labour coercion, discipline, punishment, etc. restrain him and force him to a civil, honourable life and educate him.

Through all these manifold and powerful influences sinful man is enabled to accomplish much good. When the Heidelberger Catechism says that man is completely incapable of any good and inclined to all evil, then, as the Articles against the Remonstrants clearly state, this good must be understood to be the sanctifying good.

Man by nature is totally incapable of this beatific good; he cannot do any good that is internally and spiritually good, that is completely pure in the eyes of God, that searches the heart, that is fully in accordance both with the spiritual and literal sense of the law, and that therefore, according to the promise of this law, could earn eternal life and heavenly salvation. But this does not at all mean that man is not capable, through the general grace of God, of accomplishing many good things. In his personal life he can, by reason and will, subdue his evil thoughts and desires and conform to virtue; in his domestic life he can love his wife, his children, his parents, his brothers and sisters, and seek the good for them; in society he can honestly and faithfully fulfill his vocation and contribute to the increase of prosperity - and civilization, science and art. In a word, through all the powers with which God surrounds natural, sinful man, He still enables him to lead a human life here on earth. But all these powers are not capable of renewing man’s inner life, and in many cases they even prove to be inadequate to subdue iniquity. Here we need not even think of the world of criminals, which exists in every society and leads its own life. But during conquests, colonizations, religious and race wars, popular uprisings, state revolutions, scandal trials, etc., it is sometimes revealed what terrible injustice dwells in the hearts of men. The refinement of culture does not eradicate it, but encourages the shamelessness with which it is treated. On deeper examination, the seemingly noblest deeds often turn out to have been inspired by all sorts of sinful considerations of selfishness and imperiousness. He who understands something of the malice and deceitfulness of the human heart is not surprised that there is so much evil in the world, but he is surprised that there is still so much good in it; and he prays to the wisdom of God, who still knows how to do so much with such a human race. It is the goodness of the Lord that we are not destroyed, that His mercies have no end, Lamentations 3:22. There is a constant struggle between man’s sin, which seeks to break out, and the grace of God, which restrains it and makes human thought and action subservient to the execution of His counsel. This grace of God can lead

mankind to humility, even if it is only in the sense of Ahab, 1 Kings 21:29, or of the inhabitants of Nineveh, Jonah 3:5 f., but he can also resist this grace permanently; and then that dreadful phenomenon sets in, which in Scripture is called hardening or forbearance, and of which Pharaoh is the typical example. It is true that it occurs with others in Scripture as well, but the nature and progress of the hardening are most clearly revealed with Pharaoh. He was a powerful ruler, standing at the head of a great empire, proud of his heart and unwilling to bow down to the signs of God's power. These signs succeeded each other in a regular order, they increased in miraculous power and destructive effect; but in the same degree Pharaoh became angry with them; his urges to give in and bow down lost more and more of their sincerity; finally he walked toward his own destruction with his eyes wide open.

It is a tremendous drama of the soul that is enacted before our eyes in Pharaoh's person and can be seen from both God's and man's sides. Sometimes it is said that the Lord hardens Pharaoh's heart, Exodus 4:21, Exodus 7:3, Exodus 9:12, Exodus 10:20, Exodus 10:27, then again, that he hardens his own heart, Exodus 7:13, Exodus 7:22, Exodus 8:15, Exodus 8:19, Exodus 8:32, Exodus 9:34, or also that his heart is hardened, Exodus 7:1-14, Exodus 9:7, Exodus 9:35. In the hardening there is a divine and a human effect; an effect of divine grace, which more and more becomes a judgment, and an effect of human resistance, which more and more takes on the character of a conscious and determined enmity against God. And in the same way Scripture describes the hardening in other places: the Lord hardens, Deuteronomy 2:30, Joshua 11:20, Isaiah 63:17, and man hardens himself, 1 Samuel 6:6, 2 Chronicles 36:13, Psalms 95:8, Matthew 13:15, Acts 19:9, Romans 11:7, Romans 11:25; there is an interaction, a dispute, a struggle between the two, which is inseparable from the revelation of divine grace. Such an effect is attached to general grace, but special grace in particular has this characteristic, that it brings about a judgment, a division and separation among men, John 1:5, John 3:19, John 9:39. Christ is a fall and a resurrection, Luke 2:34; He is a rock of salvation or a stumbling block and a reproach, Matthew 21:44, Romans 9:32; the Gospel is to die or to live, 2 Corinthians 2:16; it hides itself from the wise and prudent, and reveals itself to the children, Matthew 11:25. And in all this the good pleasure of God is revealed, as well as the law of the religious-moral life. The sin of hardening ends in its ultimate consequence in blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Jesus speaks of this once in connection with a serious quarrel with the Pharisees. When He healed a man who was blind and dumb and possessed by the devil, the crowds were so amazed that they exclaimed, "Is this not the Son of David, the Messiah whom God promised to the fathers? But this homage to Christ aroused nothing but hatred and enmity among the Pharisees, who declared that Jesus cast out the devil through no one else but Beelzebul, the chief of the devils. So they stand on the opposite side; instead of recognizing Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah who by the Spirit of God cast out the devils and established God's kingdom on earth, they say that Jesus is an accomplice of Satan and his work is a devilish work. Jesus preserves His full dignity in the face of this terrible calumny; He even refutes it and demonstrates its incongruity, but in the end He adds this serious warning: all sin and calumny will be forgiven to mankind, but the calumny against the Lord will be forgiven to mankind. but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven to men, neither in this age nor in the age to come, Matthew 12:31-32. The words themselves and the context in which they occur clearly show that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not committed at the beginning or in the middle, but at the end of the way of sin. It does not consist in doubting or disbelieving the truth which God has revealed, nor in resisting and distrusting the Holy Spirit, for these sins can be

committed even by the faithful and are often committed by them. But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit can only take place when there has been such a rich revelation of God and such a powerful enlightenment of the Holy Spirit in the consciousness that man's heart and conscience are fully convinced of the truth of divine revelation, Hebrews 6:4-8, Hebrews 10:25-29, Hebrews 12:15-17. And it consists in the fact that such a person, in spite of all personal revelation and subjective enlightenment, in spite of having recognized and experienced the truth as truth, nevertheless with full awareness and deliberate will declares it to be a lie with heart and mouth and blames Christ as an instrument of Satan. In it human sin passes into demonic sin; it does not exist in doubt and unbelief, but excludes these as well as all repentance and prayer altogether, 1 John 5: 16; it is far beyond all doubt and unbelief, beyond all repentance and prayer; notwithstanding the Holy Spirit is believed and recognized as the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, He is blasphemed in devilish evil. Sin becomes so ungodly insolent in its completion that it shakes off all shame, throws off all coverings, despises all pretence and out of pure lust for evil sets itself against God's truth and grace. So it is a very serious warning which Jesus gives us in this teaching about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit; but one should not forget the consolation which it contains. For if this is the one unforgivable sin, then all other sins, even the greatest and most grievous, are forgivable; forgivable not by human penance, but by the riches of divine grace.

If sin can only be forgiven and erased by grace, it follows that it deserves punishment in itself. Scripture proceeds from this, when, before sin entered the world, it already threatens it with the punishment of death, Genesis 2:7, and repeatedly announces the judgment of God on sin, whether in this life, Exodus 20:5, or in the great day of judgment, Romans 2:5-10. For God is the Just and the Holy One, who hates all ungodliness, Job 34:10, Psalms 5:5, Psalms 45:8, does not hold the guilty man guiltless, Exodus 34:7, Numbers 14:18, but seeks all iniquity with His wrath, Romans 1:18, curse, Deuteronomy 27:26, Galatians 3:10, and vengeance, Nahum 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 4:6, and shall repay every one according to his works, Psalms 62:1-3, Job 34:11, Proverbs 24:12, Jeremiah 32:19, Ezekiel 33:20, Matthew 16:27, Romans 2:6, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Peter 1:17, Revelation 22:12. The conscience bears witness to this in every man when it condemns him for his evil thoughts, words, and works, and often pursues him with consciousness of guilt, remorse, remorse, and fear of judgment. And the justice of all peoples is built on this premise of the punishability of sin. But the human heart always resists this strict judgment because it feels itself condemned by it. And science and philosophy have many times placed themselves in the service of this heart and have tried, for shining reasons, to separate the good from all reward and the evil from all punishment. Just as art must be practiced for its own sake, so in this view the good must be practiced for its own sake, and not out of hope of reward, and evil must be forsaken for its own sake, and not out of fear of punishment. Neither is there any reward for virtue, nor any punishment for sin; the only punishment for sin is the consequence which it brings about by its nature, with the necessity of a natural law. Just as the virtuous person has peace of mind, so the sinner is tormented by consciousness of guilt, fear and anxiety, and is also visited with those bodily ailments which result from many sins, such as drunkenness and lust. In recent times this philosophy of the sinful and erring heart has sought support in the theory of evolution, according to which man is descended from the animal, remains an animal at the core of his being, and is by necessity all that he is and all that he does. Just as there are flowers which give off a pleasant and an unpleasant scent; just as there are gentle and tearful animals, so there are people who are useful and those who are harmful to society. Society does have the right, out of self-preservation,

to remove and imprison these harmful individuals, but this is not punishment. One person has no right to hold the court over another and condemn him. Criminals are not evil-doers either, but rather madmen who suffer from a hereditary defect or who have been bred and raised by society itself, and who therefore do not really belong in a prison but in a hospital or reformatory and are entitled to humane, professional or educational treatment. For the sake of fairness, it must be recognized that this new theory of criminal law is partly a reaction against another extreme to which people used to deviate. While nowadays criminals are seen as a kind of madmen, in the past the madmen and all kinds of other unfortunate people were often treated as criminals and people had the good sense to inflict the most horrible pains on people who were considered to be worthy of punishment, by means of all kinds of instruments of torture. But although this may be a justification, it does not make the new theory good itself; it is just as one-sided as the previous one, because it ignores the seriousness of sin, robs man of his moral freedom and reduces him to a machine, blames man's moral nature on his conscience and guilt, and in principle undermines all basis for authority, government and justice.

Whatever efforts science may make to prove the natural necessity of sin, every man, whose conscience has not yet been scorched, feels obliged to do good and responsible for his evil deeds. Certainly the hope of reward is not the only and not the main motive for doing good, just as the fear of punishment may not be the only reason for not doing evil. But he who, for these secondary motives, does good and refrains from evil, even in an external sense, is still better off than he who, despising these motives, now starts living according to the lust of his heart. And then: not only as a result of an external calculation, but from the very beginning virtue and happiness, and sin and punishment, are inseparably connected in the moral consciousness. True love of the good, that is, full communion with God, implies that man is wholly and completely incorporated into that communion, both internally and externally; and sin, in its consummation, brings about the destruction of man both in body and soul. The punishment appointed by God for sin is death (Genesis 2:7), but this temporary, physical death is by no means an isolated event; it is preceded and followed by many other punishments. As soon as man had sinned, his eyes were opened; he was ashamed of his nakedness and hid himself for fear before God, Genesis 3:7-8. Shame and fear are inseparable from sin in man, because through sin he immediately feels guilty and unclean.

Guilt, which is a commitment to punishment, and impurity, which is moral depravity, are the consequences which occur immediately after the fall. But to these natural punishments God adds all kinds of stern punishments. The woman is punished as a wife and also as a mother; she shall bear children with pain, and yet her desire shall always be for the man, Genesis 3:16. And the man is punished in the vocation, which has been entrusted to him, in the cultivation of the earth, in the work of his hands, Genesis 3:17-19. It is true that death does not come suddenly after the offense; it is even postponed for hundreds of years, because God does not give up His intention for the human race. But the life that is now given to man becomes a life of suffering, full of trouble and sorrow, a preparation for death, a steady death. Through sin man has not only become mortal, but also dying; he is always dying, from the cradle to the grave. His life is nothing but a brief and vain struggle with death. This is expressed in the many complaints voiced in Scripture about the fragility, transience and vanity of human life. Man was dust, also before the fall; he was formed according to his body from the dust of the earth, and therefore earthly from the earth, a living soul, 1 Corinthians 15:45, 1 Corinthians 15:47. But the life of the first man was destined to be controlled,

spiritualized and glorified by the spirit in the way of observing the divine law. Now, however, as a result of his transgression, the law comes into effect: "Of dust art thou, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19).

Instead of spirit, he has become flesh through sin. And now his life is a shadow, a dream, a night-wake, a handbreadth, a footstep, a wave in the ocean that rises and breaks, a ray of light that shines and disappears, a flower that blooms and withers. It is actually not worthy of the full, glorious name of life, it is a continual death in sin, John 8:21, John 8:24, a death in sins and crimes, Ephesians 2:1. That is life seen from the inside, as it is corrupted, destroyed, dissolved and dissolved by sin. And from the outside it is constantly threatened from all sides. Immediately after the transition, man was driven out of paradise; he may not return there of his own accord, because he has forfeited the right to life and such a place of peace and quiet is no longer appropriate for a fallen man. He must go out into the world to earn his living and fulfill his vocation. The accidental man belongs in a paradise, the blessed live in heaven, but the sinful man, who is still susceptible to salvation, is given a dwelling place on earth that shares in his fall, that is cursed for his sake, and that is subject to vanity along with him, Romans 8:20. The earth on which we live is not heaven, but neither is it hell; it stands between the two and shares in both. We cannot point out in detail the connection that exists between the sins of men and the disasters of life. Jesus even warns against it, saying that the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifices, were not sinners above others, Luke 13:1-3, and that the son who was born blind was not punished for his own sins or the sins of his parents, but was visited in this way, That the works of God might be revealed in him, John 9:3. From the disasters or calamities that befall someone we may not conclude, like Job’s friends, that there is a special, personal guilt. But without doubt, according to the whole teaching of Scripture, there is a close connection between the fallen human race on the one hand and the fallen earth on the other. They were created in harmony with each other, were both cast down to vanity together, have both been redeemed in principle by Christ, and will one day be erected and glorified together. The present world is neither the best nor the worst possible, but it is a good world for fallen man; because it brings forth only thorns and thistles of its own accord, it compels man to work, preserves him from destruction, and keeps alive in his heart the unshakable hope of lasting good and eternal happiness. This hope makes him live, even if it is only a life, short of days and full of unrest. For all life, which is still part of man’s nature, perishes in death. If it is strong, it will last seventy or eighty years, but usually it is cut off much earlier, in the prime of youth, shortly after or even before birth. The Scriptures say that death is God’s judgment, a reward and punishment for sin (Genesis 2:17, Romans 5:12, Romans 6:23, 1 Corinthians 15:21, James 1:15), and thus resonate in the minds of mankind as a whole and of every special human being. Even the so-called natural nations start from the idea that man is immortal according to his nature, and that not immortality but death must be explained. Nevertheless, many people in past and present times have believed that death, namely not by external force but as an inner process of decomposition of life, is entirely natural and necessary; death in itself is not terrifying, but only appears that way to man because his instinct for life is opposed to it. As science advances with its victories, it will more and more limit untimely death and make natural death by decay the rule; and then mankind will die as calmly and peacefully as the plant that withers and the animal that lives out. But though there are some who speak in this way, there are others who sound a very different note. The men of science are also in complete disagreement about the causes and nature of death. Opposite the opinion of those who see death

as a natural and necessary end to life, there are many who consider death an even greater mystery than life and who state flatly that there is no reason why living beings should die by virtue of their inner nature. They even say that the universe was originally an immense, living being, that death only came later and that there are still immortal animals. And this language is readily accepted by all those who today believe in a pre-existence of souls and who consider death to be a transformation which man undergoes in order to ascend to a higher life, just as the caterpillar changes into a butterfly. This contradiction of opinion proves in itself that science cannot penetrate to the deepest and last causes of the phenomena, nor can it explain death and life. Both remain a mystery to it. It says that life is original and eternal, but then faces the question of where death came from and dissolves it in appearance, in a simple transformation; or it tries to understand death as entirely natural, but then knows nothing about life and is forced to deny immortality. In both cases it erases the boundary between death and life, as well as between sin and holiness. The confession that death is the wages of sin is therefore not proved by science, nor is it overthrown; it is simply beyond its sphere and reach, and does not need its proof. For it rests in the divine testimony, and is confirmed from hour to hour by the fear of death, with which men, all their lives, are subject to servitude, Hebrews 2:15. Whatever may be argued in favour of its necessity and in defence of its right, death remains unnatural. It is so in view of man’s nature and destiny, in connection with his creation in God’s image, because communion with God is incompatible with death; God is not a God of the dead, but of the living, Matthew 22:32. On the other hand, it is perfectly natural for fallen man, because sin, being completed, gives birth to death, James 1:15. In the Scriptures death is not synonymous with destruction, nor is life synonymous with nothing more than bare existence. But life is enjoyment, bliss, abundance, and death is misery, poverty, hunger, discontent, unhappiness; death is dissolution, separation of what belongs together. Man, created in God’s image, belongs in God’s community, and then he lives, fully, eternally, blissfully. But if he breaks off that community, he dies ■at that very moment and continues to die; his life is robbed of peace, joy, bliss, it has become a death in sin. And this spiritual death, separation between God and man, continues in the physical and ends in eternal death. For with the separation of soul and body, man’s fate is decided, but his existence does not end. It is set for man to die once and then the judgment, Hebrews 9:27. And who can exist in that judgment?

01.14. The covenant of grace.

14. The covenant of grace. To that question mankind at all times and in all places has given the answer that they, as they were, should not appear before God nor dwell in His presence. Is there no one who can say or dares say: I have purified my heart and I am free from sin? Proverbs 20:9. All feel guilty and unclean, and all acknowledge, if not to others, at least inwardly to themselves, that they are not what they ought to be; the inveterate sinner experiences moments when discontent and unrest take possession of his heart, and the self-righteous one always hopes in the end that God will turn a blind eye to what is lacking and will take the will for the deed.

It is true that many people try to banish these serious thoughts from their minds and continue to live as if there were no God and no commandment. They flatter themselves with the hope that there is no God, Psalms 14:1, that He does not care about the sins of mankind, so that whoever does evil is good in His eyes, Mal. But the Scriptures say of all these reasonings, that they are foolishness, Psalms 14:1, and even imply a blasphemy of God's dear name, Psalms 10:13. And he who upholds the demand of the moral law and upholds the moral ideal in its dignity cannot but fully agree with it. God is certainly love, but this glorious profession is only fully appreciated when love in the divine being is understood as holy love and is in perfect harmony with righteousness. There is only room for God's grace when God's law is unalterably established beforehand. In fact, the whole history of the world bears unequivocal witness to this law of God. We cannot think away from the world the special revelation in Christ, which makes us acquainted with the love of God, because with it the general revelation with its benefits and blessings would soon lapse. But if, for a moment, we were to turn our thoughts away from the revelation in Christ, little ground would remain for belief in a God of love. For if the history of the world gives us any indication, it is this: that God has a quarrel with His creatures. There is disagreement, separation, conflict between God and his world. God does not agree with man, and man does not agree with God. They each go their own way and have their own thoughts and will about everything. The thoughts of God are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways, Isaiah 55:8.

Therefore, the history of the world is also a world judgment; it is not, according to the word of the poet, the world judgment, for that will only follow at the end of days, nor is it merely a judgment, for the earth is still full of God's goods, Psalms 104:24. But the history of the world is nevertheless a judgment, a history full of judgments, a history of strife and struggle, blood and tears, rams and judgments. Above it is written the word that Moses once uttered, when he saw the generation of the Israelites in the wilderness dying away before his eyes: We perish because of your wrath, and we are terrified because of your fierceness, Psalms 90:7. This historical testimony confirms that mankind has continually searched and is still searching for a lost paradise, for lasting happiness, for deliverance from all the evils that weigh them down. In all people there is a need and a search for redemption, which is expressed in particular in religion. The idea of redemption can be taken so broadly that all the work mankind does on earth also falls within its sphere. For when man endeavors to provide for the needs of his life by the work of his hands, when he seeks to defend himself against all kinds of hostile forces in nature and in the world of man, when he strives

through science and art to subjugate the whole earth, then all this also has as its goal the redemption of some evil and the sharing of some good.

Yet the concept of redemption is never applied to this human work. However much it may serve to make people's lives more pleasant and richer, humanity is aware that all this progress and civilization cannot provide for its deepest needs and cannot save it from its greatest distress. Salvation is a religious concept and belongs in the realm of religion. All civilization was preceded by religion, and to this day religion continues to occupy its independent place alongside science, art and technology. It cannot be replaced or paid for by any human effort or by the brilliant results of human labor. Religion meets a very special need of mankind, and after the fall it always serves to save him from a special need. That is why the idea of salvation appears in all religions.

It is true that some divide these into nature, morality and salvation religions and distinguish the latter from the others as a special type. But this classification is rightly refuted by others. Taken in a general sense, the idea of salvation is inherent in all religions; all religions of the peoples want to be religions of salvation. Differences of opinion may exist about the evil from which salvation is sought, about the way in which it is obtained, and about the highest good which is sought. But salvation from evil and the attainment of the highest good is what all religions are about. The big question in religion is always: what must I do to be saved? What no civilization or development, no subjection to and control of the earth, can achieve, that is precisely what religion seeks: lasting happiness, eternal peace, perfect bliss. In religion, man is always concerned about God. In his sinful state he always imagines God to be something completely different than He really is, he seeks Him with the wrong intention, along the wrong road and in the wrong place, but he nevertheless always seeks God, if he may reach out and find Him. This need for salvation, which is peculiar to mankind and seeks satisfaction in the many self-willed religions of the peoples, is in itself and for Christianity of very great significance. For this need is continually awakened and kept alive by God Himself in the heart of mankind. It shows that God has not yet completely given the fallen human race over to Himself. It is an inextinguishable hope, which makes mankind live and work on its long, long journey through the world. And it serves as a guarantee and a prophecy that there is such a salvation and that, where people search for it in vain, it is given by God out of pure admiration. For a better understanding and appreciation of the redemption that God's grace has prepared in Christ, it is therefore useful to dwell for a few moments on the attempts made by mankind, apart from special revelation, to be delivered from evil and partake of the highest good. As soon as we do so, we are struck by the great diversity and at the same time by the great uniformity which characterizes all these attempts. The great diversity is already manifest in the large number of religions that have existed in mankind throughout the ages and that still exist today, and which far outnumber the diversity of peoples and languages. Just as the thorns and thistles grow from the earth, the false religions grow from human nature into the wild. They are so numerous and so diverse that they are almost impossible to survey and cannot be satisfactorily classified. Since religion occupies a central place, it assumes a different character as the relationship between God and the world, nature and spirit, freedom and necessity, fate and guilt, history and development, are interpreted differently. The more evil is considered definite or negative, as an independent entity or as a vanishing point in development, natural or moral, sensual or spiritual, the more the concept of redemption changes and the more the direction in which redemption is sought changes. And yet, when we try to penetrate the essence of all these

religions, they appear to have all kinds of traits of similarity and kinship. First of all, each religion contains a body of ideas about God and the world, spirits and men, soul and body, the origin, nature and final purpose of things; each religion brings with it a doctrine, a world view and a dogma. Secondly, no religion is satisfied with merely accepting these ideas rationally, but always insists that man should, by means of and with the help of these ideas, enter into relationship and fellowship with the supernatural world of Godhead and spirits. But now man knows everywhere and at all times that he does not automatically or naturally share this favour of Godhead; on the one hand he has an awareness that for his eternal happiness, for the salvation of his soul, he must possess this favour, and on the other hand he feels just as deeply that he lacks this favour, that because of his sin he lacks fellowship with God. That is why there is a third component to every religion, namely, an attempt in one way or another to obtain or permanently secure that favour and fellowship; every religion brings with it a set of ideas, tries to cultivate certain conditions, and also prescribes a series of actions.

These religious acts are of two types. The first type includes those which are referred to as worship and consist mainly of religious meetings, sacrifices, prayers and songs. But religion is never limited to these directly religious acts; because it occupies a central place in life and embraces all mankind, it penetrates all life and tries to bring it into harmony with itself. Every religion raises up a moral ideal and proclaims a moral law, to which man must also conform in his personal, domestic, civil and social life. In every religion, in addition to ideas and attitudes, there are also actions which are partly related to worship and partly to moral life, and which are therefore culturally and ethically distinct.

There is no religion that does not contain all of these elements. But there is a great difference in the content contained in each of these elements, in their relationship to one another, and in the value assigned to each of them. Paul says that the essence of paganism is that men have changed the glory of the immortal God into the likeness of some creature (Romans 1:23). Thus the principle of Paganism is defined, and no study of religions can overthrow the truth of this principle. But this principle admits of different effects; the apostle himself says that the heathen sometimes changed the glory of God into the likeness of a corruptible man, and then again into that of fowl, and then again into that of four-footed and creeping animals. The more the Godhead is identified with the whole world, with nature, with spirits or souls, with human beings or animals, the more the religious ideas, but also the religious emotions and actions change.

Three main forms can be distinguished. When the Divine is identified with the mysterious forces of nature, religion degenerates into gross superstition and fearful witchcraft; soothsayers and magicians are employed to provide mankind with power over the arbitrary nature of the invisible, divine beings. If the Divine is thought to be the same as the human, then religion takes on a more human character, but it also easily falls into ritualistic formalism or sober moralism. And when the Divine is conceived as the idea, the soul or the substance of the world, then religion retreats from the appearance of things into the mysticism of the heart, and seeks communion with the Divine in the way of asceticism (abstinence) and ecstasy (soul-searching). In the various religions, one or the other of these main forms comes to the fore, but never in such a way as to completely exclude the others. Salvation is always sought in the way of reason and knowledge, of will and deed, or of heart and feeling.

Philosophy concurs with this; it too is concerned with the problem of salvation and always seeks a view of the world that satisfies both reason and emotion. It also grew out of religion, it constantly incorporates elements of religion, and for many it serves as a kind of religion. With all its reflection, however, it does not rise above the basic ideas of religion. As soon as she derives a rule for life from her world view, she always tries to open up a way to salvation in the knowledge of the state, in the moral acts of the will, or in the experiences of the heart. Without special revelation, neither man's religion nor the philosophy of thought has a true knowledge of God, nor of man and the world, of sin and salvation. Both seek God, if they can reach out and find Him, but they do not find Him.

Therefore, to the general revelation now comes the special revelation; and it is this, on the other hand, by which God comes out of His hiddenness and makes Himself known to and takes up residence in man. Between the self-invented and self-willed religions of the nations and the religion based on the special revelation to Israel and in Christ, there is a fundamental difference. In the latter, it is always man who seeks God, but always forms a false conception of Him, and therefore never gains a proper insight into the nature of sin and the way of salvation; but in the religion of the Holy Scriptures it is always God who seeks man, who reveals to him his guilt and impurity, but in return also makes Himself known in His grace and mercy. There the sigh rises from the depths of man's heart: "If only God would tear the heavens asunder and come down to earth; here the heavens open and God Himself comes down to earth. Here we always see man at work, whether, by acquiring knowledge, by keeping all kinds of commandments, or by withdrawing from the world into the secrecy of his own mind, he can partake of redemption from evil and fellowship with God; here all man's work falls away, and it is God Himself who acts, intervenes in history, paves the way of redemption in Christ, and by the power of His grace leads man therein and makes him walk. The special revelation is the answer which God Himself gives in word and deed to the questions which arise in the human heart through His own guidance.

Immediately after the fall we see that God comes to man. At that very moment man, having sinned, is seized with shame and fear; he flees from his creator and hides in the dense trees of the garden. But God does not forget man; He does not let him go, comes down to him, seeks him out, talks to him, and leads him back to His community, Genesis 3:7-15. And what thus took place immediately after the fall, continues in history from generation to generation; as it happened there, so we see it always happening; in the whole work of redemption it is God and God alone, who acts as the seeking and calling, as the speaking and acting; the whole redemption proceeds from Him and returns to Him. It is He who substitutes Seth for Abel, Genesis 4:25, who makes Noah share in His favor, Genesis 6:8, and preserves in the judgment of the flood, Genesis 6:12 ff, who calls Abram and includes him in his covenant, Genesis 12:1, Genesis 17:1, who elects the people of Israel to inheritance by sheer grace, Deuteronomy 4:20, Deuteronomy 7:6-8, who in the fullness of time sends his only begotten Son into the world, Galatians 4:4, and now in this dispensation is gathering out of all mankind a congregation, which He has chosen for eternal life and preserves for the heavenly inheritance to the end, Ephesians 1:10, 1 Peter 1:5. As in the work of creation and of providence, so also in that of re-creation God is the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, Isaiah 44:6, Revelation 22:13. He cannot be anything else and nothing less, because He is God; from and through and to Him are all things, Romans 11:36. That God is first in the work of salvation, is not only evident from the fact that the special revelation emanates

entirely from Him, but is also clearly shown in the fact that all that work rests on an eternal counsel of redemption. Earlier we showed that God's whole creation and providence proceed from such a counsel; but, if possible, in still clearer language and stronger terms, we are taught by Scripture that such an eternal and unchangeable counsel also underlies the whole work of re-creation. For in Scripture we read several times of a counsel that precedes all things, Isaiah 46:10, works all things, Ephesians 1:11, and especially has the work of redemption as its object, Luke 7:30, Acts 20:27, Hebrews 6:17; which furthermore, as the counsel of God, is the foundation of the whole work of creation. Hebrews 6:17; which furthermore, as the counsel, not only of God's understanding but also of his omnipotent will, Ephesians 1:5, Ephesians 1:11, is indissoluble, Isaiah 14:27, Isaiah 46:10, and unchangeable, Hebrews 6:17, and will endure forever, Psalms 33:11,

Proverbs 19:21. Other names clarify this idea: we not only find mention of a counsel of God, but also of a pleasure, which God has revealed in Christ towards men, Luke 2:14, and delights in their attainment and adoption as children, Matthew 11:26, Ephesians 1:5, Ephesians 1:9; of a purpose, which works electively, Romans 9:11, Ephesians 1:9, is made in Christ, Ephesians 3:11, and realizes itself in the calling, Romans 8:28; of a predestination and foreknowledge, which has in grace its origin, Romans 11:5, and Christ its center, Ephesians 1:4, certain persons as its object, Romans 8:29, and their salvation as its goal, Ephesians 1:4; finally, of a predestination which, by means of the preaching of the wisdom of God, 1 Corinthians 2:7, leads to adoption as children, the conformation of Christ, and eternal life, Acts 13:48, Romans 8:29, Ephesians 1:5. When we summarize all these data of Holy Scripture, it appears that the counsel of God has three main contents.

Firstly, it includes election, that is, God's gracious intention, according to which He has predestined those whom He has known in love to be conformed to the image of His Son, Romans 8:29. One may also speak of an election of the peoples, because in the days of the Old Testament Israel alone out of all peoples was accepted by the Lord for his inheritance; and in the New Testament dispensation one people is made acquainted with the Gospel much earlier than the other. But the election of Scripture does not stop at the acceptance of the peoples. It continues in humanity to the nations and in the nations to the persons, so that an Esau is rejected and a Jacob accepted, Romans 9:13, and the same persons, who were known beforehand, are also called, justified and glorified in time, Romans 8:30. But even if the election has certain persons as its object, it is not grounded in those persons, but only in God's grace; the Lord has mercy on whom He has mercy, and He is merciful toward whom He is merciful, so that it is not the will of the one who wills, nor the will of the one who runs, but the mercy of God, Romans 9: 15, 16. Faith is a gift of God, Ephesians 2:8; the faithful were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that in time they might come to faith and through that faith be holy and blameless before God, Eph. 1: 4; so that there are always as many believers as God has predestined to eternal life, Acts 13:45. The will of God is for us the ultimate ground of all that exists and happens, and so is His good pleasure, the deepest cause to which the distinction in the eternal destiny of mankind can be reduced.

Secondly, in the council of redemption the acquisition of that entire salvation which God wants to give to His elect is established. The plan of redemption not only includes the persons who will inherit eternal salvation, but also designates the Mediator who will prepare them for it. In this sense Christ Himself can be called the object of God's election; of course not in the sense that He,

like the members of His congregation, was elected from a state of sin and misery to a state of redemption of salvation; but certainly in this other sense, that He, who was the mediator of creation, should also be the mediator of the re-creation and should bring it about entirely through His suffering and death, Matthew 12:18, as Mediator subject and obedient to the Father, Matthew 26:42, John 4:34, Php 2:8, Hebrews 5:8, has a commandment and a work to accomplish, which the Father has commissioned him, Isaiah 53:10, John 6:38-40, John 10:18, John 12:49, John 17:4, and receives as a reward for his accomplished work his own glory, the salvation of his people, and the highest power in heaven and earth, Psalms 2:8, Isaiah 53:10, John 17:4, John 17:24, Php 2:9.

Like the counsel of creation and providence, that of the re-creation does not go beyond the Son. In fact, we read explicitly that the eternal purpose was made in Christ, Ephesians 3:11, and that those who come to faith in time were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 1:4. This, of course, does not mean that Christ is the foundation or cause of election, for He is Himself the object of the Father's election in the sense described above, and therefore cannot act as foundation and cause in the re-creation any more than He does in the creation and providence. Like all things, the counsel of God has its starting point and basis in the Father. But just as creation and providence both come about in decision and reality from the Father through the Son, so the plan of redemption is also made by the Father in and with the Son. With the Father, He designates Himself as the Mediator of salvation and as the Head of His congregation. From this we may deduce that the election, although it has certain persons as its object, nevertheless excludes all chance and arbitrariness. For the purpose of election is not to bring a few people to salvation at random and let them stand apart from one another as individuals; but God's intention is nothing less than to appoint Christ the Mediator as the Head of the congregation, and to form the congregation into the body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:12, 1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 4:16. In the church, humanity is organically preserved, and the world is restored in the new heaven and earth.

Therefore, in the third place, the effect and application of the salvation acquired by Christ is also determined in the counsel of God. The plan of redemption was determined by the Father in the Son, but also in the fellowship of the Spirit. Just as the creation is providentially brought about by the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit, so too the re-creation takes place only through the appropriate activity of the Holy Spirit. It is he who is acquired, promised and given through Christ, John 16:7, Acts 2:4, Acts 2:17, who testifies of Christ and takes everything from Christ, John 15:26, John 16:13-14, and who now works in the congregation through regeneration, John 3:3, faith, 1 Corinthians 12:3, childhood, Romans 8:15, renewal, Titus 3:5, the sealing until the day of redemption, Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 4:30. And all this the Holy Spirit can work and bring about, because He with the Father and the Son is the only true God, who lives and reigns forever. The love of the Father, the grace of the Son and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit are fixed for the people of the Lord in the eternal and unchangeable counsel of God. This counsel of God is therefore also unspeakably rich in consolation. Often it is seen in a completely different light and presented as a cause of discouragement and despair. It is then objected that, when everything is determined from eternity, man becomes a plaything in the hands of divine arbitrariness. What does it profit a man if he exerts himself and devotes himself to a virtuous life; if he is rejected, he is nevertheless lost; and conversely, what does it profit a man if he lives in sin and gives himself over

to the most abominable godlessness and immorality; if he is elected, he is nevertheless saved! Such a counsel of God leaves not the least room for man's freedom and responsibility; that he then lives according to the will of his heart and commits sin, that grace may be increased! That the confession of the counsel of God has often been abused in this way, can be wholeheartedly agreed upon. And such an abuse was not only made of it since Augustine and Calvin, but also occurred in the days of Jesus and the apostles. For it is recorded of the Pharisees and the lawgivers, that they rejected the counsel of God manifested in the baptism of John with respect to themselves, so that what should have been a means of conversion was turned by them into an instrument of their destruction, Luke 7:30. And the apostle Paul calls it blasphemy when he is reproached for recommending the doing of evil, that good may come from it, Romans 3:8, and lays hands on the mouth of the ignorant man who dares to accuse God, Romans 9:19-20. He has a perfect right to do so; for the counsel of God establishes not only the outcome, but also the means; it records not only the effects, but also the causes, and establishes between the two such a connection as the reality of life itself reveals. It does not destroy the rational and moral nature of man, but rather creates and safeguards it, always to the same extent that history makes it known to us. The abuse that is made of this confession is all the more serious, because the counsel of God is revealed and preached in Scripture, not so that we should deny its reality and become hardened against it, but, on the contrary, so that, feeling our guilt and powerlessness, we should trust in the counsel of God with childlike faith and put all our trust in it with full assurance of our hearts in all our need and death. For if salvation, to a greater or lesser extent, depended on man's faith and good works, it would be lost to him forever. But now the counsel of God teaches us that salvation is God's work from beginning to end, the divine work par excellence. The re-creation, as well as the creation in providence, is a work of God alone; no man has been his counsellor, or has first given him that it might be repaid to him, Romans 11:34-35. Father, Son and Spirit together have conceived and established the whole work of salvation, and it is they who carry it out and bring it to completion. Nothing comes from man. All things are of, through and to God. And that is why our soul can rest in this with unshakable certainty; it is His will, His eternal, independent and unchanging will, that in the church mankind will be restored and saved.

We are even more convinced of the comfort of this election when we consider that God's counsel is not only a work of his mind, but also a work of his will, not only a thought that belongs to eternity, but also an omnipotent power that realizes itself in time. And so it is with all God's virtues and perfections; they are not idle, silent, inoperative qualities, but omnipotent forces, full of life and action; every quality is His essence. When God is called the Just and the Holy, it means that He reveals Himself in this way, and that He bears and maintains His right in the world, in the history of the world and in the conscience of every human being. When He is called Love, this does not only mean that He thinks of us in Christ with benevolence, but that He also demonstrates this love and pours it into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. When He calls Himself our Father, this also means that He resurrects us, accepts us as His children and through His Spirit witnesses to our spirit that we are His children. When He makes Himself known as the Merciful One, He not only says this, but He also shows it in the fact that He actually forgives our sins and comforts us in all our woes. And likewise, when Scripture speaks to us of the counsel of God, it proclaims that God Himself fulfills and fully realizes that counsel. The counsel of redemption is itself a decree, a work of God in eternity, but as such it is also the principle, the driving force, and the guarantee of the work of salvation in time. Therefore, whatever may happen to the world and to mankind, and also to our

own person, the ever-wise counsel of the Lord endures forever, has everlasting power. Nothing can ever reverse His High Decree; it remains from generation to generation. There is not the slightest reason for despondency and doubt. Everything is certain to come, as God in His wisdom and love has determined. His almighty and merciful will is the guarantee of the redemption of mankind and the salvation of the world. In the greatest of sorrows our hearts remain at rest in the Lord. As soon as mankind has fallen, the counsel of salvation begins to work. Entirely of His own accord God comes down, seeks mankind and calls him back to Himself. And then there is an interrogation and an interrogation, a declaration of guilt and a denunciation of punishment. But the punishment pronounced on the snake, the woman and the man is at the same time a blessing and a means of preservation. After all, in the mother's promise, Genesis 3:14-15, not only is the serpent humiliated and the evil power, whose instrument it was, condemned. But it also announces that from now on enmity will reign between the serpent seed and the female seed; that it is God Himself who will bring this enmity into being and confirm it; and that this enmity and struggle will end in the serpent seed crushing the legs of the female seed, but vice versa, the female seed crushing the head of the serpent seed. This is nothing less than the announcement and the institution of the covenant of grace. It is true that the word covenant is not yet used here; it cannot be used until later, with Noah, Abraham, etc., when mankind, in their many and varied struggles against nature, against animals and also among themselves, has learned the necessity and usefulness of covenants and agreements through practical life experience. But in principle and essence, the mother promise contains everything that constitutes the content of the covenant of grace. Because of his transgression mankind has ceased to obey God, has forsaken his fellowship and, on the contrary, has sought friendship with Satan and entered into an alliance with him. And now God, in His grace, comes to break this alliance between mankind and Satan and to put enmity in their place. God brings the female seed, which in the woman had surrendered to Satan, over to His side again by an almighty act of His merciful will and adds the promise that, despite all kinds of resistance and tribulation, it will one day certainly gain complete victory over the serpent seed. There is nothing conditional or uncertain here. God Himself comes to mankind, He puts up an enmity, He opens the battle, He promises victory; man has nothing else to do but to hear this and to accept it in childlike faith. Promise and faith are the contents of the covenant of grace, which is now established with mankind and which opens the way to the Father's house and the entrance to eternal salvation for him, the fallen one and the one who has been lost.

Thus there is a great difference in the way in which man was to inherit eternal life before the fall, and the way in which he can only acquire it after the fall. Then the rule was: Do this and you will live; in the way of perfect obedience to God's commandment he had to try to inherit eternal life. That in itself was a good way, which, if man had walked it to the end, would also have led him infallibly to heavenly salvation. God, for His part, has not broken His rule either, He still keeps it; if there could be a man who kept God's commandment completely, he would still receive eternal life as his reward, Leviticus 18:5, Ezekiel 20:11, Ezekiel 20:13, Matthew 19:16 ff, Romans 10:5, Galatians 3:12. But man has made that way of life impossible for himself; he can no longer keep the law, because he has broken his fellowship with God and no longer loves but hates His law, Romans 8:7. And now the covenant of grace opens to him a different and safer way, in which man no longer has to work in order to enter into life, but in which he first, at the very moment of entering, receives eternal life, accepts it through filial faith, and now produces good works through that faith. The order is thus reversed: before the fall, through works to eternal life; now, after the

fall and in the covenant of grace, first eternal life and from that life the good works as fruits of faith. Then man had to ascend to God, to His full communion; now God comes down to man and seeks to dwell in his heart. Then workdays preceded the Sabbath; now the week is opened with the Sabbath, and all its days are sanctified by the Sabbath. That there is now for fallen mankind such a separate or newly established and such a living, or infallibly certain, way into the heavenly sanctuary, Hebrews 10:20, is due only to God's grace and to the counsel of redemption. The counsel of salvation, which lies in eternity, and the covenant of grace, which is made known to man immediately after the fall and established with him, are both closely related to each other. They are so closely related that the one stands and falls with the other. There are many who hold a different opinion; taking their stand in the covenant of grace, they deny and combat the counsel of salvation; in the name of the purity of the Gospel they reject the confession of election. But in fact they destroy the covenant of grace and change the Gospel again into a new law.

After all, if the covenant of grace is severed from election, it ceases to be a covenant of grace and turns once again into a covenant of works. Election implies that God nevertheless grants salvation, which mankind has forfeited and can never again acquire by his own efforts, freely and by grace. But when that salvation is not a mere gift of grace but depends in some way on the behavior of mankind, the covenant of grace is again transformed into a covenant of works; man must then first fulfill some condition in order to share eternal life. Grace and works are here opposed to each other and mutually exclusive. If it is by grace, it is no longer of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. And if it is by works, then it is no longer grace, otherwise the work is no longer work. The Christian religion has the peculiar characteristic of being the religion of salvation, pure grace, pure religion. But it can only be recognized and maintained as such if it is only a gift and arises wholly from the counsel of God. Election and covenant of grace are thus so little in conflict that election is much more the basis and guarantee of the heart and core of the covenant of grace. And so much is it important to hold on to this intimate connection that the slightest weakening of it not only deprives the believer of a proper understanding of the acquisition and application of salvation, but also robs him of his one and only consolation in the practice of his spiritual life. An even richer light falls on this connection when the covenant of grace is not exclusively related to election, but to the entire counsel of salvation. Election is not the whole counsel of redemption, but is a part of it, the first and fundamental part; that counsel also includes and determines the way in which that election shall be realized, the whole acquisition and application of salvation. After all, the election was made in Christ, and the counsel of God is not only a work of the Father, but also a work of the Son and the Holy Spirit, a divine work of the entire Trinity. In other words, the counsel of redemption is itself a covenant; a covenant in which each of the three persons, so to speak, receives his own task and performs his own work. And the covenant of grace, which is established in time and propagated from generation to generation, is nothing but the effect and the imprint of that covenant, which is fixed in the Eternal Being. As in the counsel of God', so in history each of the persons acts. The Father is the origin, the Son is the Acquirer and the Holy Spirit is the Provider of our salvation. That is why each one immediately and to the same degree undermines the work of the Father, the Son or the Spirit, if he shifts the basis of eternity away from time and separates history from the gracious and omnipotent divine will.

Nevertheless, although time cannot do without eternity and history is most closely related to God's thought and will, the two are not the same in all respects. There is this great difference between

them, that in the history of time the eternal thought of God comes to revelation and realization. And likewise, the counsel of redemption and the covenant of grace cannot and must not be separated, but they differ in this respect, in that the latter is realized. The plan of redemption is not enough, it must also be carried out; and as a decree it carries that execution within itself and brings it about by itself. It would lose its very character as a counsel and a decree if it were not revealed and realized in time. Thus we also see it happen that the covenant of grace is made known to man immediately after the fall and is established with him, and then continued in history from generation to generation. What is one in decision, unfolds itself in the width of the world and develops itself in the length of the centuries. When we now turn our attention to this historical development of the covenant of grace, we notice three peculiarities.

Firstly, the covenant of grace is everywhere and at all times one in its essence, yet it constantly appears in new forms and goes through different dispensations. Essentially and objectively it remains one, before and under and after the Law. It is always a covenant of grace; it is called such because it flows from the grace of God, has grace as its content, and finds its ultimate goal in the glorification of God's grace.

Just as it was God in his very first announcement who put up enmity, who offered battle and promised victory, so God remains the first and the last in all the different expressions of the covenant of grace, with Noah and Abraham, with Israel and the New Testament congregation. Promise, gift, grace is and remains the content of it. In the course of time it will be unfolded much more clearly, what is included in that promise and what rich content that grace contains. But in principle, all this is already included in the mother promise. The one great, all-encompassing promise of the covenant of grace is this: I will be your God and the God of your seed, Genesis 7:8, and in it everything is included, the whole acquisition and application of salvation, Christ and all His benefits, the Holy Spirit with all His gifts. From the mother's promise in Genesis 3:15 to the apostolic prayer of blessing in 2 Corinthians 13:13 there is one straight line: all salvation for the sinner is contained in the love of the Father, the grace of the Son and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore we must pay attention to the fact that this promise is not conditional, but as definite and as firm as possible. God does not say that He wants to be our God if we do this or that. But He says that He will put down enmity, and that He will be our God, and that in Christ He will give us all things. The covenant of grace can remain the same in its essence throughout all ages, because it depends only on God and God is the Unchangeable and the Faithful. The covenant of works, which was established with mankind before the fall, was fragile and was broken because it depended on a changeable man. But the covenant of grace is fixed solely in God's mercy. People may become unfaithful, but God does not forget His promise. He cannot and must not break His covenant; He has committed Himself to it voluntarily, with a lasting oath; His name, His fame, His honor depend on it. It is for His own sake that He pardons the transgressions of His people and does not remember their sins, Isaiah 43:25, Isaiah 48:9, Jeremiah 14:7, Jeremiah 14:21. And therefore the mountains may give way and the hills may falter, but his mercy will not depart from us, nor will the covenant of his peace falter, says the Lord our Saviour, Isaiah 54:10.

Nevertheless, however unchanging its nature, it changes in its forms, and appears in different manifestations in the various administrations. In the time before the flood there was also a

separation between Sethites and Cainites, but the promise was not yet limited to one person and generation, but extended to all people; a formal separation did not yet come about, general and special revelation still flowed on in one bed. But when in this way the promise threatened to expire, the Flood became necessary and Noah took the promise with him in the Ark. Then, too, for a time the promise was still general, but when after the flood a new danger arose for the continuation of the covenant of grace, God no longer expelled the people, but let the nations wander in their own ways, and isolated Abraham as a bearer of the promise. The covenant of grace then finds its realization in the families of the patriarchs, who are separated from other peoples by circumcision as a sign of the righteousness of faith and as a sign of the circumcision of the heart. The covenant of grace is established at Sinai with Israel as the seed of Abraham; but since Israel is a people and must walk as a holy nation before God, the covenant of grace assumes a national character and makes use of the law, not only moral laws, but also all kinds of civil and ceremonial laws, to lead the people as a disciplinarian to Christ. The promise was older than the law, and the law did not take the place of the promise, but was added to the promise in order to develop it further and prepare for its fulfillment in the fullness of time. In Christ, the promise passes into fulfilment, the shadow into the body, the letter into the spirit, servitude into freedom. As such, it frees itself from all external, national bonds and, as in the beginning, extends itself to all mankind again. But in whatever forms the covenant of grace appears, it always has the same essential content. It is always the same Gospel, Romans 1:2, Galatians 3:8, the same Christ, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, the same faith, Acts 15:11, Romans 4:11, Hebrews 11:1-40, the same benefits of forgiveness and eternal life, Acts 10:43, Romans 4:3. The light differs in which believers walk, but it is always the same path which they tread. The second peculiarity of the covenant of grace consists in the fact that it has an organic character in all its dispensations.

Election draws attention to particular, individual persons, who have been known by God beforehand and who are therefore called, justified and glorified in time, but it does not in itself imply what relationship these persons have with one another. But now Scripture tells us further that the election took place in Christ, Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 3:11, and thus worked in such a way that Christ could act as the Head of His congregation, and the congregation could form the body of Christ. The elect are thus not separate from one another, but are one in Christ. Just as in the days of the Old Testament the people of Israel were one holy people of God, so the congregation of the New Testament is a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a nation obtained. Christ is the Bridegroom, and the congregation is His bride; He is the vine and they are the branches; He is the cornerstone, and they are the living stones of the building of God; He is the King and they are the subjects. So intimate is this unity between Christ and his church that Paul summarizes them both under the name of Christ: as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of this one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:12. It is a community that preserves the unity of the Spirit by the bond of peace; one body and one spirit, just as they are called to the one hope of their calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all of them, Ephesians 4:3-6.

Thus the election cannot have been an arbitrary or accidental act. If it is guided by the intention to make Christ the Head and to form the congregation into His body, then it carries an organic character and already contains the idea of a covenant. But in the testimony that election is made in Christ, something else is indicated. After all, the organic unity of the human race under one head

does not occur for the first time in Christ, but in Adam. Paul calls Adam explicitly an example of the one who was to come, Romans 5:14, and Christ is called the last Adam by him, 1 Corinthians 15:45. The covenant of grace thus appears to be after the basic ideas and lines of the work covenant; it is not the abolishment of it, but rather the fulfillment of it, just as faith does not annul the law, but confirms it, Romans 3:21. Thus, on the one hand, as was remarked earlier, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace are very sharply distinct; but, on the other hand, they are very intimately related. The great difference consists of the fact that Adam has forfeited and lost his place as head of the human race, and has now been replaced by Christ. But he takes upon himself the fulfillment of what the first man did, as well as of what he should have done; he fulfills for us the demands to which the moral law obliges us; and he now assembles his entire congregation as a renewed human race under his leadership. In the dispensation of the fullness of time, all things are again gathered together by God into one in Christ, both those in heaven and those on earth (Ephesians 1:10). This gathering can therefore only take place in an organic way. If the covenant of grace itself has been organically conceived in Christ, then it must also be established and continued accordingly. Thus we see that in history it is never established with a single, loose, isolated individual, but always with a human being and his family, with Adam, with Noah, with Abraham, with Israel, with the church and their seed. Never does the promise apply to a single believer in isolation, but always in him also his house. God does not realize His covenant of grace by subtly reading out a few people from among mankind and then assembling them outside of the world; but He inserts it into mankind, makes it a part of the world, and now ensures that it is preserved from evil in that world. As the Resurrector, He walks in the path that He has laid as Creator, Sustainer and Ruler of all things. Grace is something different and higher than nature, but it nevertheless joins nature, and does not destroy it but restores it. It is not an inheritance that is passed on by natural birth, but it flows on in the bed that has been dug out in the natural relations of the human race. The covenant of grace does not jump from one branch to another, but continues in the families, generations and peoples in a historical and organic manner. With this goes a third and last peculiarity, and that is that the covenant of grace materializes in a way that fully respects man’s reasonable and moral nature. It does rest on the counsel of God, and this must not be underestimated in any respect. Behind the covenant of grace lies the sovereign and omnipotent will of God, which proceeds with divine energy and therefore assures the triumph of the Kingdom of God over all violence of sin. But this will is not a destiny that falls upon mankind from above, but the will of the Creator of heaven and earth, who does not deny His own work in creation and providence and cannot treat man, whom He created as a rational and moral being, as a stick and a block. That will is, moreover, the will of a merciful and benevolent Father, who never coerces with brute force, but always, by the spiritual power of His love, conquers all our opposition. The will of God is not a blind, unreasonable force, but a will that is wise, merciful, loving and at the same time free and omnipotent. And that is why it works, contrary to our darkened understanding and to our sinful will, so that Paul can say of the Gospel that it is not according to man, not in accordance with the foolish insights and wrong desires of fallen man (Galatians 1:11). This explains why the covenant of grace, which actually knows no demands or conditions, yet again acts for us in the form of a commandment and exhorts us to faith and repentance, Mark 1:15. Seen by itself, the covenant of grace is only grace and excludes all work. It gives what it demands, and it fulfills what it prescribes. The Gospel is pure glad tidings, not a demand but a promise, not a duty but a gift. But in order that it may be manifested in us as a promise and a gift, it assumes, in

accordance with our nature, the character of a moral exhortation. It does not want to force us, but merely requires that we freely and willingly accept in faith what God wishes to give us. God’s will is realized only through our intellect and our will. That is why it is rightly said that mankind, through the grace it receives, believes and repents of its own accord.

Because the covenant of grace enters the human race historically and organically in this way, it cannot appear here on earth in a form that fully corresponds to its nature. Not only is there much in true believers that is in direct conflict with a life according to the demand of the covenant: walk before Me and be sincere, be holy, for I am holy. But there can also be persons, who have been accepted in the covenant of grace, as it appears to our eyes, and yet because of their unbelieving and unrepentant heart are still deprived of all spiritual blessings of that covenant. This is not only the case today, but such a situation has existed throughout the ages. In the days of the Old Testament not all who were descended from Israel were Israel, Romans 9:6, for not the children of the flesh, but the children of the redeemed are counted as the seed, Romans 9:8, Romans 2:29; and in the New Testament congregation there is chaff among the wheat, there are evil tendrils on the vine, and there are not only golden but also earthen vessels, Matthew 3:12, Matthew 13:29, John 15:2, 2 Timothy 2:20. On the basis of this contradiction between nature and appearance, some have made a distinction and separation between an inner covenant, which was established only with the true believers, and an outer covenant, which only included the external professors. But such a separation cannot exist with the teaching of Scripture; what God unites, man may not separate. There must not be any departure from the requirement that nature and appearance should correspond to one another, that confession with the mouth and belief with the heart should correspond to one another (Romans 10:9). But even though there are not two covenants that exist separately, there are two sides to the one covenant of grace, one of which is only visible to us, the other, however, is also completely visible to God. We have to keep to the rule that we cannot judge the heart, but only the outward act, and even then imperfectly. Those who walk in the way of the covenant before the eyes of mankind should, in the judgment of love, be regarded and treated by us as allies. But in the end it is not us, but God’s judgment that decides. He is the Knower of hearts and the Searcher of kidneys; with Him there is no acceptance of persons; man sees what is before his eyes, but the Lord sees the heart, 1 Samuel 16:7. So let everyone examine himself, whether he has faith, whether Jesus Christ is in him.

01.15. The mediator of the covenant.

15. The mediator of the covenant. The counsel of redemption is not a human design, whose execution depends on all kinds of unforeseen circumstances and is therefore at the most uncertain. But it is infallibly certain, because it is the decision of God's gracious and omnipotent will. As it was determined in eternity, so it is accomplished in time. All that the doctrine of faith has to do, therefore, is to describe the way in which the unchangeable counsel of the Lord concerning the salvation of His children is worked out and applied. And since that counsel was mainly concerned with three major issues, about the Mediator, through whom salvation had to be acquired, about the Holy Spirit, through whom it had to be applied, and about the people to whom it had to be given, the instruction in the Christian faith has in the sequel also to occupy itself with three issues.

Firstly, it has to deal with the person of Christ, who will acquire salvation through his suffering and death. Then she must indicate the way in which the Holy Spirit makes the person of Christ, with all His benefits, part of the elect. And thirdly, it has to give attention to the persons who partake of this salvation acquired by Christ, and thus to speak of the church or congregation as the body of Christ. Finally, this teaching naturally leads to the completion of the salvation that awaits believers hereafter. During the treatment it will become clear that the counsel of redemption is well ordained and assured in all parts; the unspeakable grace, the manifold wisdom and the almighty power of God are revealed in it.

All these virtues appear in the clearest light right from the person of Christ. Faith in the intermediary is not exclusive to Christianity. All men and peoples not only live in the consciousness that they are not partakers of salvation, but they also carry in their hearts the conviction that this salvation must in some way be indicated and granted to them by certain persons. The idea is widespread that man, as he is, cannot approach God and live in His presence; he needs an intermediary who will open the way to Godhead. In all religions, therefore, there are mediators who, on the one hand, make Divine revelations known to mankind and, on the other hand, convey the prayers and gifts of mankind to God.

Sometimes lower gods or spirits act as such intermediaries, but often they are also people endowed with supernatural knowledge and power and in a special odor of holiness. They occupy a prominent place in the religious life of the people and are consulted on all important occasions in special and public life, such as disasters, wars, diseases, enterprises, etc. But whether they act as soothsayers or magicians, as saints or priests, they do show the way which, in their opinion, man must take in order to obtain the favor of Godhead, but they are not the way itself. The religions of the peoples are independent of their persons. This is true even of those divine services which were founded by certain persons. Buddha and Kongfutse, Zarathustra and Mohammed may have been the first professors of the religion founded by each of them, but they are not the content of that religion and are related to it in an external and, to a certain extent, accidental way. Their religion could remain the same even if their name were forgotten or their person replaced by

another. In Christianity, however, the situation is quite different. It has been said from time to time that Christ never wanted to be the only Mediator and that He would be perfectly content to forget His name, provided His principle and spirit lived on in the congregation. Others, however, who have severed all ties with Christianity for themselves, have contested and refuted this idea in an impartial manner. Christianity bears a completely different relationship to the person of Christ than the religions of the nations do to the persons by whom they were founded. Jesus was not the first confessor of the religion named after him. He was not the first and foremost Christian, but He occupies a wholly unique place in Christianity. He is not the founder of Christianity in the usual sense, but He is the Christ, the Sent One of the Father, who founded His Kingdom on earth and is now extending it and preserving it until the end of the ages. Christ is Christianity itself; He is not outside it but in the midst of it; without His name, person, and work, there is no more Christianity. In a word, Christ is not the signpost to salvation, but the way itself. He is the only true and complete Mediator between God and man. What religions have suspected and hoped for in their belief in the Mediator, that is not the case.

What the religions have suspected and hoped for in their mediatorial faith, has been essentially and completely fulfilled in Him. In order to grasp this completely unique significance of Christ, we must start from the idea of Scripture, that He did not first begin to exist, as we do, at His conception and birth, but that He already existed centuries before and was from eternity the one-born and beloved Son of the Father. In the Old Testament the Messiah is already referred to by the name of Father of eternity, who is an eternal Father to his people. Isaiah 9:5, and whose goings forth (origin and provenance) are from of old, from the days of eternity, Micah 5:1. The New Testament joins in this, but expresses the eternity of Christ much more clearly. It is already contained in all those places where the entire earthly life of Christ is presented as the fulfillment of a work that God had commissioned him to do. It is true that it is also said of John the Baptist that he had to come as a second Elijah and did come. Mark 9:11-13, John 1:7. But the emphasis and the frequency with which it is said of Christ that He came into the world to accomplish His work indicate that this expression is meant here in a special sense. ■

It is not only written in general terms that He went out from the Father to preach, Mark 1:38, and that He came to call sinners to repentance and to give His soul as a ransom for many, Mark 2:17, Mark 10:45. But it is also explicitly said that He was sent to preach the Gospel, Luke 4:43, that it was the Father who sent Him, Matthew 10:40, John 5:24, John 5:30, John 5:36 etc., that He came from the Father and in His name, John 5:43, John 8:42, John 13:3 etc., that He came down from heaven to preach the Gospel, Mark 1:38, Jesus knows himself to be the only Son, who loved the Father and was sent out into the vineyard after many other servants, Mark 12:6. He, who is the Son of David, was already David’s Lord, Mark. Mark 12:36, existed already before Abraham, John 8:58, and had already glory with the Father before the world was, John 17:5, John 17:24. This self-consciousness of Jesus regarding His eternal existence is further unfolded in the apostolic testimony. In Christ that eternal Word became flesh, who in the beginning was with God and God Himself, John 1:1, John 1:14. He was the manifestation of His glory and the expressed image of His independence, and is not only higher than all the angels, but has a claim to their worship, is an eternal God and an eternal King, who always remains the same and whose years will not come to an end, Hebrews 1:3-13. He was rich, 2 Corinthians 8:9, was in the form of God, so that He was equal to the Father not only in essence, but also in form, in position and glory, but did not regard

this equality with God as something that He should selfishly possess and use for Himself, Php 2:6, but rather gave it up to take on the form of a man and a servant, Php 2:7-8 and was in that way exalted to the Lord, who came from Heaven and as such formed an opposition to Adam, the man from the earth, 1 Corinthians 15:47. In a word, Christ is like the Father, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, Revelation 1:11, Revelation 1:17, Revelation 22:13. The activity of this Son of God, made flesh, did not begin with his appearance on earth, but goes back to the creation. Through the Word all things were made without exception, John 1:3, Hebrews 1:2, Hebrews 1:10; He is the first-born, the head, the principle of all creatures, Colossians 1:15, Revelation 3:14, standing before all things, Colossians 1:17; and the creatures were not only created by Him, but they continually exist together in and through Him, Colossians 1:17, and are from eyes to eyes, from eyes to ears, from eyes to ears. Colossians 1:17 and are carried from moment to moment by the word of His power,

Hebrews 1:3; and they are at last also created for Him, Colossians 1:16, because God has appointed Him, who was the Son, heir of all things, Hebrews 1:2, Romans 8:17. For in Him was life, the full, rich, inexhaustible life, the source of all life in the world, but that life was for men, who were created in God's image and possessed a rational, moral nature, to be the light, the source of the divine truth which men should know and practise. And though mankind then became darkness through sin, yet the light of the Word still shone in that darkness, John 1:5; it enlightened every man that came into the world, John 1:9, for the Word was and remained, and still worked in the world, though it was not known by that world either, John 1:10. The Christ who appears on earth in the fullness of time is, therefore, according to the description which the Scriptures give of Him, not a man beside and in the midst of other men, not the founder of a divine service and not the preacher of a new moral doctrine, but He occupies a wholly unique place. He was the Creator, Sustainer and Ruler of all things; in Him was the life and light of men. When He appears in the world, He does not come to it as a stranger, but He is its Lord, knows it and is related to it. Recreation is related to creation, grace to nature, the work of the Son to the work of the Father. Salvation is built on foundations that have been laid in creation. The significance of Christ for us becomes even clearer if we now take a closer look at his relationship to Israel. There the Word (of the Logos) dwelt and acted in the whole world and in all mankind. But although the Light shone in the darkness, the darkness did not understand it; and although the Word was in the world, the world did not know it, John 1:5, John 1:10. Israel was ■his own', and He was not among Israel as He was in the world, but He came to that Israel deliberately and after centuries of preparation; Christ is of the fathers as far as the flesh is concerned, Romans 9:5. And although He was rejected by his own - the world is described as not knowing Him, John 1:10, but the Jews are described much more strongly as not accepting Him, as rejecting and refusing Him - His coming was not in vain for that reason, because those who accepted Him received from Him the right and the power to become God's children, John 1:12. When John 1:11 says of the Word that it came to his own, this undoubtedly refers to the Incarnation, to the coming of Christ in the flesh. But it also implies that the ownership relationship of the Word to Israel did not come about only through the incarnation, but existed long before then. Israel was His and therefore the Word came to His in the fullness of time. In the same moment that Jehovah accepted Israel for his own, there also came a special relationship of that people to the Word (the Logos) came into being. For he himself is the Lord whom Israel sought, the Angel of the Covenant, who would soon come to his Temple, Malachi 3:1, and who had dwelt and worked among Israel from the days of old. In many places in

the Old Testament reference is made to the Angel of the Covenant or Angel of the Lord; it is through this Angel, as was demonstrated earlier in the doctrine of the Trinity, that the Lord reveals Himself in a special way to His people. Although distinct from the Lord, He is so one with Him that the same names, attributes, works and honors can be attributed to Him as to God Himself. He is the God of Bethel, Genesis 31:13, the God of the fathers, Exodus 3:2, Exodus 3:6, who promises Hagar the multiplication of her seed, Genesis 16:10, Genesis 21:18, who guided and redeemed the patriarchs, Genesis 48:15-16, who gave the people the gift of God. The Angel of the Covenant gives Israel the assurance that the Lord Himself is in their midst as the God of salvation and redemption, Isaiah 63:9. His appearance was a preparation and an announcement of that complete self-revelation of God, which would take place in the fullness of time in the incarnation. The whole Old Testament dispensation was an ever-closer approach of God to his people, to dwell in their midst forever in Christ, Exodus 29:43-46. This teaching about the existence and the activity of the Word, before it appeared in Christ in the flesh, is of the utmost importance for a right understanding of the history of mankind and for a right consideration of the people and the religion of Israel. For thus it becomes possible to recognize all that is true and good and beautiful also in the heathen world, and at the same time to uphold the special revelation that was given to the people of Israel. While the Word and the wisdom of God were at work in the whole world, they appeared among Israel as the Angel of the Covenant, as the manifestation of the name of the Lord. In the Old and New Testaments the covenant of grace is one; the believers of the Old Testaments have not been saved in any other way than we have and we are not saved in any other way than they have. It is the same faith in the promise, the same trust in the grace of God, that opens the access to salvation then and now. And the same benefits of forgiveness and regeneration, of renewal and eternal life, were then and are now given to the faithful. They all walk on the same path, even though the light differs in brightness, which irradiates the faithful of the Old and New Testaments.

There is, however, another important peculiarity involved here. Paul says of the Ephesians that in former times, when they still lived as Gentiles, they were without Christ, alienated from the citizenship of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:11-12). For they had no promise of God to which they could cling, they lived without hope in the world, and they had no God in their hearts whom they could know and serve. Of course the Apostle does not mean by this that the Gentiles believed in no gods; for elsewhere he says of the Athenians that they were religious throughout, Acts 17:22, and speaks of a revelation which God gave them also, Acts 17:24 ff, But knowing God, they did not glorify and give thanks to Him as God; they were perverted in their deliberations and served gods who by nature are not gods, Romans 1:21 ff, Galatians 4:8. And so Paul does not deny that the Gentiles had all kinds of expectations about the future this side and that side of the grave, but he expresses the thought that all those expectations, as well as the gods they served, were vain, because there was no firm, unquestionable promise from God’s side in Christ.

It was different among Israel. He accepted them as His children, dwelt among them with His glory, gave them the successive covenant gifts, the law, worship, and especially also those promises which referred to the Messiah and which indicated that He would come forth from Israel as flesh. But although Christ, as far as the flesh is concerned, is of the fathers, He is more than man, He is God above all praise in eternity, Romans 9:5, and existed and worked also in the days of the Old

Testament. The Christians in Ephesus lived without Christ as long as they were Gentiles, but the Israelites in the old days were connected with Christ, namely with the promised Christ, who already existed and was active as mediator. He was active in the distribution of His benefits, but also in the preparation, by word and deed, by prophecy and history, of His own coming in the flesh, and in casting a shadow over all the people of Israel of the body of spiritual goods, which He Himself would acquire and bring about in the fullness of time. The Apostle Peter expresses this thought clearly and unambiguously in the first chapter of his first letter. When he speaks there of the great salvation, which the faithful already possess in principle and which they can fully expect in the future, he also demonstrates the glory of this salvation by saying that the prophets of the Old Testament made it the subject of their study and reflection. All the prophets have this in common: they prophesied about the grace that is now given to believers in the days of the New Testament. They received knowledge of this through revelation, but this revelation did not make them passive, but put them, so to speak, to work. This revelation stimulated them and awakened them to investigate and inquire after these things themselves, not in the manner of philosophers who try to discover the mysteries of creation with their own understanding, but as holy men of God, who made the special revelation, the future salvation in Christ, the object of their investigation, and in that investigation let themselves be guided not by their own thoughts, but by the Spirit of God. They inquired after when and how the Spirit of Christ, who was in them, would acquaint them with the sufferings Christ had to undergo and the glory that awaited him after these sufferings, through his preparatory testimony (1 Peter 1:10-11). The testimony that Jesus breathes into the hearts of His own and bears about Himself is the proof that they are partakers of the Spirit of prophecy, Revelation 19:10.

Through this revelation of the Spirit, Israel came to those rich and glorious expectations which are summarized under the name of Messianic.

These Messianic expectations are usually divided into two groups. The first are those which refer generally to the future of the Kingdom of God. These are also of great significance and are most closely related to the promise of the covenant of grace. That promise implies that God will be the God of His people and of their seed, and therefore does not only refer to the past and present, but also to the future. It is true that the people are continually guilty of unfaithfulness, apostasy and breaking the bonds with the Lord. But precisely because it is a covenant of grace, the unfaithfulness of the people cannot destroy the faithfulness of God. The covenant of grace is, by its very nature, an eternal covenant that continues from generation to generation. If, therefore, the people do not walk in the way of the covenant, God can, as it were, abandon them for a time, subject them to chastisement, judgment, exile, but He cannot break His covenant, because it is a covenant of grace that does not depend on the conduct of mankind, but rests solely in God’s mercy. He cannot break the covenant, for his own name and fame and honor are attached to it. After wrath, therefore, God’s goodness is always revealed; after judgment, His mercy; after suffering, His Lordship.

Israel was taught all this in the course of its history by prophecy. Through prophecy they gained an insight into the nature and purpose of history such as we find in no other nation. The Old Testament gives us to understand that the reign of God’s will, that the Kingdom of God, is the content and thus the course and ultimate goal of history. It is His counsel, His counsel of good pleasure and redemption, which exists forever and will defeat all opposition. Through suffering we

attain glory; behind the cross hangs the crown. One day God will triumph over all his enemies and let his people share in the fulfillment of all his promises. There will come an empire of justice and peace, of spiritual and material prosperity. And in the glory of that kingdom, Israel, but also the nations, will share. For the unity of God brings with it the unity of mankind and the unity of history. Then the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord and the promise of the covenant will be fulfilled: I will be your God, and you will be my sons and daughters. The prophecies and the psalms are full of these expectations. But they do not stop there, and they also extend to the way in which the Kingdom of God will be confirmed and completed in the future. And then they become the Messianic expectations in the narrow sense, telling us how God's rule on earth will be established in the future by a certain person, the Messiah. It is true that in recent times attempts have been made to remove all these Messianic expectations from the original religion of Israel and to place them in the time after the exile. But from other quarters this has been strongly refuted and also conclusively refuted. The Messianic expectations all revolve around two concepts: the day of the Lord, which is a day of judgment for Israel and the nations, and the Messiah, who will then bring salvation and establish the Kingdom of God on earth. And both these concepts did not originate with the prophets of the eighth century, but existed long before this time and were then elaborated and applied by the prophets whose books have been preserved to us.

Scripture itself shows this when it traces the expectations of the future back to ancient times. Of course, at first they are still of a general nature, but this is proof of their antiquity, and the gradual development which can subsequently be seen in these predictions powerfully reinforces this proof. In the mother's promise, Genesis 3:15, enmity is set up between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, and the promise is made that the former will crush the latter's head. With Calvin we have the seed of the woman in the first place to think of the human race, which, transferred to God's side in the covenant of grace, has to fight against all power that is hostile to Him and receives its Head and Lord in Christ. History shows that this human race, which fights against the seed of the serpent, by no means includes all nations, but is increasingly shrinking and limiting itself. The promise continues only in the line of Seth. When the first people were destroyed by the flood, there was soon a separation in the family between Cham and Japhet on the one side and Shem on the other. And the promise is now specified in such a way that Jehovah becomes the God of Shem, that Japheth first expands far and later comes to live in Sam's tents, and that Canaan becomes both their servant, Genesis 9:26-27. From the lineage of Shem, later on, when the pure knowledge and service of God are once again in danger of being lost, Abraham is chosen, and he receives the promise that he, blessed by the Lord, will be a blessing to many, yes, that all the generations of the earth will wish and seek that blessing that God bestowed on Abraham and his seed, and that therefore they will all be blessed in him, in his seed, Genesis 12:2-3. Among the sons of Jacob and the tribes of Israel, Judah again is designated later as the one who shall enjoy the preeminence over all his brethren. According to his name he became the praised one, Genesis 29:35, and the mighty one among his brethren, 1 Chronicles 5:2. They praise and serve him, and his enemies submit to him; and this reign will last until there comes one to whom the nations will obey, Genesis 49:8-10. The name Schilo in Genesis 49:10 is difficult to understand and is interpreted very differently, but the idea of the blessing pronounced on Judah is nevertheless clear; Judah has the preeminence among all the tribes of Israel, he has the dominion over all his brethren and from him shall come forth the future ruler of the nations. This promise was initially fulfilled in David, but at the same time it entered a new phase of development. For when

David had received rest from all his enemies, the intention arose in him to build the Lord a house. But instead of David building a house for the Lord, the Lord, through Nathan, announces to David that He will build him a house by inheriting the royal dignity in his line. The Lord will make a great name for David, like the name of the great men of the earth; after David's death He will put his son Solomon on his throne and be his father, and finally He will make his house and his kingship permanent before Him; David's throne will stand firm for ever and ever, 2 Samuel 7:9-16, Psalms 89:19-38. From now on the hope of Israel's pious people has been built upon David's house, and sometimes prophecy in general stands by this expectation, Amos 9:11, Hosea 3:5, Jeremiah 17:25, Jeremiah 22:4. But history taught, that no king of David's house met the expectation. And in connection with this history the prophecy pointed more and more clearly to that future in which the true son of David would appear and sit on the throne of his father for all eternity. Gradually this future David was referred to by the name of Messiah as a proper name. Messiah was at first, and remained for a long time, a general name and indicated everyone who was elected and anointed to one or another office among Israel. Anointing with oil was a common custom among the Eastern peoples, and served to soften the face burned by the sun and to make the members of the body fresh and supple again, Psalms 104:15, Matthew 6:17. It was a sign of joy, Proverbs 27:9 and was left in times of mourning, 2 Samuel 14:2, Daniel 10:3; it served as a token of hospitality and friendship, Psalms 23:5. 2 Chronicles 28:15, Luke 7:46, and was also employed as a means of healing, Mark 6:13, Luke 10:34, James 5:14, and as an expression of reverence towards a person who has died, Mark 16:1, Luke 23:56, John 19:40. This anointing was also incorporated into the worship service and thus acquired a religious significance. Jacob made the stone on which he had rested his head at Berseba a memorial stone and anointed it with oil, as a sign of consecration to the Lord who had appeared to him, Genesis 28:18, Genesis 31:13, Genesis 35:13. Later, in accordance with Moses' law, the tabernacle, utensils and altar were anointed in order to sanctify them and set them apart for God's service, Exodus 29:36, Exodus 30:23 and Exodus 40:10.

Once in a while we read of the anointing of prophets; Elijah anointed Elisha, 1 Kings 19:16, and in Psalms 105:15 the word anointed alternates with the word prophet. Furthermore the priests and especially the high priest were anointed, Leviticus 8:12, Leviticus 8:30, Psalms 133:2, so that he can be called the anointed priest, Leviticus 4:3, Leviticus 4:5, Leviticus 6:22. And especially we read of anointing with the kings, with Saul, 1 Samuel 10:1, David, 1 Samuel 16:13, 2 Samuel 2:4, 2 Samuel 5:3, Solomon, 1 Kings 1:34 etc. The kings were therefore called anointed. The Kings are therefore called anointed of the Lord, 1 Samuel 26:11, Psalms 2:2. But from here the usage widens. In Scripture anointed are also called those persons whom God chooses and makes competent for His service, without there having been a literal anointing with oil in them. In Psalms 105:15 the anointed and the prophets refer to the patriarchs. In Psalms 84:10, Psalms 89:39, Psalms 89:52, Habakkuk 3:13 perhaps the people of Israel or their king bears the name of anointed one. In Isaiah 45:1 it is applied to Cyrus. The anointing with oil is only a sign, which indicates on the one hand the dedication to God's service and on the other hand the election, calling and appointment to that service by God Himself. When David was anointed by Saul, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him from that day onward, 1 Samuel 16:13.

Now in this sense the name of Anointed One, Messiah, was especially arranged for the future King of David's house. He is the Anointed One par excellence, because He was not appointed by a man but by God Himself and not with the sign of oil, but without measure anointed with the Holy

Spirit Himself, Psalms 2:2, Psalms 22:6, Isaiah 61:1. When the name of Messiah (Anointed One) came into use as a proper name and without an article for the future King of David's house, cannot be said with certainty. But in Daniel 9:25 the name already appears in this sense, and in the days of Jesus' walk on earth it was in general use in that sense. In John 4:25 the Samaritan woman says to Jesus: I know that Messiah is coming, without the article, which has been wrongly included in the Dutch translation. Although anointed first had a general meaning and could indicate all kinds of people, it gradually became a proper name and was applied only to the future king of David's house. He is the Messiah, the Anointed One par excellence; he is Messiah alone. The image of the Messiah is now worked out in many ways in the prophecy of the Old Testaments. In the foreground is always His Kingship; He is called Anointed, because He is anointed King, Psalms 2:2, Psalms 2:6. On the basis of the promise that was given to him, David himself expects that a ruler over men will come from his house, who will rule in righteousness; for God has made an everlasting covenant with him, in which everything is properly regulated and insured, 2 Samuel 23:3-5. And this is the expectation of all the prophets and psalmists; the future salvation of Israel is indissolubly connected with the Davidic royal house, and the future king from that house is also the King of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not a poetic or philosophical concept, but a reality, a part of history; it is from above, spiritual, ideal, and yet it will come about in time, under a King from the house of David. It is a kingdom of God and yet a thoroughly human, earthly, historical kingdom. Thus the future Kingdom of God is drawn to us in the prophecy with paints and colors that are derived from the conditions of that time, and which cannot be taken literally, but nevertheless give a deep impression of the reality of that Kingdom; it is not a dream; it is being realized here on earth, in history, under a King of David's house. But however much this kingdom of Messiah may be inferior in tangible reality to any other earthly kingdom, it is nevertheless radically different. It is, although only established by struggle against and victory over all enemies, Psalms 2:1 ff, Psalms 72:9 ff, Psalms 110:2, a kingdom of perfect righteousness and peace, Isaiah 32:1, Psalms 45:7-8, Psalms 72:7; which righteousness consists above all in the fact that the needy are saved and the wretched helped, Psalms 72:12-14. But further, it extends over all enemies, to the ends of the earth, and remains for all eternity, Psalms 2:8, Psalms 45:7, Psalms 72:5, Psalms 72:8, Psalms 72:17, Psalms 110:2, Psalms 110:4. At the head of the Kingdom of God stands a Sovereign who, although a man, far exceeds all men in dignity and honor. He is a man, is born of David's house, is a son of David, and is called a son of man, 2 Samuel 7:12 ff, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:5, Micah 5:1, Daniel 7:13. He is Immanuel, God with us, Isaiah 7:14, the Lord our righteousness, Jeremiah 23:6, Jeremiah 33:16, in whom the Lord Himself comes with His grace to His people and makes dwelling among them. In prophecy it is the same whether the Lord or His Messiah rules over His people; now it is said that the Lord, and then again that His anointed King will appear, judge the nations and redeem Israel. Thus, for example, it is said in Isaiah 40:10-11. The Lord will come with power, His arm will rule, He will lead His flock like a shepherd, and in Ezekiel 34:23, that the Lord will raise up a shepherd, namely His servant David, who will lead His people and be their shepherd. The prophet Ezekiel says of the New Jerusalem that its name will be: The Lord is there, Ezekiel 48:35, and Isaiah presents it in such a way that in the Messiah God is with us, Isaiah 7:14. Ezekiel connects the two thoughts when he says, I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be Sovereign in the midst of them, Ezekiel 34:24, just as Micah also says that Messiah will lead the people of Israel in the power of the Lord, in the glory of the name of the Lord his God, Micah 5:3. This is the reason why in the New Testament both

sets of texts can be explained in the Messianic sense. In the Messiah God Himself comes to His people; He is more than man, He is the perfect revelation and indwelling of God, and therefore also bears Godly names; He is called Wonderful, Counselor, Strong God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Isaiah 9:5. But however great the dignity and power of this Messiah may be, the prophecy adds a very remarkable feature. He will be born in very humble circumstances and in very distressed times. Perhaps this is already included in the words of Isaiah, that a virgin, a young woman, without any further description, will give birth to a son, and that this son will share in the suffering of His people, because he will only eat milk and honey, which are the main products of a land that has been destroyed and is not being cultivated, Isaiah 7:14-15, Isaiah 53:2. There the prophet says that a tree will come forth from the severed trunk of Isai and that a shoot will sprout from its roots; in the time in which Messiah will be born, the Davidic royal house will still exist, but it will be dethroned and will be similar to a trunk that has been severed, but will still be able to produce a new shoot. Micah expresses the same thought in another way, when he says that the house of Ephrata, that is, the Davidic house of kings, is so called because Ephrata was the region in which David's birthplace, Bethlehem, was situated, that the house of Ephrata is the smallest among all the families of Judah, but that nevertheless a Ruler would come forth from it who would be great to the ends of the earth. Micah 5:1. That is why the Messiah is also indicated with the name of sprout by Jeremiah 23:5, Jeremiah 33:15 and by Zechariah 3:8, Zechariah 6:12. When Israel is scattered and Judah is in misery, when almost all expectations are gone and all hope extinguished, then the Lord will raise a Sprout from the decayed House of David, who will build the temple of the Lord and establish His kingdom on earth. However much the Messiah may come with power and glory. He will yet appear in humility, not riding a war horse, but sitting for peace on a donkey, a colt, a young of the donkeys, Zechariah 9:9. He shall be King, but also Priest; both dignities shall be combined in Him, as in Melchizedek, and He shall bear both for ever, Psalms 110:4, Zechariah 6:13. This idea of the humility of the Messiah leads us to that other image, under which it is especially presented by Isaiah, namely, the image of the suffering servant of the Lord. The people of Israel were to be a priestly kingdom, Exodus 19:6; they were to serve God as priests and then rule royally over the earth, just as man was originally created in God's image and therefore received the rule over the entire earth. In the picture of the future, therefore, one destiny stands out and another. Time and again we read in the prophecies and the psalms that God will do justice to his people and give them victory over all his enemies. Sometimes this victory is described in very crass terms: God will arise, his enemies will be scattered and his haters will flee from his face; he will drive them away as smoke is driven away; as wax melts before the fire, so God's enemies will perish from God's face; He will crush the head of his enemies, the skull of one who walks in his sins; He will bring them back from the depths of the sea, that his people may wash their feet in their blood and the tongue of their dogs may be dyed red with it, Psalms 68:2-3, Psalms 68:22-24, Psalms 28:4, Psalms 31:18, Psalms 55:10, Psalms 55:16, Psalms 69:23-29, Psalms 109:6-20, Psalms 137:8-9 etc. All these curses are not expressions of personal vengefulness, but descriptions in Old Testament language of the vengeance of God on His and His people's enemies. But the same God, who thus punishes the wicked, will give justice, peace and joy to all his people, and that people will serve him with a united shoulder. Through tribulation and suffering they will arrive at a state of glory and bliss, in which the Lord will make a new covenant, write His law in their hearts and give them a new heart and a new spirit, so that they may walk in His statutes and keep and do His law.

These two features of Israel's future are also present in the same way in its Messiah. He will be a King who crushes his enemies with an iron scoop and shatters them like earthen vessels, Psalms 2:9, Psalms 110:5-6, etc. Nowhere is there a more realistically portrayed victory over God's enemies than in Isaiah 63:1-6. There it is illustrated how the Lord arrives in red-painted garments, shining in His garment and advancing in the fullness of His power, speaking in righteousness and able to redeem. And to the question of the prophet: Why is your garment so red, and are your clothes like those of a vinedresser? the Lord answers: I have walked alone through the press, and there was no one with me from among the nations; I have walked with them in my wrath and I have trampled on them in my anger, so that their lifeblood has splashed on my garments and all my garments have been stained by it. For a day of vengeance was in my heart and my year of salvation had come. In Revelation 19:13-15 some of the characteristics of this description are applied to Chris when he returns in the last days and subdues all his enemies. And this is absolutely right, because He is a Saviour and a Judge, a Lamb and a Lion, at the same time. But then He is also a Redeemer and Saviour. Just as the Lord is just and merciful, just as His day is a day of vengeance and a year of redemption, just as Israel will rule royally over his enemies and will serve God priestly, so the Messiah is at the same time the King anointed by God and the suffering servant of the Lord. Isaiah, in particular, introduces us to this figure. The prophet thinks first of all of the people of Israel, who are in exile and have a calling to fulfil towards the Gentiles in that very time of suffering. But in the development of his prophecy this suffering figure takes on more and more the character of a particular person, who priestly atones for the sins of his people through his sufferer, who as a prophet proclaims this salvation to the ends of the earth, and receives a royal share among the great and shares the spoils with the mighty, Isaiah 52:13-15, Isaiah 53:1-12. In the anointed King God reveals His glory, His power, the majesty and highness of His name, Micah 5:3; in the suffering servant of the Lord He reveals His grace and the riches of His mercy, Isaiah 53:11. The prophecy with Israel ends in these two forms, and that prophecy is rooted in history. Israel herself as a people is God's son, Hosea 11:1, a priestly kingdom, Exodus 19:6, clothed with the glory of the Lord, Ezekiel 16:14, but at the same time also God's servant, Isaiah 41:8-9, sharing in the reproach with which the enemies reproach the Lord, Psalms 89:51-52, and for his sake slain all day long and regarded as sheep to be slaughtered, Psalms 44:23. Both, the glory and the suffering of Israel, of Israel as a people and then of its servants such as David, Job and others in a special sense, have a prophetic character; they both point to Christ; the entire Old Testament with its laws and institutions, with its offices and ministries, with its events and promises, is a foreshadowing of the suffering that was to come for Christ, and of the glory that will follow, 1 Peter 1:11. As the church in the days of the New Testament has become one with Christ in the likeness of his death, and will be so in the likeness of his resurrection, Romans 6:11; as it fills in its body the remnants of the tribulations of Christ, Colossians 1:24, and also be changed in the image of Christ from glory to glory, 2 Corinthians 3:18; so the church of the Old Covenant in all its suffering and glory was the preparation and foreshadowing of the humiliation and exaltation of that Priest-King, who in due time would establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

There is no doubt that the New Testament sees itself in this light and understands its relationship to the Old Testament in this way. What Jesus says, that the Scriptures testify of Him, John 5:39, Luke 24:27, is a thought that underlies the whole New Testament and is also clearly expressed each time. The first disciples of Jesus recognized Him as the Christ, because they found in Him that of which Moses and the prophets had spoken (John 1:46). Paul testifies that Christ died, was

buried and raised according to the Scriptures, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. Peter says, that the Spirit of Christ in the prophets testified beforehand of the sufferings that were to come upon Christ ■and of the glory afterwards, 1 Peter 1:11 .-. And all the books of the New Testament show directly or indirectly that the whole Old Testament has come to its fulfilment in Christ; the Law with its moral, ceremonial and civil commandments, with its temple and altar, priesthood and sacrifices, and likewise the prophecy with its promise both concerning the anointed King from the house of David and concerning the suffering servant of the Lord. The entire Kingdom of God, which had been foreshadowed in Israel's people and history, outlined in the law in national forms and announced in Old Testament language through prophecy, came near in Christ and descended from heaven to earth in Him and His congregation. This close connection between Old and New Testament is of the utmost importance for the truthfulness of the Christian faith. For the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah promised to Israel, forms the heart of the Christian religion and distinguishes it from all other religions. It is therefore vigorously opposed by the Jews, the Mohammedans and all heathen peoples, and at the present time is also opposed by many who bear the name of Christians. These try to argue that Jesus never considered Himself the Messiah, or that at best He dressed up His profound religious consciousness and His high moral calling in that temporary form, but that this form now has no meaning for us at all. But the testimonies of the New Testament are too numerous and too strong for such a view to be sustained for long. That is why others have gone much further in recent times. They cannot deny that Jesus thought of himself as the Messiah and attributed all sorts of superhuman qualities and powers to himself. But instead of bowing down and accepting Jesus as he is, they conclude that Jesus was a man who suffered from imagination, bigotry and all kinds of excesses. Yes, the fight goes so far that some attribute all kinds of ailments of soul and body to Jesus and from that explain the high thoughts He had about Himself. This struggle about the person of Jesus, which has again taken on such a serious character in recent years, shows by necessity that the question: What do you think about the Christ? As it did in previous centuries, it still occupies and divides people's minds today. Just as the Jews had different ideas about Jesus and some saw Him as John the Baptist, others as Elias, others as Jeremiah or one of the prophets, Matthew 16:13, and there were also those who accused Him of madness and possession, Mark 3:21-22, and so it has been throughout the ages, and so it is still today. Even if we renounce those few who dare to openly accuse Jesus of being a bigot, there are thousands who still recognize Him as a prophet, but no longer profess Him as the Christ of God. And yet, Jesus maintains his full claim to this name and is satisfied with nothing less than this confession. He is a man and is described as such on all pages of the New Testament. He is, although the eternal Word, made flesh in time, John 1:14, Php 2:7, our flesh and blood and in all things "like" our brothers, Hebrews 2:14, Hebrews 2:17, of the fathers as far as the flesh is concerned, Romans 9:5, Abraham's seed, Galatians 3:16, of Judah's tribe, Hebrews 7:14, Revelation 5:5, of David's lineage, Romans 1:3, born of a woman, Galatians 4:4, man in the full, true sense, with a body, Matthew 26:26, a soul, Matthew 26:38 and a spirit, Luke 23:46, with a human mind, Luke 2:52 and a human will, Luke 22:42, with human emotions of joy and sorrow, wrath and mercy, Luke 10:21, Mark 3:5, etc. with human needs for rest and relaxation, for food and drink, John 4:6-7 etc. Everywhere and always Jesus appears to us in the Gospel as a human being, -to whom nothing human is alien. He has been tempted in all things, as we are, yet without sin, Hebrews 4:15, has in the days of his flesh offered prayers and supplications to God with strong pleading and tears, and learned obedience from what he suffered, Hebrews 5:7-8. His

contemporaries, therefore, do not doubt His true human nature for a moment. In the Gospels He is usually referred to by the simple, historical name of Jesus. It is true that this name was given to Him by explicit command of the English and that it implies that He is the Saviour of His people (Matthew 1:21). But in itself this name has been known among Israel from time immemorial and has been used by many people. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Jehoshua or Jeshua, which comes from a verb that means to save. The successor of Moses was first called Hosea, but was later called Jehoshua (Joshua) by Moses, Numbers 13:16 and appears in Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8 under the name Jesus. And so we read in the New Testament of other persons who bore the name of Jesus, Luke 3:29, Colossians 4:11. The name alone could not make the Jews think that the son of Mary was the Christ.

They therefore usually speak of Jesus as the man called Jesus, John 9:11, the son of Joseph, the carpenter, whose father and mother, sisters and brothers we know, Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3, John 6:42, the son of Joseph, of Nazareth, John 1:45, Jesus the Na- zarener, Matthew 2:23, Mark 10:47, John 18:5, John 18:7,John 19:19, Acts 22:8, Jesus the Galilean, Matthew 26:69, the prophet of Nazareth in Galilee, Matthew 21:11. And the usual title by which Jesus is addressed is that of Rabbi or Rabbouni, teacher, master or my master, John 1:39, John 20:16, by which in those days the scribes and Pharisees were usually addressed, Matthew 23:8, and He not only accepts that title but claims it for Himself, Matthew 23:8-10. These names and titles do not yet imply that people recognized Him as the Christ. And this is not yet the case either, when they call him in general Heer, Mark 7:28, Zone David. Mark 10:47, or a prophet, Mark 6:15, Mark 8:28, call Him. But although a true and complete man, Jesus from the beginning was aware that he was more than a man, and as such was recognized and confessed by all his disciples with ever-increasing clarity. And that is not only the case, as is so often claimed, in the Gospel of John and the Letters of the Apostles, but it is also already clearly stated in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Besides, the contradiction that one wants to make nowadays between the historical Jesus and the Christ of the church, is completely untenable. It is then said that Jesus was and wanted to be no more than a pious Israelite, a religious genius, an exalted teacher of virtue, a prophet, as so many had been among Israel in the past; and everything else that is now professed by the congregation about this historical Jesus, his supernatural conception, his Messianic life, his resurrection, his ascension, etc., is said to be the fruit of the imagination and added by the disciples of Jesus to the original image of their Master. But there are so many and so serious objections to this whole idea that it cannot satisfy anyone. After all, if all those facts mentioned above did not take place, but were later condensed and included in the life of Jesus, some explanation must be given as to how the disciples of Jesus came to create such fabrications and from where they derived the material for these skilfully constructed fables. The impression that Jesus' extraordinary personality made on them is by no means suitable, for such an impression would only be that of a highly exalted man and would not contain any elements of the Christ as the church confesses Him. And these elements must be sought, and indeed are sought, in the Jewish sects of the time, or in the Greek, Persian, Indian, Egyptian, and Babylonian religions, by which Christianity is robbed of its independence and peculiarity, and made into a hotchpotch of Jewish and pagan errors. But moreover, the first three Gospels were written by men who themselves had the firm conviction that Jesus was the Christ. They were written at a time when the church had already existed for some time, when the preaching of the Apostles had already gone out to all sides of the then known world, and when Paul had already written several epistles. Nevertheless,

these Gospels were generally accepted and recognized. In the early days of the Apostles and their co-workers there was no known conflict about the person of Christ. They all believed that Jesus was the Christ, that God had made this Jesus, who was crucified by the Jews, a Lord and Christ, and that in His name He gave repentance and the forgiveness of sins. This faith has been the foundation of the Christian community from the beginning. Paul argues in the fifteenth chapter of his first letter to Corinth that the Christ according to the Scriptures, the Christ who died, was buried and rose again, was the content of the apostolic preaching and the object of Christian faith, and that without these facts, both that preaching and that faith are vain and the salvation of those who died in Christ is a dream. There is no choice but between these two: either the apostles are false witnesses of God, or they have testified and proclaimed that which was from the beginning, that which they have seen, seen and felt of the Word of life. And likewise: Jesus was either a false prophet, or He was the faithful Judge, the first-born from the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth, who loved us and washed us of our sins in His blood and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father Revelation 1:5-6. There is no contradiction between the historical Jesus and the Christ of the church. The testimony of the apostles is the unfolding and explanation of the self-witness of Christ given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The building of the church rests on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, of which Christ is the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 3:20).

However tempting the task may be, there is no opportunity here and now to give a full development of the content of the testimony given by Christ about Himself and by the Apostles about their Master and Lord, but attention should be drawn to a few details.

Like John the Baptist, Jesus preached that the kingdom of God was at hand and that citizenship in that kingdom could only be obtained by faith and conversion (Mark 1:15). But he puts himself in a completely different relation to that kingdom than John or any of the prophets. All of them have prophesied about it, Matthew 11:11, Matthew 11:13, but Jesus is the owner and possessor of it. He did receive it from the Father, who ordained it for Him in His decree, Luke 22:29. But for that very reason it is His kingdom, which He freely disposes of for the benefit of His disciples. It is the Father who prepares a wedding for his son, Matthew 22:2, but the son is the bridegroom, Mark 2:19, John 3:29, who celebrates his own wedding in the future union with his own people, Matthew 25:1. The Father is the owner of the vineyard, but the son is the heir, Matthew 21:33, Matthew 21:38. Thus Jesus also calls the kingdom of God His kingdom, Matthew 13:41, Matthew 20:21, Luke 22:30, and speaks of His church as being founded on the rock of His confession, Matthew 16:18, Matthew 12:39, Matthew 12:42; for His sake everything, father, mother, sisters, brothers, house, field, yes the own life has to be left and denied; whoever loves father or mother, son or daughter above Him, is not worthy of Him: whoever confesses or denies Him before men, will accordingly be confessed or denied by Him before His Father, who is in heaven, Matthew 5:11, Matthew 10:32 f..., Mark 8:34. To this high place, which Jesus attributes to Himself in the kingdom of heaven, all His words and works correspond. They correspond perfectly to the will of His Father; Jesus is completely without sin; He is not aware of any violation of God’s will and never confesses to any error or sin. He does allow Himself to be baptized by John, but absolutely not in order to receive forgiveness of sins Himself, as others do, Matthew 3:6. Because John objected to baptizing Jesus precisely because his baptism was a baptism of conversion to the forgiveness of sins. And Jesus acknowledges that objection, but also takes it away, by saying that He is not

baptized to receive personal forgiveness of sins, but to fulfill all righteousness, Matthew 3:14-15, Matthew 10:18, but by no means in order to deny himself moral perfection. The rich young man, however, came to Jesus in the same way that people in those days came to the Scribes and Pharisees with all kinds of greetings and honors, Matthew 23:7; he wanted to flatter Jesus and take him for himself, by calling Him good, (or rather, good, best) Master. Jesus does not like this flattery; He does not want to be greeted and honored in the manner of the scholars of Scripture. Good, in the full sense, the source of all blessings and benefits is God alone. So here Jesus in no way denies his moral perfection, but resists the thoughtless flattery of the rich young man. And so also in Gethsemane; His human nature looks up to the suffering that awaits Him and proves its truthfulness in the prayer that this cup might pass from Him, but at the same time it also demonstrates its complete submission and obedience: not my will, but Thine, O Father, be done! Matthew 26:39. But even at that anxious hour, neither in Gethsemane nor on Golgotha any confession of sin comes from His lips. On the contrary, all that He is and speaks and does is in perfect accord with God’s holy will. All things which He reveals in words and deeds concerning God and His kingdom, are given Him by the Father, Matthew 11:27.

He did not teach like the scribes, through, shrewdly, scholastically, but as one having power, as one who had received prophetic authority from God, Matthew 7:29, and that same power was manifest in His works. He cast out the devils by the Spirit of God, Matthew 12:28, by the finger of God, Luke 11:20, has power to forgive sins, Matthew 9:6, and power also to lay down his own life and take it on again, John 10:18. And all this power he received from his Father.

Jesus brings all his words and works back to his Father’s commandment, John 5:19-20, John 5:30, John 8:26, John 8:28, John 8:38, John 12:50, John 17:8. To do his His will is his food, John 4:34, so that at the end of his life he can say that he is his Father. This relationship, in which Jesus relates to the Kingdom of God in his person, his words and his works, is expressed in his Messianic character. There has been and still is a great deal of research into whether Jesus considered himself to be the promised Messiah, and, if so, how he came to this awareness.

About the first, however, there can be no doubt on an open-minded reading of the Gospels, not only of John, but also of Matthew, Mark and Luke. To name but a few: in the synagogue at Nazareth He announced that the prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled today, Luke 4:16 f. To the question of John the Baptist, whether He was the promised Messiah, He answered in the affirmative, by referring to His works, Matthew 11:4 f. He accepts Peter’s confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and sees it as a revelation from His Father, Matthew 16:16-17. The prayer of the mother of the Zebedaides is based on the belief that Jesus is the Messiah and is understood and answered by Jesus in this sense, Matthew 20:20, His performance in the temple, Matthew 21:12 f., His institution of the Lord’s Supper, Matthew 26:26 f., all rest on the assumption that He is the Messiah, David’s Son and David’s Lord, and can replace the old covenant by a new one. And which actually detracts all, for nothing else than the confession, that He was the Christ, the Zone of God, He was condemned and put to death, Mark 14:62, and the inscription above His cross: Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews, seals it.

Another question is, in what way and by what means Jesus came to this awareness that He was the Messiah. But all generally accepted ideas today, that Jesus was originally not aware of this, that this idea came to Him only late, at the baptism, or even later, after and through the confession

of Peter, that He accepted it out of necessity or tolerated it as a less appropriate but inevitable form of His religious-moral calling, all these and similar ideas are out of touch with reality, are in direct conflict with the testimony of Scripture and with the nature of Jesus' personality. There was without doubt a development of the human consciousness of Christ, for we read explicitly that He increased in wisdom, in size, in grace with God and mankind, Luke 2:52. In the quiet family of Nazareth, under the guidance of His mother, His human insight into His own person and work, into the work that the Father had commissioned Him to do, into the kingdom that He had come to establish, has gradually clarified and deepened on the basis of the Old Testament Scriptures. But as a boy in the temple He already knew that He had to be in the things of His Father, Luke 2:49. And before He was baptized by John, He knew that He did not need it for the forgiveness of His sins, but only to be obedient to the will of God in all things. For Jesus this baptism was therefore not a break with a sinful past, for He had none; but from His side a complete surrender and dedication to, and from God's side, a complete equipping and enabling of Himself for the work that the Father had commissioned Him to do. As Messiah he is already acknowledged by John, and the day after by the disciples whom he joined, John 1:29-51. But this confession was, so to speak, a preliminary one. It was not at all what it should and would be. It was still accompanied by all kinds of errors concerning the nature of the Messiahship. The disciples involuntarily thought that Jesus would be a Messiah, as the Jews of that time generally imagined, a king who would do battle with the heathen nations and place Israel at the forefront of the nations in glory. When Jesus, after his public appearance, did not live up to this expectation, even John the Baptist began to have doubts, Matthew 11:2 ff. And the disciples had to be reprimanded by Jesus and taught better at every moment. The Jewish expectation of the Messiah was so deep in their souls that they even asked Jesus after the resurrection whether he would now establish the kingdom for Israel.

These misconceptions, which generally prevailed about the Messiahship, also in the circle of His disciples, made it necessary for Jesus to follow a certain educational line in preaching it. It is well known that in the first period of His activity Jesus never says in so many words that He is the Christ. The content of his preaching is the kingdom of heaven, and the nature, the origin, the progress and the completion of the kingdom is explained extensively, especially in striking parables. And His works consist of works of mercy, in healing infirmities and all kinds of sicknesses among the people. These works testify of Him, and from them His disciples, including John the Baptist, must conclude who and what He is, wherein lies the character of His Messiahship. Indeed, it is as if his Messiahship were a secret that must not be made public. More than once His works brought to mind that He was the Christ, but then He sharply commanded that no one should say so, Matthew 8:4, Matthew 9:30, Matthew 12:16, Mark. Even when, towards the end of his life, the disciples got to know him better and, through Peter, on the road to Caesarea Philippi, they confessed him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, he still sharply commanded them not to tell anyone, Matthew 16:20, Mark 8:30. Jesus was the Christ, but He was in a different sense than the Jews then imagined. He did not want to be, and was not allowed to be, in accordance with their expectations; he even avoided them in order not to be taken by force and exalted as king, John 6:14-15. Messiah he was and wanted to be, but in accordance, not with the will and favor of the people, but with the will and counsel of his Father, with the prophecy of the Old Covenant.

Therefore He chooses, to designate Himself, that peculiar name of Son of Man, which appears repeatedly on His lips in the Gospels. The name is undoubtedly derived from Daniel 7:13, where the world empires are presented in the image of animals, but the rule of God over His people in the image of a son of man. The place was also explained in some Jewish circles in a Mesian sense, and the name was thus known, at least to some, as an indication of the Messiah, John 12:34; but still it does not seem to have been a common name or to have had a fixed meaning. There were no such fleshly expectations attached to this name as, for example, to the name: Zone David, King of Israel. That is why this name was the most suitable for Jesus, because on the one hand it expressed that He was the Messiah promised by the prophecy, and on the other hand He was not in the sense of the Jewish people. This is proven by Jesus' use of this name. He refers to Himself by this title in two series of places, namely in those texts in which He speaks of His poverty, suffering and humiliation, and in others in which He speaks of His power, highness and exaltation. For example, in the first case He says: The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his soul as a ransom for many, Matthew 20:3-8; in the other case He declares before the High Council that He is indeed the Messiah, and then adds: But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the power of God and coming on the clouds of heaven, Matthew 26:64. The same thought forces itself upon us, when we compare places like Matthew 8:20, Matthew 11:19, Matthew 12:40, Matthew 17:12, Matthew 18:11, Matthew 20:18 etc. with Matthew 9:6, Matthew 10:23, Matthew 12:8, Matthew 13:41, Matthew 16:27, Matthew 17:9, Matthew 19:28, Matthew 24:27, Matthew 24:30, Matthew 24:37, Matthew 24:39, Matthew 25:13, Matthew 25:31 etc. With this name Jesus describes Himself in His full Messianicity, in His humiliation, in His elevation, in His grace and in His power, as Saviour and as Judge. And in this He now summarizes the entire Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah. As we have indicated before, this developed in two directions, in that of the anointed King from the house of David and in that of the suffering servant of the Lord. In the Old Testament these lines usually run parallel to one another, but in the case of Daniel they meet. The Kingdom of God will be a reign in the true and full sense, but that reign will be human, the 'reign of a Son of man'. And so Jesus says that He is indeed a King, the King of Israel, the King promised and anointed by God; but He is nevertheless in a different sense than the Jews expected. He is a King who rides on the foal of a donkey, a King of righteousness and of peace, a King who is also a Priest, a King who is also a Saviour. Power and love, justice and mercy, highness and humility, God and man are united in Him.

He is the complete fulfilment of the entire Old Testament law and prophecy, of all the suffering and all the glory, which were the preparatory and foreshadowing part of Israel, the counterpart of the kings and the priests under Israel, the counterpart of the people of Israel themselves, who were to be a priestly kingdom and a royal priesthood. He is King-Priest and Priest-King, Immanuel, God with us. Therefore, the kingdom He came to preach and establish is at once internal and external, invisible and visible, spiritual and physical, present and future, private and universal, from above and yet below, from heaven and yet on earth. And Jesus comes again; He came to save the world, He returns to judge it.

One more characteristic should be added to this image of Jesus, as the Gospels describe it to us; and that is that He is conscious of being the Zone of God in a very special sense. In the Old Testament this name was already used for the angels, Job 38:7, for the people of Israel, Exodus

4:22, Deuteronomy 14:1, Isaiah 63:6, Hosea 11:1, and in that nation again for the judges, Psalms 82:6, and for the kings, 2 Samuel 7:11-14, Psalms 2:7, Psalms 89:27-28. In the New Testament, Adam is called the son of God. Luke 3:38, the children of God bear this name, 2 Corinthians 6:18, and it is especially given to Christ. He is referred to by this name from various sides and by very different people: John the Baptist and Nathanael, John 1:34 John 1:50, Satan and the possessed, Matthew 4:3, Matthew 8:29, Mark 3:11, by the high priest, the multitude of the Jews, and the chief over a hundred, Matthew 26:63, Matthew 27:40, Matthew 27:54, by the disciples, Matthew 14:33, Matthew 16:16 and by the Evangelists, Mark 1:1, John 20:31. Although Jesus does not usually call Himself by that name, He nevertheless accepted this confession of His divine Sonship without any contradiction and at times openly declares that He is the Zone of God, Matthew 16:16-17, Matthew 26:63-64, Matthew 27:40, Matthew 27:43.

Now there is no doubt that the various persons who referred to Jesus in this way did not all take this name in the same deep sense. On the lips of the chief of a hundred, Matthew 27:54, of the High Priest, Matthew 26:63, of Peter, Matthew 16:16, the same name did not have the same content and the same meaning. The chief priest was a pagan and did not call Jesus a heathen, but a son of God. The Chief Priest was thinking especially of the Messianic dignity, because he asked Jesus if He was the Christ, the Son of God. But when Peter, after having had contact with Jesus for a long time, emphatically confesses Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, who has the words of eternal life, then there is undoubtedly a deeper meaning in this, which the disciples later, after the Resurrection, have learned to understand more and more fully and richly.

Indeed, Jesus can also be indicated in an Old Testament, Theocratic sense with the name of the Zone of God. As the King anointed by God, He may and can be called His Son. He is the Son of the Highest, to whom God the Lord will give the throne of his father David, Luke 1:32, the holy seed born of Mary, Luke 1:35, the Holy One, as the possessed man called Him, Mark 1:24, the Son of the blessed God, as the high priest used this expression as a further description of the Messiah, Mark 14:62. But this Theocratic Sonship has a deeper meaning for Jesus and arises with Him from a different relationship to the Father. He did not become the Son of God because He was received in Mary in a supernatural way, Luke 1:35, nor because He received the Holy Spirit at baptism without measure, Matthew 3:16, nor because He was made a Lord and Christ by God through the resurrection, Acts 2:36. It is true that on those occasions He was recognized and honored by the Father as His Son in Christ, but His Messianic dignity did not begin then. It goes back much further; and Scripture teaches us that Christ is not actually called the Zone of God because He is the anointed King of Israel, the Messiah, but rather the other way around, that He was appointed by God to be King because in a very real sense He was His Son. That this is how it is presented elsewhere in Scripture is beyond any doubt. Already in Micah 5:2 it is said that the output of the Lord from the house of David is from the beginning, from the days of eternity. In Hebrews 1:5, Hebrews 5:5, the verse from the second Psalm: "Today I have generated you" is explained from eternity, in which Christ as the Son, as the reflection of God’s glory and the expressed image of His own nature, was brought forth by the Father. And in Romans 1:4 the apostle declares that Christ, by the resurrection of the dead, was powerfully proved to be the Son of God. He was the Zone of God in a special sense, from eternity, Romans 8:32, Galatians 4:4, Php 2:6, but in his supernatural conception, baptism and resurrection this came increasingly clearly into the light.

We find the same teaching in the Gospel according to the descriptions of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Jesus is aware that He has a relationship with the Father that is essentially different from that of all other people. Even as a boy He knew that He had to be in the things of His Father, Luke 2:49. At his baptism and later again after the glorification on the mountain, God openly declares by a voice from heaven that this is his beloved, only Son, in whom he has all his good pleasure, Matthew 3:17, Matthew 17:5.

He speaks of Himself as the Son, who is exalted above the angels, Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32. Other men sent by God are but servants, but He is the only Son, the Son who loved the Father and was His heir. Matthew 12:6-7. The kingdom in which He reigns was predestined to Him by His Father, Luke 22:29; He sends to His disciples the promise of His Father, Luke 24:49 and will one day come in the glory of His Father, Mark 8:38. He never speaks of our Father, but always of His Father, and on the other hand puts the prayer of our Father on the lips of all His disciples, Matthew 6:9. He is in one word the Son, Mark 13:32, while all his disciples are children of their Father, Matthew 5:45. All things have been given over to Him by the Father, for no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and whomever the Son wills to 'reveal', Matthew 11:27. And after the resurrection He gave His disciples the charge to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that He had commanded them, Matthew 28:19. The Gospel of John, in which not only the evangelist but also the apostle is speaking, adds nothing essentially new, but elaborates everything much deeper and wider. The name Son of God also here sometimes still has a theocratic sense, John 1:34, John 1:50, John 11:27, John 20:31, but as a rule it has a deeper meaning. Not only is Jesus often called the Zone of God by others John 1:34, John 1:50, John 6:68; but He also calls Himself this way, John 5:25, John 9:36, John 10:35, John 11:4, and in still more cases speaks of Himself only as the Son without further definition. As such He attributes to Himself the power to perform miracles, John 9:35, John 11:4, to spiritually and physically raise and quicken the dead, John 5:20, and makes Himself, as the Jews understood, equal to God, John 5:18, John 10:33. He also spoke of the Father, and of Himself as the Son in such an intimate manner, that these statements only come into their own when God is in a very special sense His Father, when He is His own Father, John 5:18. Everything He attributes to the Father, He also attributes to Himself. The Father gave Him power over all flesh, John 17:2, so that the fate of all men depends on the relationship in which they place themselves with Him, John 3:17, John 6:40. He, like the Father, quickens whom He wills, John 5:21, presides over all, John 5:27, does everything the Father does, John 5:19, and even received from the Father to have life in Himself, John 5:26. He and the Father are one, John 10:30; He is in the Father and the Father is in Him, John 10:38; to see Him is to see the Father, John 14:9. It is true that the Father is greater than He is, John 14:28, because the Father has sent Him, as Jesus repeatedly declares, John 5:24, John 5:30, John 5:37 etc. But this does not take away from the fact that He is the Father of all things. But this does not alter the fact that He was already in the glory of God before His conception and will return there later (John 17:5). His Sonship is not based on his mission, but conversely his mission on his Sonship, John 3:16-17, John 3:35, John 5:20, John 17:24. Therefore He is the Son, the only begotten Son, John 1:18, John 3:16, John 3:18, 1 John 4:9, the only begotten of the Father, John 1:14, the Word, who in the beginning was with God and Himself God, John 1:1, the Saviour of the world, John 4:42, whom Thomas addresses and confesses as his Lord and his God, John 20:2.

01.16. The divine and human nature of Christ.

16. The divine and human nature of Christ. The testimony of Christ, given of Himself according to the Gospels, is developed and confirmed by the preaching of the Apostles. The confession that a man called Jesus is the Christ, the One-born of the Father, is in such direct conflict with all our experience and all our thinking, and above all with the inclinations of our hearts, that no one can accept it in sincerity and with all his soul, without the persuasive action of the Holy Spirit. By nature, everyone is hostile to this confession, because it is not after mankind. No one can say that Jesus is Lord except through the Holy Spirit, but no one who speaks through the Holy Spirit can call Jesus anathema, but acknowledges Him as his Savior and King (1 Corinthians 12:3). When Christ appeared on earth and professed Himself to be the Son of God, He did not leave it at that, but also saw to it that it found its way into the world and was believed by the congregation. He has called and taught His apostles and made them witnesses of His words and deeds, of His death and resurrection. He gave them the Holy Spirit, who led them personally to confess that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, Matthew 16:16, and who later, on the day of Pentecost, made them act as witnesses of that which they had seen with their eyes and touched with their hands of the Word of life, 1 John 1:1. The apostles were not the actual witnesses: the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, is the original, infallible and omnipotent witness to Christ, and the apostles are only in Him and through Him, John 15:26-27, Acts 5:32. And it is the same Spirit of truth who, through the witness of the apostles, brings the congregation of all ages to confession and keeps it there: Lord, unto whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we have believed and known that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, John 6:68-69. When the four Evangelists relate the events of Jesus' life in a regular order, they usually only refer to Him by the name of Jesus, without any further description or addition. They then say that Jesus was born in Bethhehem, that Jesus was led into the desert, that Jesus saw the multitudes and climbed upon the mountain, etc. Jesus, the historical person who lived and died in Palestine, is the subject of their story. And so we also find a few times in the Letters of the Apostles that Jesus is only referred to by his historical name. Paul says, for example, that no one can say that Jesus is Lord except through the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:3. John testifies that everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, 1 John 5:1-2, 1 John 2:22. And in the book of Revelation is spoken of the faith of Jesus, the witnesses and the testimony of Jesus, without the name being specified, Revelation 14:12, Revelation 17:6, Revelation 19:20, Revelation 20:4.

Yet the use of this simple name, without more, in the Letters of the Apostles is rare; usually the name Jesus occurs only in connection with: the Lord, Christ, the Zone of God, etc., and the full name usually reads: our Lord Jesus Christ. But whether the name Jesus is used alone or in combination with other names, it always expresses the link with the historical person, who was born in Bethlehem and killed on the cross. The entire New Testament, in the Letters as well as in the Gospels, rests on the foundation of historical facts. The Christ figure is not an idea and not an ideal of the human brain, as many in earlier centuries and some even today would like to make it out to be, but it is a real figure, which has come to us at a certain time and in a certain person, in

the man Jesus.

It is true that the various events in the life of Jesus are in the background in the Letters; of course, the Letters have a different purpose than the Gospels, they do not give a history of the life of Jesus, but they highlight the significance of that entire life for the redemption of mankind. But all the apostles are familiar with the person and life of Jesus, his words and deeds, and now show us that this Jesus is the Christ, who was exalted by God at his right hand to give repentance and the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:36, Acts 5:31). The apostles also repeatedly mention events from the life of Jesus in their preaching; they depicted Him before the eyes of their hearers and readers (Galatians 3:1). They mention that John the Baptist was His forerunner and wayfarer, Acts 13:25, Acts 19:4, that He is of the lineage of Judah and the tribe of David, Romans 1:3, Revelation 5:5, Revelation 22:16, that He was born of a woman, Galatians 4:4, was circumcised on the eighth day, Romans 15:8, was raised in Nazareth, and was the first in the world to be baptized. Romans 15:8, was brought up in Nazareth, Acts 2:22, Acts 3:6 and also had brothers, 1 Corinthians 9:5.

Furthermore, He was perfectly holy and sinless, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 7:26, 1 Peter 1:11, 1 Peter 2:22, 1 John 3:5, set himself as an example to us, 1 Corinthians 11:1, 1 Peter 2:21, and spoke words that have authority for us, Acts 20:35, 1 Corinthians 7:10, 1 Corinthians 7:12. By one of the twelve apostles, whom He appointed, 1 Corinthians 15:5, betrayed, 1 Corinthians 11:23, and not known by the rulers of the world as Lord of glory, 1 Corinthians 2:8, He was killed by the Jews, Acts 4:10, Acts 5:30, 1 Thessalonians 2:15, and died on the floodplain of the river.

He died on the flaming log of the cross, Galatians 3:13, Colossians 2:14. But though He suffered greatly in Gethsemane and on Golgotha, Php 2:6, Hebrews 5:7-8, Hebrews 12:2, Hebrews 13:12, by his shedding of blood he has made the atonement of the sins of the world. And for this reason God also raised Him up, exalted Him at His right hand, and appointed Him a Lord and Christ, a Prince and Saviour for all peoples, Acts 2:32-33, Acts 2:36, Acts 5:30-31, Romans 8:34, 1 Corinthians 15:20, Php 2:9 etc. From these few facts it is evident that the apostles did not deny or neglect the facts of Christianity, but on the contrary fully recognized and understood them in their spiritual significance. There is no trace with the apostles of a separation or opposition between the fact of salvation and the word of salvation, as was advocated by many in the past and later. The fact of salvation is the realization of the word of salvation; the latter is given its concrete and real form in the former and is therefore at the same time its explanation.

If any doubt remained about this, it was completely removed by the struggle the Apostles already had to wage in their days. Not only in the second and third centuries but already in the apostolic age there stood out men who considered the facts of Christianity of secondary and transitory importance, or even denied them altogether, and thought the idea was enough. What does it matter, they argued, whether Christ is risen bodily; as long as He lives on in spirit, our salvation is thus sufficiently assured! But the Apostle Paul But the Apostle Paul had quite a different opinion, and in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 he placed the reality and significance of the bodily resurrection in the clearest light. He proclaims the Christ according to the Scriptures, the Christ who died, was buried and rose again according to the advice of the Father, who was seen by many disciples after his resurrection, and whose resurrection is the foundation and guarantee of our salvation. And if possible even stronger, John emphasizes that he is a proclaimer of that which he has seen with his eyes and touched with his hands from the Word of life. 1 John 1:1-3. The principle of antichrist

lies in the fact that he denies the incarnation of the Word; and the Christian confession on the contrary consists in the belief that the Word became flesh, that the Zone of God came by water and blood, John 1:14, John 3:2-3, John 5:6. The entire apostolic preaching in the Gospels and Epistles, thus in the entire New Testament, comes down to the argument that Jesus, born of Mary and who died on the cross, is, according to his exaltation, the Christ, the Son of God. John 20:31, 1 John 2:22, 1 John 4:15, 1 John 5:5.

Now it deserves our attention that, in connection with the content and purpose of the apostolic preaching, the use of the single name Jesus, without further description, is very rare in the Epistles. As a rule, the apostles speak of Jesus Christ, or Christ Jesus, or even more fully of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even the evangelists, who usually speak of Jesus in the narrative, use Jesus at the beginning or at a significant turning point in their Evangelie, Matthew 1:1, Matthew 1:18, Matthew 16:21, Mark 1:1, John 1:17, John 17:3, of the full name Jesus Christ, to indicate the person of whom their Gospel speaks. In the Acts and the Epistles, this usage becomes the rule; the Apostles do not speak about a person, Jesus, just like that, but in the addition of Christ, Lord, etc., they also express the value of what this person is to them. They are proclaimers of the Gospel, that 'in the man Jesus the Christ of God has appeared on earth. In this way they had gradually gotten to know Jesus during their contact with Him, and especially after the important hour at Caesarea Philippi a light had come to them about His person and they had all confessed through Peter, that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, Matthew 16:16. In the supreme prayers He identifies Himself by the name of Jesus Christ, whom the Father has sent, John 17:3. Precisely because He presented Himself as the Christ, the Zone of God, He was accused of blasphemy by the Jewish council and sentenced to death, Matthew 26:63. And the inscription above His cross read: Jesus, the Nazarene, the King of the Jews, Matthew 27:37, John 19:19.

It is true that the disciples could not reconcile these Messianic claims of Jesus with His imminent suffering and death, Matthew 16:22. But through and after the Resurrection they also learned to understand the necessity and significance of the Cross. Now they understood that God had made this Jesus, whom the Jews had put to death, a Lord and Christ through the resurrection and had exalted him to be a Prince and Saviour, Acts 2:36, Acts 5:31. This is not to say that Jesus was not yet Christ and Lord before His resurrection and only became so after His resurrection, for already beforehand Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the Christ and was recognized and confessed as such by His disciples, Matthew 16:16. But before the resurrection He was the Messiah in servant form, in a form and shape that hid His dignity as the Son of God from the eyes of mankind; in and after the resurrection He has laid aside that servant form, He has taken back the Lordship that He had with the Father before the world was, John 17: 5, and so He is appointed as the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness that dwelt in Him, Romans 1:3.

Hence Paul can say that now, after it pleased God to reveal His Son in him, he no longer knew Christ according to the flesh, 2 Corinthians 5:16. Before his conversion, he knew Christ only according to the flesh, he judged Him only by His outward appearance, by the servant form in which He walked on earth. Then he could not believe that this Jesus, who was stripped of all glory and even hung on the cross and killed, was the Christ. But his conversion has changed all that. Now he knows and judges Christ not by appearances, not by the outward, temporary servant form, but by the spirit, by what was within Christ, by what He really was on the inside and showed Himself to be on the outside in His resurrection. And this is true, in a certain sense, of all the

apostles. r,It is true that even before the suffering and death of Christ they had already been brought to a believing confession of his Messianic dignity. But for them, this dignity remained unscreened by the suffering and death. The resurrection, however, has reconciled this contradiction. It is the same Christ who came down to the lowest parts of the earth and who was taken up above all the heavens to fulfill all things, Ephesians 4:9. When they speak of Christ, the Apostles think at once of the Christ who died and was raised, of the Christ who was crucified and the Christ who was glorified. They relate their Gospel not only to the historical Jesus, who lived and died a few years ago in Palestine, but also to the same Jesus, as He was exalted and is now seated at the right hand of God's power. They stand, as it were, at the intersection of the horizontal line, which connects them with the past, with history, and of the vertical line, which connects them with the living Lord in the heavens. Christianity, therefore, is a religion of history, but at the same time a religion that lives out of eternity in the present. The disciples of Jesus were not called Jesuits after his historical name, but Christians after his official name, Acts 11:26. This peculiar standpoint, which the apostles took in their preaching after the resurrection, indicates the reason why they almost never refer to Jesus simply by his historical name, but almost always speak of him as Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, our Lord Jesus Christ, etc. Even the name Christ soon lost its appellative meaning in the circle of the disciples and assumed the meaning of a proper name. The conviction that Jesus was the Christ was so strong that He could simply be called Christ, even without the prefix cr. Already in the Gospels this occurs a few times, Matthew 1:1, Matthew 1:16-18, Matthew 27:17, Matthew 27:22, Mark 1:1, Mark 9:41, Luke 2:11, Luke 23:2, John 1:17, but with the apostles, especially with Paul, this becomes rule. In addition, in the Acts 3:20, Acts 5:41 etc., and again especially with Paul, both names, Jesus Christ, were repeatedly transformed in order to make the Messianic dignity of Christ even more conspicuous, and the name thus became Christ Jesus. This name, Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus, was the name of choice for the first congregations. The use and meaning of the name in the Old Testament is transferred to Christ in the New Testament. The Name of the Lord, or the Name alone, was in the books of the Old Covenant the indication of the revealed Lordship of God. In the days of the New Covenant that glory of God has appeared in the person of Jesus Christ; and thus in His name stands the power of the church. In that name is baptism, Acts 2:38, speaking and teaching, Acts 4:18, the lame man is healed, Acts 3:6, and sin forgiven, Acts 10:43. That name is resisted and opposed, Acts 26:9, but also suffered for that name, Acts 5:41, and invoked, Acts 22:13, and made great, Acts 19:17. In this sense the name of Jesus Christ became the short content of the church's confession, the strength of its faith and the anchor of its hope. Just as Israel used to glory in the name of Jehovah, so the church of the New Testament finds its strength in the name of Jesus Christ. In this name the name of Jehovah has been fully revealed. The name of Lord, which in the New Testament is always linked to the name of Jesus Christ, points in the same direction. In the Gospels, Jesus is repeatedly addressed by those who do not belong to his disciples, but still ask for his help, Matthew 8:2, Matthew 8:6, Matthew 8:21, Matthew 15:22, Matthew 16:22, Matthew 17:4, Matthew 17:15 etc.; and then this name usually has no more meaning than that of rabbi or master. But we also find this name many times on the lips of His disciples, Matthew 14:28, Matthew 14:30, Matthew 26:22, John 16:6-8, John 11:3, John 21:15-17, John 21:21. Furthermore, in the Gospel story the name of Jesus is sometimes alternated with that of the Lord by Luke and John, Luke 1:43, Luke 2:11, Luke 2:38, John 7:13, John 7:31, John 10:1, John 11:39, John 17:6 etc. John 4:1, John 6:23, John 11:2, John 20:2, John 20:13, John 20:18, John 20:25, John 20:28 etc. And finally

Jesus Himself also uses this name and refers to Himself as the Lord, Matthew 7:21, Matthew 12:8, Matthew 21:3, Mark 5:19, John 13:14 etc. In the mouth of Jesus himself and of the disciples this name of Lord now takes on a much deeper meaning than that contained in the title; rabbi or master. It is not possible to say with certainty what everyone who came to Jesus for help and addressed Him by the name of 'Lord' thought of and meant by that name. But in His own consciousness Jesus was the teacher, the master, the Lord above all others, and He attributed to Himself an authority far beyond that of the scribes. This is already evident in places like Matthew 23:1-11 and Mark 1:22, Mark 1:27, where Jesus elevates himself as the only Master above all others. But it is even more pronounced and beyond all doubt, when He calls Himself Lord of the Sabbath, Matthew 12:8, and elsewhere the Son of David and David's Lord, Matthew 22:43-45. There is no less in this, than that He is the Messiah, who sits at the right hand of God, shares in His power, and has the decision over the living and the dead, Matthew 21:4-5, Matthew 13:35, Matthew 24:42 f. Matthew 25:34 f. This deep significance has probably also partly attached itself to the name of Lord, because the names of Jehovah and Adonai in the Old Testament are rendered in the Greek translation by kurios, Lord, that is, by that same word, which was also applied to Chris. As Christ expressed Himself more clearly, who He was, and as the disciples better understood the revelation of God that had come to them in Christ, so the name Lord also became richer in meaning. Texts in the Old Testament that spoke of God were applied to Christ without difficulty. Thus, in Mark 1:3 is quoted from Isaiah: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight, and in the preparation of Chris, the Lord, through John the Baptist, the fulfilment of that prophetic word is seen. In Christ, God himself, the Lord, has come to his people. And the disciples, confessing Jesus as Lord, have expressed ever more clearly that God Himself had revealed and given to them in the person of Christ. To the climax of this confession, during Jesus' stay on earth, Thomas ascends when he falls on foot of the risen Christ and addresses him with the name: My Lord and my God, John 20:28.

After the resurrection, the name Lord became the common name within the circle of Jesus' disciples.

Jesus' disciples the common name. We find it repeatedly in the Acts and in the Letters, especially those of Paul. Sometimes the name Lord is used on its own, but usually it appears in combination with others: the Lord Jesus, or the Lord Jesus Christ, or our Lord Jesus Christ, or our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, etc. And with the name Lord, the believers then express that Jesus Christ, who was humbled to death on the cross, because of his complete obedience to God is exalted by God to be Lord and Prince, Acts 2:36, Acts 5:31, who is seated at God's right hand, Acts 2:34, Lord of all and everything, Acts 10:36, first of all of the church, which he bought with his blood, Acts 20:28, but also of all creation, which he will judge one day as the judge of the living and the dead, Acts 10:42, Acts 17:31.

He that therefore shall call upon this name, the name of Jesus as Christ and Lord, shall be saved, Acts 2:21, 1 Corinthians 1:2, To be a Christian, that is to say, to confess with one's mouth the Lord Jesus, and to believe with one's heart that God raised him from the dead, Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 12:3, Php 2:11. The content of the preaching is: Christ Jesus the Lord, 2 Corinthians 4:5. So much is the essence of Christianity drawn together in this confession, that the name Lord with Paul becomes, as it were, a proper name, given to Christ in distinction from the Father and the Spirit. We have as Christians one God, the Father, of whom all things are, and we unto him;

and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things are, and we by him; and one and the same Spirit, who giveth to every man in particular according as he will, 1 Corinthians 8:6, 1 Corinthians 12:11. The apostolic blessing therefore prays for the congregation the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, 2 Corinthians 13:13. The one name of God' explains itself in the three persons of Father, Son and Spirit, Matthew 28:2-9.

If, according to the testimony of the apostles, Christ has such a high place, it is no wonder that all kinds of divine virtues and works are attributed to Him, yes, even the divine nature.

It is a completely unique figure that meets us on the pages of the Holy Scriptures in the person of Christ. On the one hand, He is truly man, made flesh and entered into the flesh, John 1:14, 1 John 4:2-3, bearing the stature of the sinful flesh, Romans 8:3, of the fathers, as far as the flesh is concerned, Romans 9:5, Abraham's seed, Galatians 3:16, of Judah's lineage, Hebrews 7:14, of David's lineage, Romans 1:3, born of a woman, Galatians 4:4, possessing our flesh and blood, Hebrews 2:14, with a spirit, Matthew 27:50, a soul, Matthew 26:38, and a body, 1 Peter 2:24, man in the full, proper sense, who grew up like a babe and increased in wisdom and stature and grace with God and mankind, Luke 2:40, Luke 2:52, who hungered and thirsted, grieved and rejoiced, was moved and angered, Matthew 4:2, Matthew 26:28, John 11:27, John 11:35, John 19:28 etc., who put himself under the law and was obedient unto death, Galatians 4:4, Php 2:8, Hebrews 5:8, Hebrews 10:7, Hebrews 10:9, who suffered, died on the cross, was buried in the garden; without form or glory. When we looked at Him, there was no form that we should have desired Him. He was despised, and the most unworthy of men, a man of sorrows, and tempted with sickness, Isaiah 53:2-3. And yet this same man is set apart from all men and placed high above them all. Not only was He, according to His human nature, received of the Holy Spirit, during His whole life He remained free from all temptations, from all sin, and after His death He was raised again from the dead and ascended into heaven. But the same subject, the same person, the same I, who humbled Himself so deeply that He took on the form of a servant and became obedient to the death of the cross, existed in another form of existence long before the time of His incarnation and humiliation. He then existed in the form of God and did not consider it a robbery to be equal to God, Php 2:6. At His resurrection and ascension He received back the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, John 17:5. He is eternal as God Himself, having been with Him from the beginning, John 1:1, 1 John 1:1, and just as He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, Revelation 22:13; omnipresent, so that, while walking on earth, He is also in the bosom of the Father, in heaven, John 1:18, John 3:13, and after His glorification He remains with His church and fulfills all in all, Matthew 28:20, Ephesians 1:23, Ephesians 4:10; unchangeable and faithful, so that He is the same yesterday and today and for ever, Hebrews 13:8; omniscient, so that He hears the prayers, Acts 1:24, Acts 7:59-60, Acts 6:13, Romans 10:12-13 etc. and perhaps in Acts 1:24 (unless it is the Father who is meant here); omnipotent, so that all things are subject to Him, all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth, and He is the Prince of all kings, Matthew 28:18, 1 Corinthians 15:27, Ephesians 1:22, Revelation 1:4, Revelation 19:16, Revelation 19:16. Being in possession of all these divine perfections, He also participates in all divine works. With the Father and the Spirit He is the Creator of all things, John 1:3, Colossians 1:5, and the firstborn, the principle and head of all creatures, Colossians 1:15, Revelation 3:14. He sustains all things by the word of His power, so that they exist not only of Him, but also in Him and through Him forever, Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 1:17. And above all, He

preserves, reconciles and restores all things and gathers them into one under Himself as the head. As such He carries above all the name of Saviour of the world. In the Old Testament the name of Saviour, He-land or Redeemer was given to God, Isaiah 43:3, Isaiah 43:11, Isaiah 45:15, Jeremiah 14:8, Hosea 13:4. But in the New Testament the Son as well as the Father bear this name. In 1 Timothy 1:3, Titus 1:3, Titus 2:10 God, and in 2 Timothy 1:10, Titus 1:4, Titus 2:13, Titus 3:6, 2 Peter 1:11, 2 Peter 2:20, 2 Peter 3:18 Christ in whom and through whom the salvific work of God is completely accomplished.

All this points to a unity between Father and Son, between God and Christ, which nowhere else exists between the Creator and His creatures. Even though Christ assumed a human nature that is finite and limited, and began to exist in time; as a person, as an entity, Christ is not on the side of the creature in Scripture, but on the side of God. He shares His virtues, He participates in all His works, He possesses the same divine nature. This is especially evident in the three names given to Christ: the Image, the Word and the Son of God.

Christ is the Image of God, the radiance of God's glory, and the expressed image of His independence, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3. In Christ the unseen God has become visible; he who sees Him sees the Father, John 9:1. He who wants to know who and what God is, looks to Christ; as Christ is, so is the Father. Christ is also the Word of God, John 1:1, Revelation 19:13; in Him the Father has made Himself fully known, His wisdom, His will, all His virtues, His whole being; He has given Himself to have life in Himself, John 5:26. Whoever wants to know God's thought, God's counsel and God's will for mankind and the world, should listen to Christ and hear Him, Matthew 17:5. Finally, Christ is the Zone of God, the Son, as John, in particular, often calls Him without any further description, 1 John 2:22 ff, Hebrews 1:1, Hebrews 1:8 etc., the only begotten and the one true, He who wishes to be a child of God accepts Christ, for all who accept Him receive the right and the authority to be called children of God, John 1:12.

Finally, Scripture crowns this testimony concerning Christ by attributing to Him the Divine Name. Thomas already confessed Him as his Lord and God before the ascension, John 20:28. John testifies of Him that in the beginning He was the Word with God and God Himself. Paul declares that He is of the fathers as far as the flesh is concerned, but that according to His nature He is God above all things, to be praised for ever and ever, Romans 9:5. The letter to the Hebrews says that He is exalted far above the angels and is addressed by God Himself with the name of God, Hebrews 1:8-9. Peter speaks of Him as our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Peter 1:1. In the baptismal command of Jesus, Matthew 28:19, and in the prayers of blessing of the apostles, 2 Corinthians 13:13, 1 Peter 1:2, Revelation 1:4-6, Christ the Son is on the same line with the Father and the Spirit. The name and essence, the virtues and works of Godhead belong to the Son (and the Spirit) as much as to the Father.

Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God - the church is built on this foundation. From the beginning, the unique meaning of Christ was clear to all believers. He was confessed by all as the Lord, who had acquired salvation, the forgiveness of sins and immortality, by his teachings and life, then was exalted by the Father at his right hand, and would soon return as Judge to judge the living and the dead. With the same names, Christ, Lord, Zone of God, God, etc., which occur in the Letters of the Apostles, He is also mentioned in the oldest Christian scriptures and invoked in prayers and songs. All stood in the conviction that there was one God, whose children they knew,

one Lord, who had assured and given them God's love, and one Spirit, who made them all walk in newness of life. The baptismal command in Matthew 28:19, which came into general use towards the end of the apostolic era, is evidence of this. But as soon as people began to think about the contents of this confession, all kinds of differences of opinion arose. The members of the congregation, who had previously been educated in Judaism and Paganism, and who for the most part belonged to the humble classes of the country, were not able to assimilate the apostolic teaching into their consciousness at once; they lived in the midst of a society in which all sorts of ideas and directions were intermingled, and were therefore continually at the mercy of temptation and error. Already during the life of the Apostles we read of various deceivers who penetrated into the congregation and tried to tear it away from the firmness of its faith. In Colossae, for example, there were members who did not appreciate the person and work of Christ and turned the Gospel into a new law, Colossians 2:3, Colossians 2:16. In Corinth libertinists arose who, abusing Chris¬tian freedom, did not want to be bound by any rules, 1 Corinthians 6:12, In his first letter, the apostle John conducts a battle against so-called doctrines, who deny the coming of Christ in the flesh and thus misunderstand the truth of his human nature, 1 John 2:18 ff, 1 John 4:1 ff, 1 John 5:5 ff etc. And so it remained in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council. And so it remained in the post-apostolic age; even the errors of the second century increased in variety, strength and expansion. There were those who believed in the true human nature of Christ, in his supernatural birth, resurrection and ascension, but who saw the divine in nothing but an extraordinary measure of the gifts and powers of the Spirit, which had been given to him by God at his birth or baptism and which made him capable of his religious and moral work. The followers of this movement lived under the influence of the deistic Jewish idea of the relation between God and the world; they could not imagine a more intimate relation between God and man than that which consisted in a communication of gifts; Jesus was therefore a richly gifted man, a religious genius, but He was and remained a Christian. But others, who had been brought up in paganism and were more attracted to polytheistic ideas, thought they could understand very well that, according to his inner nature, Christ was one of the best, or perhaps the highest of all divine beings; but they could not believe that such a divine, pure being could have taken on a human, material, fleshly nature. And so they abandoned the true humanity of Christ, saying that He had only temporarily walked the earth in an apparent form, just as the angels of the Old Testament had done on many occasions. Both tendencies live on to this day; while at one time the Godhead is sacrificed to mankind, at another time the Godhead is maintained at the expense of mankind. There are always extremes who sacrifice the idea for the sake of the fact, or the fact for the sake of the idea; they do not see the unity and harmony of the two. But the Christian Church stood on a different foundation from the very beginning and professed in the person of Christ the most intimate and profound, and therefore the wholly unique, communion of God and man. In the early days, its interpreters sometimes expressed themselves in a very awkward manner; they had to struggle first to gain a somewhat clear understanding of the matter, and then to put this understanding into clear language. But the congregation did not allow itself to be torn away from its foundation; it avoided the one extreme and held fast to the apostles' teaching on the person of Christ. But when one and the same person was both a partaker of the divine nature and a true man, it was necessary to determine his place and to define clearly the relationship between him and the Godhead and the world. And here again a mistake was made to the right and to the left.

If, namely, the unity of God, which is a fundamental truth of Christianity, were to be understood in such a way that the essence of the Godhead coincided completely with the person of the Father, there would be no place in the Godhead for Christ; he would be outside the Godhead and thus on the side of the creature, for there is no gradual transition between Creator and creature. And then it could be said, as Arius did, that He preceded the whole world in time and rank, that He was created first of all creatures and surpassed them all in stature and honor; but Christ remained a creature, there was a time when He was not, and in that time He was called into being, like all other creatures, by the will of God. In striving, however, to maintain the unity of God and to secure to the person of Christ the place and honor due to Him, it was very easy to fall into another error, that which takes its name from its foremost teacher, Sabellius. Whereas Arius, so to speak, identified the essence of Godhead with the person of the Father, Sabellius offered all three persons to that essence. According to his doctrine, the three persons, Father, Son and Spirit, are not eternal entities existing in the essence of the Godhead, but forms and appearances, in which the one Godhead has revealed itself successively in the course of time, under the Old Testament, in the earthly walk of Christ, and after the Day of Pentecost. Both errors have found followers throughout the centuries: the Groninger Theology, for example, essentially renewed the teachings of Arius, and modern Theology first followed in the footsteps of Sabellius.

It took much prayer and much struggle to find the right way amidst all these errors, which moreover were modified and mixed in all kinds of ways. But under the leadership of great men, who excelled both in their piety and their powers of thought and who therefore rightly bear the name of Church Fathers, the church nevertheless remained faithful to the slate of the apostles. At the Nicea Synod in 325, the church proclaimed its faith in the one God, the Father, the Almighty, Creator of all things visible and invisible, and in the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was generated from the Father as the one-born, that is, from the essence of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, created and not created, being one with the Father, through whom all things in heaven and earth were made,.... and in the Holy Spirit.

Important as this outcome was, it by no means brought about an end to the *lyristian Disputes. On the contrary, the Nicene Creed opened the way to new questions and different answers. For although the relationship of Christ to the essence of God and to the world and humanity was determined in the sense that He shared both in His person and was God and humanity in one person, the question could not be left unanswered as to how the relationship of these two natures in one person should be conceived. And on this point, too, various avenues were explored for an answer.

Nestorius decided that if there were two natures in Christ, there must also be two persons, two selves, in Him, who could only be united by a moral bond, as, for example, in marriage between a man and a woman. And Eutyches, starting from the same identification of nature and person, came to the conclusion that, if in Christus there was only one person, one I, then the two natures must have been so mixed and fused that only one divine nature emerged from that mixture.

There the distinction between the natures was maintained at the expense of the unity of the person, here the unity of the person at the expense of the duality of the natures. But after long, hard struggles, the church also overcame these disagreements. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451, it declared that the one person of Christ consisted of two natures, which existed unchanged

and unmixed (against Eutyches), and undivided and undivided (against Nestorius), but had their unity in the one person. This decision, which was later supplemented and completed on a specific point at the Synod in Constantinople in 680, put an end to the centuries-long struggle over the person of Christ. The Church had preserved the essence of Christianity, the absolute character of the Christian religion, and with that also her own independence.

It goes without saying that this Nicene and Chalcedon creeds cannot claim infallibility. The terms used by the church and theology, such as person, nature, unity, etc., are not found in Scripture, but are the fruit of the reflection which Christianity gradually had to devote to the verbosity of salvation; it was forced to do so by the errors which arose from all sides, both within and outside the church. All the expressions and descriptions used in the Church's confession and in the language of theology do not serve to explain the mystery before us, but to preserve it purely and unimpaired in the face of all those who weaken or deny it. The Incarnation of the Word is not a problem that we must or can solve, but it is a wonderful fact that we thankfully confess, as God Himself places it before our eyes in His Word. But understood in this way, the confession, which the church established at Nicea and Chalcedori, is of great value. There have been many, and there are still many, who look down on the doctrine of the two natures in Christ and try to replace it with other words and terms. What does it matter, they say, whether we agree with this doctrine or not; what matters is that we possess the person of Christ Himself, who stands high behind and above this clumsy confession. But later on all these men will themselves also introduce words and terms in order to describe in more detail the person of Christ whom they accept. No one can escape this, for what we do not know, we do not have. If we believe that we possess Christ, that we have fellowship with Him, that we are His property, then that faith must also speak, and resort to words, terms, expressions and descriptions. But then, history has also shown that the expressions used by those who oppose the doctrine of two natures lag far behind those of the confession in value and force, and often even, in disregard of the fact that they are true, fall short of the latter.

Even in disregard of the fact of the Incarnation, as Scripture makes us know it, they encourage error.

Today, for example, there are many who consider the doctrine of the two natures to be the height of absurdity and who, in their consciousness, take an entirely different view of the person of Christ. They cannot deny that there is something in Christ that distinguishes Him from all men and raises Him above all. But this Divinity which they recognize in Christ they do not regard as partaking of Divine nature itself, but as a Divine gift or power which was given to Christ in a special measure. They say, then, that Christ has two sides, a divine and a human side; or that he can be seen from two points of view; or that he lived in two successive states, of mortification and exaltation; or that he, though only a man, has been, through his preaching of the love of God and the foundation of his kingdom, the extraordinary and perfect organ of God's revelation, and has thus acquired for us the value of God. But any impartial reader will feel that these representations do not merely modify ecclesiastical expressions, but make something entirely different of the person of Christ than the Church has always professed on the basis of the Apostolic witness concerning Him.

Divine gifts and powers are given to every human being in a certain sense, because all good gifts and perfect gifts come down from the Father of Lights. The prophets and the apostles were men of

the same movements as we are. If, therefore, Christ received nothing more than extraordinary divine gifts and powers, he was no more than a man, and there can be no question of his becoming flesh. But then He could never, as others propose, have been exalted to God through resurrection and ascension after His death or have acquired the significance of God for us. For between man and God there is no gradual transition, but a deep cleavage. They stand in relation to each other as creature and Creator, and the creature, of course, can never become the Creator nor ever have the value and significance for us, human beings, of the Creator, on Whom we are completely dependent.

It is remarkable, then, that after comparing all these new ideas about the person of Christ with the teachings of the Church and Scripture, some have come to the honest conclusion that ultimately the creed of the Church still corresponds best to the teachings of Scripture. The doctrine that Christ was God and Man in one person is not a product of pagan philosophy, but is grounded in the Apostolic Testimony.

Herein lies the mystery of godliness, that He who, as the Word, was in the beginning with God and was God Himself, John 1:1, who was in the form of God and did not think it worthwhile to be equal to God, Php 2:6, who was the reflection of God's glory and the expressed image of his own nature, Hebrews 1:3, who became flesh in the fullness of time, John 1:14, who was born of a woman, Galatians 4:4, who destroyed himself, took on the form of a servant, and became like unto men, Php 2:7. The first thing to note here is that Christ was and is God and remains eternal. He was not the Father nor the Spirit, but the Son, the Father's own, only begotten, beloved Son. And not the Divine being, nor the Father and the Spirit, but the person of the Son became man in the fullness of time. And when He became man and walked around the earth as a man, even when He wrestled in Gethsemane and hung on the cross, He remained His own Son, in whom the Father had all His good pleasure. It is true that the apostle says that Christ, who was in the form of God and did not think it was a sin to be like God, destroyed or emptied Himself, Php 2:6-7. But this is wrongly understood by some to mean that Christ, at his incarnation, in the state of humiliation, stripped himself of his divinity in whole or in part, and laid down his divine attributes, and then gradually took them back in the state of his exaltation. For how would this be possible, since God cannot deny Himself, 2 Timothy 2:13, and since the unchangeable One in Himself is above all creation and corruption? No, even when He became what He was not, He remained what He was, the One-born of the Father. But the Apostle does say that Christ destroyed Himself in this sense, that He, who was in the form of God, took on the form of a man and a servant. To put it humanly and simply, before His incarnation Christ was not only equal to the Father in essence and virtues, but He also had the form of God. He looked like God; He was the reflection of His glory and the expressed image of His autonomy. Whoever could have seen Him would have recognized Him immediately as God. But this changed at His conception; then He took on the form of a man, the figure of a servant. Whoever saw Him now could no longer see in Him the only Son of the Father, except through the eye of faith. He had laid aside His divine form and glory; He hid His divine nature behind the form of a servant; on earth He was and looked like our one.

Secondly, the incarnation includes the fact that He, who remained what He was, became what He was not. He became this at a point in time, at a particular moment in history, at that hour when the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and the power of the Most High overshadowed her (Luke 1:35). But that does not take away from the fact that this Incarnation was prepared centuries ago.

If one wants to understand it well, one can say that even the generation of the Son and the creation of the world prepared the incarnation of the Word. Not in the sense that the generation and creation already included the incarnation in principle. For the Scriptures always connect the incarnation of the Son with the redemption from sin and the acquisition of salvation, Matthew 1:21, John 3:16, Romans 8:3. Galatians 4:4-5 etc. But generation and creation, especially the creation of man in God's image, both teach that God is communicable, in a complete sense within and in a relative sense outside the Divine being. If this were not the case, there would be no room for the incarnation of God. Whoever considers the incarnation of God impossible, in principle also denies the creation of the world and the generation of the Son; and whoever recognizes the latter, can no longer raise any principled objection to the former.

However, the Incarnation of the Word was directly prepared in the Revelation, which began immediately after the fall, continued in the history of Israel, and reached its highest point in the conception of Mary. The entire Old Testament is an approach of God to man, in order to make his home permanently in him in the fullness of time.

However, since the Son of God, who assumed human nature in Mary, already existed before that time and from eternity as the person of the Son, his conception in Mary's womb did not take place through the will of the flesh and the will of man, but through the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. The Incarnation joins and completes the previous revelation, but it is not itself a product of nature or mankind. It is a work of God, a revelation, the highest revelation. Just as it was the Father who sent His Son into the world, and the Holy Spirit who came upon Mary, so it was the Son Himself who became a partaker of our flesh and blood (Hebrews 2:14). He became flesh by His own will and by His own act. Therefore, at the time of His incarnation, He set aside the will of the flesh and the will of man, and He prepared Himself a human nature in Mary's womb by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. This human nature did not exist beforehand. It was not brought by Christ out of heaven and carried into Mary from outside and led through her. The Anabaptists taught this, in order to be able to maintain the sinlessness of human nature in Christ; but in doing so they were following in the footsteps of the old Gnosticism and starting from the idea that flesh and matter are in themselves sinful. But the Scriptures maintain the goodness of creation and the divine origin of matter, even in the incarnation.

Christ took on His human nature from Mary, Matthew 1:20, Luke 1:52, Luke 2:7, Galatians 4:4. He is, as far as the flesh is concerned, of David and of the fathers, Acts 2:30, Romans 1:3, Romans 9:5. Therefore it is also a true and perfect human nature, equal to us in all things, except sin, Hebrews 2:14, Hebrews 2:17, Hebrews 4:15. Nothing human was foreign to Christ. The denial of the coming of Christ in the flesh is the principle of antichrist, 1 John 2:22.

Just as the human nature of Christ did not exist before His conception in Mary, so it did not exist for a time before or after His birth, separate from Christ. The seed received in Mary, and the child born of her, did not first grow up independently into a human being, into a person, into an entity, and was then accepted by Christ and united with Himself. This error, too, was defended in the past and later, but Scripture knows nothing of such an idea. The Holy One, who was conceived in Mary's womb, was and bore from the beginning the name of Zone Cods, Luke 1:35. The Son, whom the Father sent, was born of a woman, Galatians 4:4. The Word did not take upon Himself a man at a later date, but became flesh, John 1:14. And that is why the Christian church said in her

confession that the person of the Son did not take upon Himself a human person, but a human nature; and that only in this way can the duality of natures be maintained in the unity of the person. For - and this is the third point that merits our consideration - although Scripture states as clearly as possible that Christ was the Word and became flesh, that according to the flesh He is of the fathers but according to His essence He is God over all, to be praised for all eternity, yet in this Christ He always appears as one person to us. It is always the same I that speaks and acts out of Christ. The child that was born bears the name of strong God and eternal Father, Isaiah 9:5. David's son is also David's Lord. The same, who came down, is also ascended far above all heavens, Ephesians 4:10. Who according to the flesh is of the fathers, is according to his nature the God of all things, to be praised for ever and ever, Romans 9:5. Walking about on the earth, He was and remains in heaven, in the bosom of the Father, John 1:18, John 3:13. The fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him in a bodily manner, Colossians 2:9. In a word, to the same subject, to the same person, are ascribed Divine and human characteristics and works, eternity and time, omnipresence and limitedness, creative omnipotence and creaturely weakness. This being so, the union of the two naves in Christ cannot have been as that between two persons. For two persons can be intimately united by love, but they can never become one person, one I. Love presupposes the duality and brings about nothing but a mystical and ethical unity. If the union of the Son of God with humanity had this character, it would be different, at best in degree but not in essence, from that which God establishes with His creatures, especially His children. But Christ occupies a wholly unique place. He did not form a moral alliance with a human being and did not take an existing human being into His community, but He prepared Himself a human afterlife in Mary's womb, and became a human being and a servant. Just as a human being can pass from one state of life to another, can live successively or sometimes even simultaneously in two spheres of consciousness, so Christ, who was in the form of God, walked the earth in the form of a servant by way of analogy (agreement). The union that came about in his incarnation was not a moral one between two persons, but the union of two natures in the same person. Man and woman, however intimately united in marriage, remain two persons; God and man, although united by the most intimate love, remain distinct in nature. But in Christ, man is the same subject as the Word, which in the beginning was with God and was God Himself, and the Word is the same subject that became flesh. Here is a completely unique, incomparable and incomprehensible union of God and man. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, John 1:14.

Through this union Christ, in the unity of His person, possesses all the qualities and powers that are peculiar to both natures. Some have tried to obtain a stronger and more intimate union of the two natures by teaching that the two natures were at once fused into one divine nature at the conception of the flesh, or that divine nature divested itself of its own attributes and descended into the narrowness of human nature, or that human nature lost its attributes and received those of divine nature (either all or some, such as omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience and life-giving power) as its own. But the Reformed confession has always rejected and disputed such a fusion of both natures and such a communication of characteristics by one nature to the other. For such a fusion and communication amounted to confusion and mixing of the two natures and thus to a pantheistic denial of the distinction between God and man, between Creator and creature.

There is a close union between the two natures and their properties and powers. But this union is brought about in the unity of the person. And a stronger, deeper, more intimate union is not conceivable. Just as, by comparison but not by assimilation, soul and body are united in one human being and yet remain distinct from one another in essence and properties, so in Christ the same person is the subject of both natures with all their properties and powers. The distinction between soul and body is the foundation and the condition for their intimate unity in the one man, and thus also the distinction between divine and human natures is the basis of their unity in the person of Christ. The fusion of the two natures and the communication of the characteristics of one to the other does not bring about a more intimate union, but rather dissolves the union in a fusion, and actually impoverishes the fullness that is in Christ. They rob either the divine, or the human, or both natures in Christ and weaken the word of Scripture that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily, Colossians 2:19, Colossians 1:9. Only then does that fullness remain, if both natures remain distinct, and do not communicate their qualities to each other, but to the one person, and place them at his service. It is then always the same, rich Christ, who in His humiliation and exaltation has the qualities and powers of both natures at His disposal and who is thus able to accomplish those very works which, as mediatorial works, are on the one hand distinct from the works of God and on the other hand from the works of man, and which have their own place in the history of the world. This doctrine of two natures has the great advantage that everything that Scripture says about the person of Christ and attributes to Him can be fully appreciated. On the one hand, then, He is and remains the only and eternal Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit created, sustains and governs all things, John 1:3, Colossians 1:15-16, Hebrews 1:2, and therefore may be the object of our worship. He was already this in the days of the apostles, John 14:13, Acts 7:59, Acts 9:13, Acts 22:16, Romans 10:12-13, Php 2:9, Hebrews 1:6, just as He was then and is now the object of the faith and confidence of all His disciples, John 14:1, John 17:3, Romans 14:9, 2 Corinthians 5:15, Ephesians 3:12, Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 1:27 etc. But He cannot and must not be both, if He is not truly God, for it is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou worship, and Him only shalt thou serve (Matthew 4:10). The basis for the religious worship and adoration of Christ can only lie in His divine nature, so that whoever denies this and yet maintains this worship, is guilty of idolatry. The divinity of Christ is not a reserved doctrine, but it is of the utmost importance for the life of the church. On the other hand, Christ became a true and complete human being, equal to us in everything except sin. He was an infant, a child, a youth and a man like us, and increased in wisdom, size and grace with God and mankind. All this is not an appearance, as they must say, who make the Divine qualities the property of human nature, but it is the full truth. There was in Christ a slow development, a gradual progress in size of body, in powers of soul, in favor with God and man. The gifts of the Spirit were not all given to him at once, but were given to him in increasing measure. There were things He had to learn and which He did not know at first. 13: 32, Acts 1:7. In Him, even though He possessed the inability to sin because of His weak human nature, there was nevertheless a possibility to be tempted, to suffer and to die. As long as He was on earth, He was not in heaven according to His human nature, and therefore He lived, not by sight, but by faith. He has fought and suffered, and in all this has clung to the word and promise of God. In this way He learned obedience from what He suffered, continually established Himself in obedience and in that way sanctified Himself, John 17:19, Hebrews 5:8-9. But at the same time He left us an example and became a cause of eternal salvation for all who obey Him, Hebrews 5:9.

01.17. The work of Christ in His humiliation.

17. The work of Christ in His humiliation. The Incarnation is the beginning and the introduction of Christ's work on earth, but it is not the whole nor the main content of that work. It is good to form a correct idea and a clear understanding of this in relation to all those who consider that the complete reconciliation and fusion of God and man has already been accomplished in the adoption of human nature. Starting from the idea that religion is a such communion of God and man, in which both need and complement each other, they then reason that this communion, disturbed by sin or not yet attainable for mankind at a lower, sensual level, was first expressed and realized in history by Christ. The peculiarity of Christianity, then, lies in the fact that the idea of religion, given as a disposition and seed in human nature, has reached its fulfilment in the person of Christ.

It is without doubt a great honor for mankind that the only begotten Son, who was in the form of God and the Father, has taken on the form of a man. Christ is therefore related to all human beings; he is of the same flesh and blood and they have in common with him soul and body, head and heart, mind and will, perceptions and feelings. In this natural sense Christ is our brother, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone. But this natural (phy- sic) communion, important as it is, must not be identified or confused with the spiritual and moral communion. Already among people it is possible, and often happens, that family members and blood relatives are spiritually distanced from one another and are sharply opposed to one another. Jesus Himself says that He came to earth to make man two against his father, and the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and that man's enemies shall be those of his household. Matthew 10:35-36. So natural descent does not decide anything about spiritual kinship; the communion of blood and the communion of souls are often far apart.

If Jesus had done nothing else than take on human nature and declare the oneness of God and man, it would be completely incomprehensible how we could thereby enter into spiritual fellowship with Him and be reconciled to God. Rather, by taking on a sinless human nature and by living in an uninterrupted communion with God, He would have distanced us from Himself and would have depressed us deeply under the impression of our powerlessness, because we, weak, sinful creatures, could never follow His exalted example. The incarnation of the Son of God, without more, cannot therefore have been the act of reconciliation and redemption; it is the beginning, the preparation and the introduction, but it is not the act itself.

Besides, if the Incarnation in itself had already brought about the reconciliation and the joining of God and man, there would have been no place for a life and especially for a death of Jesus. It would then have sufficed that He, whether in the way of conception and birth or not, had taken on human nature, walked around on earth with it for a shorter or longer time and then returned to heaven. Then there would have been no need for the complete and profound humiliation of Christ. But Scripture teaches us differently. It says that the Son of God not only became a man, equal to us in everything except sin, but that He also took the form of a servant, humbled Himself and

became obedient to death, yes to the death of the cross, Php 2:7-8. It befitted Him to fulfil all the righteousness of the law, Matthew 3:15, and to be sanctified by suffering Himself, Hebrews 2:10. It was written that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead on the third day, Luke 24:46, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. The Father sent Him to accomplish His work on earth, John 4:34, and even gave Him a commandment to lay down His life and take it again, John 10:18. Everything that happened to Christ was therefore the execution of what God's hand and counsel had previously determined should happen, Acts 2:23, Acts 4:28. It was not until the cross that Christ could say that all was accomplished and that He had finished the work that the Father had given Him to do, John 17:4, John 19:30. While the life of Jesus is sketched relatively briefly in the Gospels, His last suffering and death are recounted at length; and likewise, the Apostolic preaching seldom goes back to the conception and birth of Jesus, but only emphasizes the Cross, the death and blood of Christ. Not by the birth, but by the death of his Son have we been reconciled to God, Romans 5:10.

Through this consideration of Scripture, the whole life of Christ acquires for us a wholly unique significance and a surpassing value. It is one perfect work that the Father has commissioned Him to do. It can be viewed from different angles and from different sides, and we must do this in order to obtain an overview of the content and scope of that work. But we must never forget that it is a single work; it encompasses and fills his whole life, from conception to the death of the cross; just as the person of Christ is one in the diversity of his natures, so also his work is one; it is God's work on earth par excellence. Yes, even more, it is backwardly connected with the counsel and foreknowledge of God, with His revelation among Israel and His guidance of the nations; and forward it continues in a modified way in the work that Christ is still accomplishing today in the state of His exaltation. It is a work that has its center in time on this earth, but that arises from eternity, takes root in eternity, and extends into eternity. From time immemorial, this one work of Christ has been summarized under the doctrine of three offices, and it is thanks to Calvin in particular that this scheme has become generally accepted in the treatment of Christ's work in the doctrine of faith. Nevertheless, objections have repeatedly been raised, and in some cases the objection that the three offices were indistinguishable in the life of Jesus and that their activities were intertwined has been raised. This objection, however, is valid against a wrong interpretation of the three offices, but not against this one.

If Jesus had intended the three offices of prophet, priest and king to be exercised separately, or temporarily one after the other, such a division and separation in the work of Christ would indeed be impossible to carry out. It is true that sometimes one ministry is more prominent than the other, so that, for example, His public preaching is more reminiscent of the prophetic, His final suffering and death more of the priestly, and His exaltation at the right hand of the Father more of the royal; but essentially Jesus was always and everywhere active in His three ministries simultaneously. When He spoke, He proclaimed God's words as a prophet, but in doing so He also demonstrated His priestly mercy and His royal power, for through His word He healed the sick, forgave sins, calmed the storm; He was the King of truth. His miracles were signs of his divine mission and of the truth of his word, but at the same time they were also revelations of his compassion on all kinds of wretched people and of his rule over sickness and death and the violence of Satan. His death was a seal of his life, but also a sacrifice of perfect obedience and a willing act of power to give up life. In a word, his whole appearance, word and work always carries a prophetic, priestly

and royal character at the same time. But having put this in the foreground, it remains of the utmost importance to look at the person and work of Christ from the point of view of the three offices. There are advantages to this which would otherwise be lost. In the first place, this treatment gives us the advantage that Christ's coming and entire life on earth becomes the exercise of a ministry that has been entrusted to him by the Father. With Jesus we cannot speak of a business, a craft, nor even a moral profession, which He chose for Himself.

According to the Holy Scriptures, He was appointed to an office. Office differs from craft and profession in that one cannot choose and take it oneself, but can only receive it through appointment by a power that stands above us. It is true that He is different from Moses in that He, not like a servant, but like the Son over His own house, has been faithful to the Father in everything, Hebrews 3:5-6. But then He has been faithful to the One who made Him an Apostle and High Priest to our confession, Hebrews 3:2. He did not accept the honor of becoming an archpriest Himself, but He was glorified for it by God Himself, who spoke to Him: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Hebrews 5:5). Jesus himself repeatedly emphasizes that the Father has sent Him, that His food is the Father's will, that He has a commandment from the Father as to what He will do and say, that He has completed the Father's work on earth, etc., John 4:34, John 5:20, John 5:30, John 6:38, John 7:16, John 8:28, John 10:18, John 12:4-50, John 14:10, John 14:24, John 17:4. This appointment to the ministry evidently predates the time in which Christ became a man. Not only does Scripture teach that Christ was with God and God Himself from the beginning, but in Hebrews 10:5-7 we also read expressly that when He came into the world, that is, when He was about to come into the world, He already said: burnt offerings and sacrifices have not pleased thee; but when thou didst prepare a body for me, (in order to accomplish the will of God in this body by giving it up to death); burnt offerings and sacrifices have not pleased thee; but when thou didst prepare a body for me, I said according to the word of prophecy, Behold, I come to do thy will, O God. The coming into the world, the incarnation, was thus already part of the execution of the work that the Father had commissioned Him to do; the commission preceded it, not falling into time after the incarnation, but before it in eternity. That is why it is said elsewhere that Christ was foreseen before the foundation of the world, 1 Peter 1:20, that election is taken and grace is given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of ages, Ephesians 1:3, 2 Timothy 1:9, and that the book of life, which has been before God from the foundation of the world, is the property of the slaughtered Lamb, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8. The conception of Christ's work as the exercise of a ministry links that work to God's eternal counsel. He bears the name of Messiah, Christ, Anointed One, because He was predestined by the Father from eternity and anointed by Him with the Holy Spirit in time.

Secondly, the three offices that were conferred upon Christ refer back to man's original calling and destiny. It is by no means accidental or arbitrary that Christ was appointed to precisely these three offices of Prophet, Priest and King, and to no other or greater offices; rather, it is based on God's intention for the human race and, therefore, on human nature itself. Adam was created in the image of God, in true knowledge, righteousness and holiness, that as a prophet he might preach the words of God; as a king rule in righteousness over all things; and as a priest consecrate himself and all his possessions to God for a sacrifice pleasing to Him. He received a head to know; a hand to rule; and a heart to encompass all in love. In the unfolding of the image of God, in the harmonious development of all his gifts and powers, in the exercise of the three offices of prophet,

priest and king, lay man's destiny. But that calling has been trampled on by mankind. And that is precisely why Christ came to earth, in order to show once again the true image of mankind and to fulfil his destiny. The doctrine of the three offices establishes a fixed connection between nature and grace, creation and re-creation, Adam and Christ. The first Adam is the type, preparation and prophecy of the last, and this one is the image and fulfillment of genes.

Third, the doctrine of the three offices in Christ is directly related to revelation in the Old Testament. When humanity, fallen in Adam, lost its way more and more, God chose a special people to be His property. In connection with this, Israel as a people was again given a prophetic, priestly and royal task; it was to be a priestly kingdom and an holy nation to the Lord, Exodus 19:6. But in a special sense this task was given to the men who were called by God and who worked among Israel as prophets, priests and kings. Although Israel as a whole, as a people, could be called the Anointed One of the Lord, this name belongs especially to the prophets, priests and kings, Psalms 105:15, Exodus 28:41, 1 Samuel 2:10, etc. But all these men were sinners, and therefore could not fulfil their office truthfully; they turned away from themselves, together with the whole people, and went to another one, who would be prophet, priest and king at the same time and would be called the Anointed One of the Lord in a completely unique sense, Isaiah 61:1. Christ is the fulfillment of all Old Testament revelation; He is the counterpart of all Israel and of all its prophets, priests and kings. It is He Himself who in and through them testifies of Himself and prepares His coming.

Finally, only when treated under the three offices does the work of Christ come into its fullness. There have always been unilateralists in the Christian Church who, like the rationalists, saw in Him only the prophet, or who, like the mystics, were only interested in His priestly sufferings, or who, like the chiliasts, only wanted to know of Him as King. But we need a Christ who is all three at once. We need a prophet, who declares God to us, a priest, who reconciles us to God, a king, who rules and preserves us in the name of God. The whole image of God must be restored in man; knowledge, but also holiness and righteousness. The whole man must be saved, soul and body, head and heart and hand. We need a Saviour, who redeems us completely and fully and realizes our original purpose in us. And that is what Christ does; because He Himself is prophet, priest and king, He makes us again prophets, kings and priests, to God and His Father, Revelation 1:6, Revelation 22:4.

Although anointed from eternity and already working in preparation as mediator of the covenant of grace in the days of the Old Testament, Christ first fully and truly assumed the offices of prophet, priest and king when He came into the world and said: Behold, I come to do Your will, O God. It was then that He first assumed human nature, which enabled Him to perform His mediumistic work. He had to be human in order to be able to reveal God's name to mankind, to suffer and die on the Cross, to bear witness to the truth as the King of Truth.... .. His reception of the Holy Spirit was therefore at the same time already an initial qualification of Christ's human nature for the task to which He would later be called. In recent times, the confession that Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary has been the subject of many objections, and many attempts have been made to explain away the story of Matthew and Luke as a Jewish or Pagan infiltration of the original Gospel. But the result has been that the truth of this history has been confirmed and revealed more clearly than before. It is not to be inferred from Judaism or Paganism, but is based on the testimony of Joseph and Mary, as is clear from the language in

which it is written in Matthew and Luke. Of course, for a long time this miraculous conception was only to Joseph and Mary and perhaps to a few trusted ones. But by its very nature it did not lend itself to public communication.

Only later, when the words and deeds, and especially the resurrection of Christ had revealed who and what He was, did Mary decide to share the secret of Jesus' conception with the disciples. Yet even after that, the reception of the Holy Spirit never came to the fore in the apostolic preaching; it is perhaps mentioned in Mark 6:4 John 1:13 (John 7:41-42), Romans 1:3-4, Romans 9:5, Php 2:7, Galatians 4:4, but except in Matthew and Luke nowhere explicitly mentioned. Nevertheless, it is an essential element of the Gospel and corresponds to all the teaching of the Scriptures concerning the person of Christ. He was, after all, the One-born Son, who, as the Word, was with God from the beginning and God Himself, who actively intervened at conception and, through the activity of the Holy Spirit, prepared Himself a true and complete human nature in Mary's womb. Luke 2:6-7. The prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:5, cf. Matthew 1:28, was fulfilled in Him, that a virgin (a young, unmarried woman) would become pregnant and give birth to a son, who would be Immanuel and bear the names of Wonderful, Counselor, Strong God, Father of eternity, Prince of Peace.

Through this reception of the Holy Spirit, the human nature of Christ was completely free from all sin from the very beginning. Since the Zone of God had already existed as a person and had not united Himself with an existing human being, but had prepared His human nature Himself out of Mary's womb through the activity of the Holy Spirit, He was not included in the covenant of works, had no inheritance debt to bear and was therefore not allowed to be defiled by any stain of sin. The doctrine of Rome, that Mary would have been received already unstained and would have lived sinless, is unnecessary, unfounded and - even with what the Scriptures testify about Mary, John 2:4, Mark 3:31, Luke 11:28. Mary enjoyed a high honor, greater than was ever given to prophets or apostles; she is the most blessed of women and the mother of the Lord, Luke 1:42-43. But she was in herself equal to all men; and the Holy One who was born of her,

Luke 1:35, was not due to the purity of her nature, but to the creative and sanctifying activity of the Holy Spirit in her womb.

Although the human nature which Christ took from Mary was a holy one, it was nevertheless a weak human nature. This is expressed in Scripture by the fact that He became flesh, not man, John 1:14, that He was sent in the likeness of the sinful flesh, Romans 8:3, that He assumed the form of a servant, Php 2:7, and that He became like us in everything, except for sin alone, Hebrews 2:17, Hebrews 4:15. Such a weak human nature Christ had to accept, in order to be tempted, to learn obedience from suffering, to be able to fight and be sanctified in battle, to have compassion on our weaknesses and be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in a word, to suffer and die. Although in this respect He was like Adam before the fall, in that He was without sin, He was very different from him in other respects. For Adam was created all at once, but Christ was conceived in Mary's womb and born as a helpless child. When Adam came, everything was ready for him, but when Christ came to earth, no one had counted on Him and there was not even room for Him in the inn. Adam came to rule and to subdue the whole earth: Christ came, not to be served, but to serve and to give His soul as a ransom for many. The incarnation of the Son of God was therefore not only an act of humble goodness, as it still is in the state of exaltation, but at the

same time and in one act it was also an act of deep humiliation. Humiliation began with the conception itself and continued throughout life until death and the grave. Christ was not a human hero who has the motto 'Excelsior', overcomes all obstacles and finally stands at the pinnacle of his fame; but, on the contrary, he has always descended deeper and deeper into our community. He descended, as it were, along various stages, from conception and birth, hidden and humble life in Nazareth, baptism and temptation, opposition, denial and persecution, suffering in Gethsemane, condemnation by Caiaphas and Pilate, crucifixion, death and burial, Ever further from the Father's house, ever closer to us in the fellowship of our sin and death, until at last, in the deepest depths, he uttered his anguished complaint about his abandonment by God, but then he could also give the victorious cry of : it is finished! This humiliation includes, besides the conception and birth itself, also the simple circumstances under which Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem, the persecution to which He was exposed by Herod, the flight to Egypt to which He was forced to go with His parents, but also the quiet hidden life that was led by Jesus in Nazareth during His childhood and youth. There is very little of this recorded in the Gospels, because they do not aim at all to write a ■life of Jesus' in the new-fashioned sense of the word, but they intend to make us know Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world and the Only Begotten of the Father. In connection with this goal the little that is told us about Jesus' youth is sufficient.

Matthew tells us that Jesus, after returning from Egypt, went to live with his parents in Nazareth in Galilee, Matthew 2:23. His mother had lived there before, Luke 1:26, and there Jesus spent his life until his public appearance among Israel, Luke 2:39, Luke 2:51, Mark 1:9. Only after He had entered their synagogue and been cast out by His fellow townsmen did He settle in Capernaum, Luke 4:28 ff, Matthew 4:13. But He still Matthew saw in it a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, Matthew 2:23; but not of a single statement, for Nazareth and Nazarene do not occur anywhere in the Old Testament, but of the prophecy in its entirety, as it is to be found with all the prophets, that n. the Christ is a humble, holy man, and that he is a man of God. The Christ would have a lowly, humble origin, Isa. 11: 1, and that the light would rise over the nations in the darkness of Galilee of the Gentiles, Isa. 8:23, Isaiah 9:1. From the quiet life that Jesus led for years in Nazareth, we now know that He was a child, submissive to His parents, Luke 2:51. As a child He grew up physically and mentally, He increased in wisdom and in favor with God and mankind, Luke 2:40, Luke 2:52. At the age of twelve He went with His parents, for the first or for another time, to Jerusalem, to celebrate the Passover, Luke 2:41 ff. On the Sabbath day He went to the synagogue according to his custom, Luke 4:16, and during the week He may have helped his father in his trade; at least later He is called the carpenter himself, Mark 6:3. His later life sheds light on these quiet years to the extent that we know that he could read and write, was imbued with the Old Testament, was aware of the nature of the Pharisaic and Sadducee sects, knew the moral needs of the people, was familiar with civil and social life, loved nature, and often spent time alone in community with God. However small all these details may be, they all indicate that in the hidden years of His life Jesus was preparing Himself for the task that would later await Him in public. More and more clearly He became aware of what He was and what He had to do. His Sonship and His Messianic nature, with all that was connected with it and ensued from it, became clearer and clearer in His mind. And finally, at the age of thirty, the day came on which He would be revealed to Israel (John 1:31). The occasion of this public appearance was the preaching that John the Baptist had begun in the desert south of Judea. He was sent by God to tell Israel that in spite of their descent from Abraham, their circumcision and their own righteousness they were guilty and unclean, and

needed the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Many went to him, from Jerusalem and Judea and the whole country around the Jordan, to be baptized by him, confessing their sins. Jesus also left Galilee from this preaching and went to Judea to be baptized by John, just like others. Although John objected, because he recognized the Messiah in Jesus, who himself could only baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, and had no need of baptism for his own person, Jesus urged him on, saying that he had to be baptized, because it was fitting for him to fulfill all righteousness.

Jesus did not say that He had to be baptized because He needed repentance and forgiveness; nor did He, like the others, make a confession of sins. But He saw in John a prophet, indeed much more than a prophet, His own forerunner and wayfarer, Matthew 11:7-14, and in His baptism not an arbitrary ceremony devised by John Himself, but a grace that He had received from heaven, Mark 11:30. The baptism of John was thus based on God's will and was a piece of righteousness that Jesus had to fulfill. When Jesus undergoes this baptism, He on the one hand submits Himself completely to the will of His Father, and on the other hand He places Himself in the most intimate fellowship with that people, who in baptism receive repentance and forgiveness of sins. Baptism by John is for Jesus the solemn surrender to the whole will of the Father, the public entrance into the community with all His people, the royal entrance into His Messianic career. That is why for Him baptism had a meaning that differed from that of all others. He did not personally receive the sign and seal of his conversion and forgiveness, but he was baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire, as only he can give it. In later times some sects have believed that it was not until the moment of baptism that the divine nature or power (the Christ) was united with Jesus. This view is an error because it ignores the incarnation of the Word at conception. But it is certain that the baptism of Jesus was the full qualification for His ministry. For when He came up out of the water, the heavens were opened, the Spirit of God descended upon Him, and a voice was heard from the heavens, saying: This is my Son, my Beloved, in whom I am well pleased, Matthew 3:16-17. Although few understood it, the day of Jesus' baptism was the day of His revelation to Israel and the beginning of His public activity as Messiah.

Yet, before beginning this activity, He withdrew into the solitude of the desert for a few days. He met no one, was surrounded only by silent nature and wild animals, and gave Himself up to fasting, contemplation and prayer Mark 1:13, Luke 4:2. The nature of this contemplation becomes somewhat clear from the story of the temptation. The temptation by Satan, which took place at the end of the forty days and which is recounted in detail by Matthew and Mark, was a high point in the battle that Jesus had to fight, but it was by no means the only one. Luke says explicitly that He was tempted by the devil all those forty days, Luke 4:2, and that the devil, after having completed all the temptations, departed from Him for a time, Jesus was also tempted in all things, as we are, yet without sin, Hebrews 4:15. But the temptation in the desert ran over the plan of His public activity. After His baptism He was now full of the Holy Spirit Matthew 4:1, and He Himself led Him into the desert to be tempted by the devil, Matthew 4:1. Furthermore, Jesus was now fully and clearly aware that He was the Son of God, the Messiah, and could dispose of divine powers. But how would He use that power? Would He use it to selfishly satisfy His own needs, - or to win over the people by glorious miracles, or by bowing to worldly power to acquire an earthly kingdom? The tempter tries Him successively on these three points. But Jesus remains standing in all those temptations; He clings to and rejects them all with the Word of God, He submits Himself to the will

and the way of the Father, He confirms Himself in His obedience and He sanctifies Himself as an offering to God. In this way He not only knows from His own experience what it is to be tempted, and can have compassion on our weaknesses; but, because He did not collapse like Adam but stood firm, He can also come to the aid of those who are tempted, Hebrews 2:18, Hebrews 4:15. In this way Jesus was prepared for the public exercise of His ministry and was introduced to it. Of these ministries, prophetic work came to the fore in the first period. Soon after He began His public activity, the people recognized Him not only as a teacher (rabbi, master), but also as a prophet; after the raising of the young man in Naïn, the crowd cried out: a great prophet has risen among us, and God has visited His people, Luke 7:16. And so it remained to the end of His life; because of His words and His miracles many considered Him a prophet, although they had no knowledge of His priesthood and kingship and were even averse to them. Yes, as a prophet, as a man who can teach us more than others about God and divine things, he is honored to this day by all those who still attach any value to religion. That Christ was a priest and a king is contested by them and considered an outdated Jewish idea; but He is gladly called a prophet, and even Muhammad grants Him this dignity in the Koran. But Jesus Himself wanted to be a prophet in a different and higher sense than many Jews recognized Him as such. When He returned to Galilee after being baptized by John and tempted in the desert, He soon after entered the synagogue at Nazareth and applied the prophecy of Isaiah 11:1 to Himself; the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him to preach the Gospel to the poor and to heal the brokenhearted. He did not present Himself as a -prophet next to, but high above all others; the former prophets were servants, but He is the Son, Matthew 21:37; He is the only Master, Matthew 23:8, Matthew 23:10, John 13:13-14. But He still rises high above them all and is exalted far above them. His calling and anointing are already in eternity; His separation and empowerment already began in the miraculous reception of the Holy Spirit; at His baptism He receives the Spirit not in moderation, and He is proclaimed by a voice from heaven as the beloved Son in whom the Father has His pleasure; He does not receive a few revelations from time to time, but He Himself is the full revelation of God, the Word, which was with God and was God Himself and became flesh in time; He was and remained continually in the bosom of the Father and never spoke or did anything in His entire life except what He had received a commandment to do; therefore, He did not give a piece of revelation to be completed later by others, but is at the same time the complete and final revelation of God, fulfilling and concluding all previous prophecy. In the past God spoke to the fathers many times and in many different ways through the prophets, but He has spoken to us in these last days through the Son (Hebrews 1:1). Yes, the prophecy that went out to the fathers in the old days is thanks to Him; it was the Spirit of Christ who testified in the prophets, 1 Peter 1:11, and His testimony had Christ as its content, Revelation 19:10. The preaching of Christ was therefore in the deepest sense self-preaching, a proclamation of His own person and work. When He arose, He joined John and the Old Testament prophets in saying: "The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the Gospel" (Matthew 3:2, Matthew 4:17). But the former prophets and also John the Baptist were wayfarers and saw the kingdom of God still in the future, Matthew 11:10-11; but now the time is fulfilled and in the person of Christ the kingdom itself has come down from heaven to earth. For God is the King and Father of it, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 5:35, Matthew 5:45 etc., but the Father has given it to Him. But the Father has ordained it for Him, that He should give it to His disciples according to the Father’s good pleasure, Matthew 11:27, Luke 12:32, Luke 22:29. In His sermon Christ unfolded the origin and nature of that kingdom, the way that leads to it and the goods it contains, its slow development

and its final completion. He did not do this in the form of philosophical reasoning or scholarly discourse, but used proverbs and parables, derived His images from natural phenomena or everyday occurrences, and always spoke to the crowds in such a vivid and visual manner that they could hear and understand. Mark 4:33. If many did not understand his words ■ and resisted, it was a proof of the hardness of their hearts and also of the good pleasure of the Father, who hides the things of the kingdom from the wise and prudent and reveals them to the children, Matthew 11:27, Matthew 13:13-15. But in themselves they were always simple and intelligible, even though they dealt with the deepest mysteries of the kingdom of God. For he himself in his person is the Son and the heir, the dispenser and the distributor, the revealer and the dispenser of it. Jesus declared the Father to us in his appearance, in his word and in his work, John 1:18, John 19:6. He who has seen Him has seen the Father, John 14:9. The word which Christ proclaimed was therefore in the essence no other than that which had already been made known in the days of the Old Testament. It contained both law and gospel; but Jesus was not a new giver of law, supplementing and correcting the law of God in the Old Testament; and the gospel proclaimed by Him was no other than that which had already been revealed by God from paradise. Jesus did not come to earth to dispense with the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17). And He fulfilled them by cleansing them of all false interpretations and human additions, and by bringing them to their full realization in His own person and work. Therefore Christ stands in a different relation to the Law than Moses, and in a different relation to the Gospel than the prophets. For the Law was given by Moses, and the Gospel was proclaimed by the prophets, but grace and truth were given by Jesus Christ, John 1:17. Moses carried the law on two stone tablets in his hand and could very well have been replaced by another at the time of the transfer. And likewise the prophets were preachers of the Gospel, but they were not the Gospel itself. Christ, however, carried the law within His bowels, and accomplished the will of God completely and without any defect; and He was not merely a preacher of the Gospel, but the very substance of that Gospel, the greatest gift which God has given to the world. Grace and truth were made through Him, and inseparable from His person, The words of Jesus are accompanied and confirmed by his works. These also belonged to his office, to the accomplishment of the will of the Father, John 4:34. He did them not of Himself, but the Father gave Him all things in His hand, Matthew 11:27, John 3:35, and the Son did nothing but what He saw the Father doing, John 5:19; it was the Father Himself, abiding in the Son, who accomplished these works, John 14:10. And as they were divine in origin, so also they all bore a divine character; not only because they were miracles and departed from the ordinary order of nature, but also because they were uncommon and were not performed by other men. For while these always follow their own will, Jesus never sought after himself or pleased himself, Romans 15:3, but, denying his own will, accomplished the will of the Father. Yet among all those works, miracles occupy a large place. On the one hand they are signs and proofs of Jesus' divine mission and power, John 2:11, John 2:24, John 4:54, John 7:31, John 9:16, John 10:37, John 11:4, etc., and on the other hand they are always such acts, which have the purpose of man's physical and spiritual salvation. The miracles of Christ are virtually all miracles of healing and redemption, and thus belong to the exercise of his priestly ministry. This is already evident from the self-limitation imposed by Christ in performing miracles. In the desert He had resisted Satan's temptation to use His divine power for His own benefit. And all His life He rejected this same temptation. What He says in the Garden of Gethsemane, that He could pray to His Father and that He would send more than twelve legions to Him, Matthew 26:53, applies to His whole

public activity. He continually refuses to make signs to satisfy the curiosity of the people, Matthew 12:38, Matthew 16:1, John 4:48; not infrequently He sees the revelation of His power limited by the unbelief which He encounters, Matthew 13:58; and again and again the people who are miraculously healed by Him are ordered not to tell anyone about it, Mark 1:34, Mark 1:44, Mark 3:12 etc. Jesus did not want to give food for the wrong thoughts that were cherished among the people concerning the Messiah and his works.

Furthermore, the works that Jesus performed also belong to his priestly ministry, because they are demonstrations of his inner compassion. We read about this again and again, Matthew 9:36, Matthew 14:14, Matthew 15:32 etc., and the evangelist Matthew sees in the healings a confirmation of Isaiah's prophecy that He took our sicknesses upon Himself and carried them away, Matthew 8:17. Elsewhere this prophecy is applied to the death of Christ, through which He atoned for our sins, John 1:29, 1 Peter 2:24. But sin and sickness belong together. As the merciful High Priest, Christ has not only taken away our sin, but therein also the cause of all our misery. And in the various miracles that He performed, in the exorcism of the dead, in the healing of the blind and deaf, of the lame and crippled, in the raising of the dead and in the control of nature, He provides conclusive proof that He can completely deliver us from all our misery. There is no guilt so heavy, no sin so great, no misery so deep, or He can remove it by His priestly mercy and His royal power. Of course the priestly activity is especially evident in His last suffering and death, but the surrender of His soul as a ransom for many, is a completion of the service to which He came on earth, and which He practiced throughout His life, Matthew 20:28. As the Lamb of God He bore the sin of the world always, John 1:29. His humiliation began with the incarnation, has been a continuing life of obedience out of suffering, and has been completed in the death of the cross, Php 2:8, Hebrews 5:8. Christ was ordained by the Father not only as a prophet but also as a priest; and like his prophetic office, he also fulfilled his priestly office throughout his life.

Yet it is remarkable that Christ never mentions the name of priest in the New Testament, except in the letter to the Hebrews. His life and death are indeed repeatedly presented as a sacrifice, but the name of priest is only used in that letter. There is a good reason for this. Christ is certainly a priest, but He is a priest in a completely different sense than the priests under the Old Testament and according to the Law of Moses. They were priests only, but not prophets and kings; they lived and served for a short time, and then had to be replaced by others; they offered sacrifices of swine and goats, which could not take away sins. But all this does not apply to Christ; even He was descended from the tribe of Judah and therefore, according to the law of Moses, had no claim to the priesthood, Hebrews 7:14.

According to the letter to the Hebrews, Christ was not a priest after the order of Aaron, but after that of Melchizedek. This was already foretold in the 1 Oth Psalm: the Messiah would be a priest, who would attach royal dignity to himself and would remain a priest forever. The letter to the Hebrews elaborates on this and explains at length that Christ, not according to the order of Aaron but according to that of Melchizedek, is a priest, because He is at the same time king; is completely righteous and sinless. He is a King of righteousness; He remains a priest forever and is never replaced by another; He brings an offering, not of heifers or goats, but of His own body and blood; thereby acquiring perfect salvation for His people; and thus He brings an everlasting peace and is a King of peace, Hebrews 7:1-28, Hebrews 8:1-13, Hebrews 9:1-28, Hebrews 10:1-39. The practical admonition, which is derived from this for the Jewish Christians, who were exposed to the

danger of apostasy, is this, that they have no reason to go back, but rather have the calling to go forward, Hebrews 6:1. What the Old Testament priests represented only symbolically and typically through their sacrifices and intercessions, namely to open up the access of the people to God's presence, has been completely and eternally accomplished by Christ. There, through Him, a new and living way has been opened that leads to eternal life, through which Christians may approach the throne of grace with complete boldness and assurance of faith.

Just as the priestly ministry is closely connected with the prophetic ministry, so with the priestly again is the royal ministry of Christ. One of the peculiarities of the priesthood of Christ is that it is connected with the kingship, Psalms 110:4, Hebrews 7:17. It was, after all, Israel's calling to be a priestly kingdom to the Lord, Exodus 19:6; and though the offices among Israel were separate, the prophecy held out the prospect that the Messiah, the sprout that would come forth out of his own place and build the temple of the Lord, would bear the jewel (the royal majesty), and in this majesty sit on his throne and reign. He would be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace would be between the two, that is, between his priestly and his kingly office there would be complete agreement and unanimous deliberation about the peace that had to be established for his people. The Messiah, who combines the royal and priestly office within himself, will thus bring about that perfect peace which his people need (Zechariah 6:13). This union with the priestly office gives the Messiah's kingship its own character. He will come forth from the house of David, 2 Samuel 7:16, but at a time when it will have come to its decline, Micah 5:1. And He Himself shall be a king, righteous, endowed with help and salvation by God, but also humble, and for the sign of His humility riding on a donkey, yes on a colt, a donkey's young, Zechariah 9:9. And just as the Messiah will not display earthly glory and power in his appearance, so also his kingdom will not be established by force of arms. On the contrary, the Lord will 'in his days remove the chariots from Ephraim and the horses from Jerusalem, and the bow shall be removed; and Messiah shall speak peace to the nations, and his dominion shall be from the sea to the sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, Zechariah 9:10, cf. Psalms 72:1-20. This prophecy of the future Messiah has been completely fulfilled in Christ. The New Testament repeatedly and emphatically states that He is of the house of David, and therefore has a right to His throne, also according to the laws of the Kingdom of Israel. Both genealogies, Matthew 1:1-25 and Luke 3:1-38, make Him known as the Son of David. The angel announced to Mary that God the Lord would give her son, who would be called the Son of the Highest, the throne of his father David and would appoint him king over the house of Jacob for all eternity, Luke 1:32-33. He is universally recognized as the son of David, Matthew 9:27, Matthew 12:23, Matthew 15:22, Matthew 20:30, Matthew 21:9, Romans 1:3. And with this Davidic descent is connected the idea, that He is a king and has the right to a kingdom, Luke 23:42.

Also in His own consciousness Jesus is a king. It is true that He preaches about the kingdom of God, and He repeatedly says that God is the king of that kingdom, Matthew 5:35, Matthew 18:23, Matthew 22:2. But then He is, in distinction from the servants, the Son of the King, Matthew 21:37, yes also King Himself, Matthew 25:31 f. But He is still King in another sense than that in which the Jews of that time expected their Messiah to be. He never asserted before the authorities of the Jewish people, before King Herod or before the Roman emperor his legitimate claims to the throne of his father David. He resists the temptation to gain dominion over the world by worldly means, Matthew 4:8-10. When, after the miraculous feeding, the multitudes wanted to take Him by the

horns and make Him their king, He avoided them and sought the solitude of the mountain for prayer, John 6:15, Matthew 14:23. He did indeed repeatedly profess His royal power, but He showed it■not in wielding power, like the rulers of the nations, but in serving and giving His soul as a ransom for many, Matthew 20:25-28. His kingship was manifested in the power with which He spoke, proclaimed His laws for the kingdom of heaven, subdued the people, commanded sickness and death to be spared, and Himself gave up His life on the cross, in order to take it again, and once as King and Judge to judge the living and the dead. But this spiritual significance which Christ, in accordance with the prophecy of the Old Testament, attributes to his kingship, must not lead us to think that he was not actually a king and that he only carried this name metaphorically. Just as He is not according to the order of Aaron but according to that of Melchizedek, and for that very reason is a better priest than the priests of the Old Testament, so He is also, because He is a different king from the rulers of the nations, not a lesser but a better king. He is the true king, the real king, and the kings of the earth are but in image and likeness. He is the King of kings, the chief of the kings of the earth, the King who reigns in and out, spiritually and physically, in heaven and on earth, to the ends of the earth and forever.

He never forsakes His rightful claim to this perfect and eternal kingship, neither for God nor for man. Also during His stay on earth He has never renounced His divine nor His human rights. He did not try to obtain it by force, but only in the way of perfect obedience to God. But in so doing He has strengthened His claims. In His humiliation He proved to be the Son of God and must therefore also be the heir of all things. To show that He is king in this true sense, He entered Jerusalem on the Sunday that opens the week of suffering. There was now no danger that the nature of His kingship would be misunderstood. For a life of servile obedience, in which He had repelled all earthly power by word and deed, now lay behind Him; the enmity between Him and the people was already at its height; and this, the same week, they would lay their hands on Him and deliver Him to death. Whereas in the past he had evaded the attempt to make him king, now he takes the initiative in his royal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 22:1). Before he dies, he must therefore once more, openly, make himself known to all the people as the Messiah born of David and sent by God. But then, in accordance with the prophecy, he also made himself known to them as a king who was humble and rode on the foal of a donkey. He was condemned by the Sanhedrin and Pilate for his Messianic character, for his divine sonship and his Davidic kingship; he was a King, Matthew 27:11; the inscription above his cross testified to this, against the will of the Jews, John 19:19-22. The whole of Jesus' life, both in His prophetic and royal activity and in His priestly activity, ends in death. Death is the end of His life; Jesus came to die. He himself was clearly aware of this. Already at His first, public appearance in the synagogue of Nazareth, He applied to Himself the prophecy about the suffering servant of the Lord, Luke 4:16 ff, and was thus clearly aware that He would be led to the slaughter like a lamb. He was the Lamb who bore the sin of the world, John 1:29. The temple of his body was to be torn down, but also raised up again after three days, John 2:19. Just as Moses exalted the serpent in the wilderness, so according to God's counsel the Son of Man must be exalted on the Cross, John 3:14, cf. John 12:32-33. He was the grain of wheat that had to fall into the earth and die in order to bear fruit, John 12:24.

Thus Jesus, from the very beginning of his public activity, indicates death as the end of his life in pictures and parables. But as that end came nearer, He expressed Himself more clearly and unequivocally. Especially after Peter, in the name of all the disciples, had confessed Jesus as the

Christ, the Son of the living God, at a decisive hour near Caesarea Philippi, He began to show them that He had to go to Jerusalem and suffer a lot from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day (Matthew 16:21). The disciples did not understand this and did not want to know anything about it. Peter even took Him aside confidentially and began to chastise Him, saying : 1 But Jesus saw this as a temptation and answered him sternly: Get away from me, Satan; you are a stumbling block to me, for you do not consider the things that are God's, but man's. Matthew 16:22-23. Christ's steadfastness in surrendering to death received the seal of divine approval a few days later on the Mount of Transfiguration; his going to Jerusalem was in accordance with the law and the prophets (Moses and Elijah) and with the will of the Father; he remained the beloved Son in whom the Father was pleased, and the disciples were not, like Peter, to rebuke him, but to listen to him respectfully and in submission. Matthew 17:1-8.

Yet this death is not sought by Jesus. He did not challenge the Pharisees and the Scriptures to lay hands on Him. Although He knew that His hour had come (John 12:23, John 17:1), it was still Judas who voluntarily sold and betrayed Him, it was the servants of the chief priests and Pharisees who imprisoned Him, the members of the Sanhedrin and the governor Pontius Pilate who sentenced Him and put Him to death. God's counsel does not exclude historical circumstances and does not cancel out man's guilt. On the contrary, He was given by God's determinate counsel and foreknowledge, but in such a way that the Jews took Him and attached Him to the Cross by the hands of the unrighteous and killed Him (Acts 2:23 and Acts 4:28). This death of Christ is at the center of the Apostolic proclamation, not only later but from the very beginning, Acts 2:23 ff, 3:28, 2: 23 ff, 3: 14 ff, 4: 10 ff etc., and not only with Paul but with all the apostles. Only after the resurrection of Christ was the necessity and significance of Jesus' suffering and death understood through the instruction of the Holy Spirit. That suffering and death was certainly also a fulfillment of His prophetic activity, a proof of the truth of His teaching, and a seal of His whole life. After all, under Pontius Pilate he made a good confession, 1 Timothy 6:13, and in his innocent and patient suffering he left us an example, so that we would follow in his footsteps, 1 Peter 2:21. He is the faithful Witness, Revelation 1:5, Revelation 3:14, who as apostle and high priest is the workman and the substance of our confession, Hebrews 3:1, and begets and completes faith in us, Hebrews 12:2. And likewise the death of Christ is a revelation of His royal power, for His death was not a fate that He had to suffer, but an act that He Himself willingly and voluntarily performed, John 10:17-18; His death on the cross was an exaltation above the earth and a triumph over His enemies, John 3:14, John 8:28, John 12:32, John 12:34, because it was the most perfect obedience to the commandment of the Father, John 14:31. But we must not stop at this significance of Christ's death, according to the Apostolic teaching. In his death, Jesus was not only a witness and a guide, a martyr and a hero, a prophet and a king. But above all he was also active as a priest; his high priestly office comes most strongly and clearly to the fore in his death; according to the teachings of the entire Holy Scripture, his death was a voluntary sacrifice, offered by him to the Father. According to the teachings of the entire Holy Scripture, his death was a voluntary offering to the Father. When the New Testament presents the death of Christ under this name, it is in close connection with the Old Testament. Sacrifices have existed from ■ the oldest times; they occur with Cain and Abel, with Noah and the patriarchs, and are found with all peoples and in all religions. Generally speaking, their purpose is to secure or regain the favor and fellowship of the Godhead by offering a material gift, consisting of living or inanimate objects which are destroyed in a ceremonial way. The Lord also included these sacrifices in the legislation for

His people Israel. But here they were given a different place and a modified meaning.

First of all they were limited to the offering of cattle (cattle, sheep, lambs, goats, goats, pigeons) and fruits of the land (flour, oil, wine, incense, spices) and were to be brought only to Jehovah, the God of Israel; the offering of human beings, the drinking of blood, mutilation of the body was forbidden, Genesis 22:11, Deuteronomy 12:23, Deuteronomy 14:1, Deuteronomy 18:10, etc., and likewise all sacrifices to Jehovah, the God of Israel, were forbidden, And likewise all sacrifices to idols, to the dead, to holy animals were contrary to God's will, Exodus 32:4 ff, Numbers 25:2 ff, Hosea 11:2, Jeremiah 11:12, Ezekiel 8:10, Psalms 106:28. In the other place, they were far behind in value to the moral commandments; obedience is better than sacrifice and notice than the fat of rams; the Lord has pleasure in beneficence and not in sacrifice, in the knowledge of God more than in burnt offerings, 1 Samuel 15:22, Hosea 6:6, Hosea 14:2, Micah 6:6, Micah 6:8, Psalms 40:7, Psalms 50:7-14, Psalms 51:18-19, Proverbs 21:3. In the third place, the sacrifices were in the service of the promise, just like the priesthood, the temple, the altar and the whole legal dispensation. They did not bring about the covenant of grace, for this rests solely on God's gracious election, but only, served to maintain and confirm this covenant among Israel. As the whole nation of Israel was by virtue of God's election and calling a kingdom of priests, Exod. 19 : 6, and the priesthood was but a subordinate and temporary institution, the sacrifices (especially the burnt offerings, sin offerings and trespass offerings) were but the ceremonial indication of the way in which the sins committed by the Israelites within the covenant, that is to say, not with a raised hand but by error (unknowing, unforeseen), could be atoned for, Leviticus 4:22, Leviticus 4:27, Leviticus 5:15, Leviticus 5:18. Numbers 15:25, Numbers 35:11, Numbers 35:15, Joshua 20:3, Joshua 20:9. For the serious, deliberate sins which broke the covenant and incurred God's wrath, although they were often punished civilly, there was only an appeal to the mercy of God, who then, though also through the intervention of persons such as Abraham, Genesis 18:23-33, Moses, Exodus 32:11-14, Numbers 14:15-20, Pinehas, Numbers 25:11, Amos, Amos 7:4-6, cf. Jeremiah 15:1, for his name's sake forgive, Exodus 33:19, Exodus 34:6, Psalms 78:38, Psalms 79:8-9, Isaiah 43:25, Ezek. 36:52, Micah 7:18 etc. By this whole service, God taught his people in the first place, that the covenant of grace, with all its goods and benefits, was due solely to his mercy; it had its origin and basis in his undeserved mercy: I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful, and I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, Exod. But furthermore, through the ceremonial institutions and laws, the Lord made His people understand that He could not bestow the benefit of the forgiveness of sins except by the way of reconciliation. Sin is always of such a nature that it arouses God's wrath and makes man guilty and unclean. Therefore, in general, a sacrifice is necessary to appease God's wrath, to free man from his guilt and impurity, and to restore him to the favor and fellowship of God. In the case of sins for which the law does not specify a particular sacrifice as the means of atonement, that atonement is, as it were, rarely left to God; it is then He Himself who atones for the sins and in that way forgives them; forgiveness presupposes atonement and includes it, Psalms 65:4, Psalms 78:38, Psalms 79:9, Proverbs 16:6, Isaiah 27:9, Jeremiah 18:23, Ezekiel 16:63, etc. But even in the case of sins that have gone astray and can be atoned for in accordance with the law by a certain offering, it is God Himself who, by means of the sacrifice, priest and altar, covers and takes away the sins, Leviticus 17:11, Numbers 8:19; the whole service of atonement emanates from Him and is ordained by Him. The blood of the sacrificial animal serves as the actual means of atonement. The blood is the seat of the soul, the seat of the animal life principle, and was therefore given by the Lord on the altar to make

atonement for the souls, Leviticus 17:11. But in order to be a means of atonement this blood first had to be poured out in death by the slaughter of the sacrificial animal, which the sinning man brought to the temple and on which he had laid his hands, and then sprinkled all around the altar by the priest, Exodus 29:15-16, Exodus 29:19-20 etc.; the laying on of hands, the slaughter and the sprinkling of the altar indicated the way in which the blood as the seat of the soul became a means of atonement. And when the blood had thus atoned for, covered, and taken away the sins, then the guilt was forgiven, the blemish cleansed, the fellowship of the covenant with God restored. Priesthood and people, temple and altar and all the instruments of service were appropriated to the Lord through the blood; they were all sanctified, that the Lord might dwell in the midst of the children of Israel and be their God. Exodus 29:43-46. But the whole of this sacrificial service was provisional, and possessed only a shadow of the future goods, Hebrews 10:1. The tabernacle in the wilderness was but a picture of the true sanctuary, Hebrews 8:5. The priests were sinners themselves, who had to make atonement not only for the people's sins, but also for their own, Hebrews 7:27, Hebrews 9:7, and were prevented by death from ever remaining, Hebrews 7:23. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away the sins nor cleanse the consciences, Hebrews 9:9, Hebrews 9:13, Hebrews 10:4; therefore they had to be brought again and again, Hebrews 10:1. In a word, it was all external, weak, unprofitable, not un- risible, Hebrews 7:18, Hebrews 8:7, and pointed to a better future. Pious Israel learned to understand this better and better in the course of the centuries; they eagerly looked forward to the day when the Lord would establish a new covenant, would Himself bring about true atonement and would allow His people to share in the full enjoyment of the benefits of forgiveness and renewal, Jeremiah 31:33 ff, Jeremiah 33:8, Ezekiel 11:20, Ezekiel 36:25 ff. This expectation receives its most beautiful expression, especially in Isaiah; his book of comfort begins with the proclamation to Jerusalem that her struggle is fulfilled, that her iniquity is forgiven, that she has received from the hand of the Lord double for all her sins, Isaiah 40:2, and then unfolds the prophecy of the servant of the Lord, who takes our sicknesses and sorrows, our transgression and punishment upon himself, and thereby brings us healing and peace, Isaiah 53:2 ff. In line with the Old Testament, the New Testament sees the death of Christ as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus did not only say that He had come to fulfill the law and the prophets and all God's righteousness (Matthew 3:15), but He also applied the sacrifice to our sins, Matthew 5:17. He also applied to Himself the prophecy of Isaiah and saw Himself as the servant of the Lord, who was anointed with His Spirit and had to preach the Gospel to the poor, Luke 4:17 ff. He came, according to the commandment of the Father, to lay down his life and take it again, to give life to his sheep and through death to prepare his flesh and his blood for a food and drink that shall last unto eternal life, John 2:19, John 3:14, His death is the true sacrifice and the perfect fulfilment of all the sacrifices that were offered in accordance with the law in the days of the Old Testament.

Christ's death is the fullest surrender to the Father's will, a proof that He came not to be served but to serve, and in this way He becomes a ransom, a ransom price, by which many are ransomed from the power of sin under which they were captives, Matthew 20:28. It is the fulfillment of the covenant sacrifice, by which the Old Covenant was inaugurated, Exodus 24:8, and lays the foundation for the New Covenant, Matthew 26:28, Hebrews 9:15-22. It is called a victim and an offering, Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 9:26, and is the realisation of the thought of the paschal sacrifice, John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 5:6 etc., of the sin and guilt offering, Romans 8:3, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 13:11, 1 Peter 3:18, and of the sacrifice

on the Day of Atonement, Hebrews 2:17, Hebrews 9:12. And not only the sacrifices of the Old Testament have been fulfilled in Christ, but also all the requirements to which they had to conform and all the actions that took place. The priest who sacrificed had to be a man without defect, Leviticus 21:17 f., and so is Christ a high priest, holy, without defect, undefiled and separate from sinners, Hebrews 7:26. The animal that was sacrificed had to be without blemish and perfect, Leviticus 22:20 ff, and Christ is therefore a lamb, unsanctified and without blemish, 1 Peter 1:19. Just as the sacrificial animal had to be slaughtered by the hand of the priest, Exodus 29:11 ff, so Christ was also slaughtered as a lamb and bought us with His blood, Revelation 5:6, Revelation 5:9. No leg was to be broken on the paschal lamb, Exodus 12:46; therefore Christ also died without a leg being broken, John 19:36. After the slaughter, the priest took the blood of the sacrificial animal and sprinkled it into the sanctuary at the sin offering, Leviticus 16:15, Numbers 19:4, and on the people at the covenant offering, Exodus 24:8; thus Christ also entered once into the true sanctuary by His own blood, Hebrews 9:13, and sprinkled it on His people, 1 Peter 1:2, Hebrews 12:24. At the sin offering the blood of the animal was brought into the sanctuary, but the body was burned with fire outside the camp, Leviticus 16:27; in the same way Christ, to sanctify the people by His own blood, suffered outside the gate, Hebrews 13:13. And just as in the Old Testament cult the blood, as the seat of life, by its outpouring in death and its sprinkling on the altar, was the actual means of kissing, so also in the New Covenant the blood of Christ is the working cause of the atonement, forgiveness and purification of our sins, Matthew 26:28, Acts 20:28, Romans 3:25, Romans 5:9, 1 Corinthians 11:25, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:20, Hebrews 9:12, Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 12:24, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 1:19, 1 John 1:7, 1 John 1:6, Revelation 1:5, Revelation 5:9, etc. When the New Testament speaks of Christ's suffering and death as an offering in this sense, it does use an image and derives the words and expressions from the sacrificial cult of the Old Testament; but it must not be inferred from this that this image is accidental and unreal, and can be surrendered by us without harm. On the contrary, Scripture proceeds from the idea that the sacrifices in the days of the Old Testament were image and shadow and received their fulfillment in the sacrifice of Christ. Just as Christ was not a prophet, priest and king by way of comparison but in a true sense, so too his surrender in death was not a sacrifice in a figurative but in the most essential and true sense of the word. We cannot, therefore, do without the designation of Christ's death as a sacrifice, but with the word we immediately lose the matter itself. And that matter is of the greatest value to us; it is the source of our salvation.

After all, if Christ's death is called a sacrifice, it means that He gave Himself up as a sacrifice and a victim, to please God (Ephesians 5:2). Certainly, Christ was a gift and proof of God's love, John 3:16; God confirmed His love for us, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us, Romans 5:8; He did not even spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, Romans 8:32. The birth, life and also suffering and death of Christ indicate and assure us of the love of God. But this love of God does not set aside His righteousness, but rather incorporates it. It is a love that does not rob sin of its character as sin, but opens a way to its forgiveness through reconciliation. It was according to the commandment of the Father that Christ should die, Matthew 26:54, Luke 24:25, Acts 2:23, Acts 4:28, and by his death he fulfilled God's justice, Matthew 3:15, Matthew 5:17, John 10:17-18, Romans 3:25-26. In the death of Christ, God, in forgiving the sins that had previously taken place under His forbearance, maintained His perfect justice, and at the same time paved the way for Himself, while maintaining His justice, to justify all those who are of the faith of Jesus. In the second place, Christ's sacrifice is a demonstration, both of his ■lateral' and ■perpetual'

obedience. In former times, passive obedience was so emphasized that the immediate obedience almost disappeared behind it; but nowadays, so much emphasis is placed on the latter that the former cannot come into its own. According to Scripture, however, the two go together and are to be regarded as two sides of the same thing. From the moment of his conception and birth Christ has always been obedient to the Father; his whole life is to be regarded as the fulfilment of God's righteousness, of his law and commandment, Matthew 3:15, Matthew 5:17, John 4:34, John 6:38, Romans 9:19; coming into the world he said: Behold, I come to do your will, O God, Hebrews 10:5-9. But this obedience was first fully manifested in death, and then in the death of the cross, Php 2:8; the New Testa¬ment is full of it, that first through the suffering and death of Christ sin was atoned for, forgiven, taken away. Not only the fulfilment of the Law, but also the punishment belonged to the Father's will, which Christ had to fulfil.

Thus, in the third place, the sacrifice of Christ is connected with us and our sins. Already in the Old Testament we read that Abraham offered a ram for a burnt offering in his son's place (Genesis 22:13), that the Israelite laid hands on a sacrificial animal in his place (Leviticus 16:21), and that the Lord's servant was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (Isaiah 53:5). In the same way the New Testament makes a very close connection between Christ's sacrifice and our sins. The Son of man came into the world to give his soul (his life) as a ransom in the place of many (Matthew 20:28, 1 Timothy 2:6). He was delivered up for, or the sake of our sins, Romans 4:25, died in respect of our sins, Romans 8:3, Hebrews 10:6, Hebrews 10:18 1 Peter 3:18, 1 John 2:2, 1 John 4:10, or, as it is usually expressed, for our sakes or our sins, Luke 22:19-20, John 10:15, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:32, 1 Corinthians 15:3, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:10, Hebrews 2:9, 1 Peter 2:21, John 3:16, etc. The fellowship into which Christ entered according to these testimonies of Scripture is so profound and deep that we cannot even conceive of it or understand it. The word 'vicarious suffering' expresses it only in a weak and inadequate way, and it goes far beyond our imagination and thought. There are some analogies (similarities) among people who can convince us of its possibility. We know of parents who suffer for and with their children, of heroes who sacrifice themselves for their fatherland, of noble men and women who sow what others will reap after them. Everywhere the law continues that some work, suffer, fight, so that others may enter into their labor and enjoy the fruit. The death of one is the bread for another. The grain of wheat must die in order to bear fruit. The mother gives life to her child in childbirth. But all these examples are mere comparisons and cannot be equated with the community in which Christ entered us. Hardly anyone will die for a righteous person, although it remains possible that someone will die for a good person. But God confirms His love for us, that while we were still sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:7-8).

There was actually no fellowship between Christ and us, but only separation and opposition. For He was the only begotten and beloved Son of the Father, and we were all like the prodigal son. He was righteous and holy and without sin, and we were sinners, guilty before God and unclean from head to foot. Nevertheless, Christ has communed with us, not only in the physical sense, by taking on our nature, our flesh and blood, but also in the juridical and ethical sense, by entering into communion with our sin and death. He stands in our place; He puts Himself in that relation to the law of God in which we stood to it; He takes upon Himself our guilt, our sickness, our pain, our punishment; He, who knew no sin, is made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of

God in Him, 2 Corinthians 5:21. He became a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law. He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again for them. 2 Corinthians 5:15.

Here is the mystery of godliness, the mystery of divine love. We do not understand the vicarious suffering of Christ, because we, being haters of God and hating each other, cannot even remotely calculate what love is capable of and what eternal, infinite, divine love can do. But we do not need to understand this mystery: we may believe it, rest in it, glory in it and rejoice. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brings us peace was upon Him, and through His wounds we are healed. We all erred like sheep; we turned every one to his own way; but the Lord hath made all our iniquities to run to Him, Isaiah 53:5-6.

What shall we say then to these things? If God is for us, who will be against us? Who also did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how will he not also with him give us all things? Who shall bring an accusation against the elect of God? It is God who justifies: who is it that condemns? It is Christ who died, yea what is more, who was also raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also prays for us, Romans 8:31-34.

01.18. The work of Christ in his exaltation.

18. The work of Christ in his exaltation. The benefits, which Christ has acquired for us by his great love, are so rich, that they are almost impossible to enumerate and never to estimate at their full value. They comprise nothing less than complete and total salvation; they consist in the redemption of the greatest evil, sin with all its consequences of misery and death, and in the bestowal of the highest good, communion with God and all its blessings. These benefits will be discussed more fully later, but they must nevertheless be mentioned here, in order to give a better understanding of the deep significance of Christ's work. Of all the benefits that we owe to Christ's profound humiliation, reconciliation takes precedence. This is expressed in the New Testament by two words, which unfortunately have been transcribed in the same way in our translation. The first word (or rather different words, but from the same root) occurs in Romans 3:25, Hebrews 2:17, 1 John 2:2, 1 John 4:10, and is the translation of a Hebrew word, which originally means to cover, and then indicates the reconciliation brought about by the sacrifice. The idea is that the sacrifice, or rather the sacrificial blood - for the blood as the seat of life is, when poured out and sprinkled, the actual means of atonement, Leviticus 17:11, Hebrews 9:12 - covers the sin (guilt, impurity) of the sacrificer before God and thus robs him of its power and effect to incur God's wrath. Because of the pouring and sprinkling of the blood, into which the life, the soul of an innocent and flawless animal, is poured out, God renounces His wrath, changes His disposition towards the sinner, forgives him his transgression and allows him back into His presence and fellowship. And the forgiveness that comes after the reconciliation is so complete, that it can be called an erasing, Psalms 51:3, Psalms 51:11, Isaiah 43:25, Isaiah 44:22, a casting behind the back, Isaiah 38:17, a casting of the sins into the depths of the sea, Micah 7:19, can be called. The atonement removes sins as completely as if they had never been committed; it drives out wrath and makes God's face shine with fatherly favour and pleasure upon his people. In the Old Testament all this pointed to Christ's sacrifice in the future; in the New Testament it has all been completely fulfilled in Christ. He is the High Priest who, through his sacrificial blood, covers our sins before God, turns away his wrath and shares his grace and favor with us. He is the means of atonement, Romans 3:25, the reconciliation, 1 John 2:2, 1 John 4:10, who works for us with God as the high priest and atones for the sins of the people, Hebrews 2:17. There are many who reject such an objective reconciliation of Christ with God for us, and say that God is love, that He does not need to be reconciled, and that such reconciliation belongs only to a lower, lawless, Old Testament conception of God, which is precisely condemned and set aside in the New Testament. But they forget, that sin, not first in the Mosaic law, but also before and outside it, and likewise in the New Testament, because of its guilty and unholy character arouses God's wrath and deserves punishment, Genesis 2:17, Genesis 3:14 ff, Romans 1:18, Romans 5:12, Romans 6:23, Galatians 3:10, Ephesians 2:3; that Christ and his sacrifice are not only a gift and revelation of God's love, but also of his righteousness, Luke 24:46, Acts 4:28, Romans 3:25; and that the forgiving love of God does not exclude the atonement, but presupposes and confirms it. For forgiveness is always an entirely voluntary and gracious act of God; it is based on the idea that God has the right to punish, and now consists in such remission of the penalty as is in accordance with the maintenance and

recognition of that right. To deprive God of the right to punish beforehand, on the other hand, is not only to undermine the guilty and unholy nature of sin, but also to undermine the gracious and forgiving love of God. It ceases to be a personal, voluntary, gracious act and is changed into a natural process. Scripture, however, teaches that Zion is redeemed by right, and that Christ, by his sacrifice, satisfied that right of God and reconciled his displeasure with sin, Isaiah 1:27, Romans 5:9-10, 1 Corinthians 15:18, Galatians 3:13. From this objective reconciliation, which Christ brought about for us with God, is now distinguished that other, which is indicated in the New Testament by a special, second word. This word occurs in Romans 5:10-11, and 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, and originally has the meaning of exchange, substitution, settlement, and in these places it designates the new, gracious disposition which God has assumed toward the world on the basis of the sacrifice made by Christ. Because Christ, by dying, covered our sins and averted God's wrath, God establishes a different, reconciled relationship with the world and says so to us in His Gospel, which is therefore called the word of reconciliation. This reconciliation, too, is something objective; it is not something that is first brought about by our faith and conversion, but it rests on the atonement made by Christ, consists in the reconciled, gracious relation of God to us, and is received and accepted by us through faith. As God has renounced His hostile disposition on account of Christ's death, so we are exhorted to renounce our enmity on our part as well, to be reconciled to God, and to enter into the new, reconciled relationship in which God has set Himself apart to us. Everything has been accomplished; there is nothing left for us to do; we may rest with our whole soul and for all time in the perfect work of redemption that Christ has performed; we may accept by faith that God has renounced his wrath and in Christ is a reconciled God and Father to guilty and unholy sinners.

Whoever believes this Gospel of reconciliation with all his heart, receives immediately and in principle all the other benefits that are acquired through Christ. For in the peace relation, in which God places Himself to the world in Christ, all other goods of the covenant of grace are included; Christ is one and cannot be divided, nor taken in half; the chain of salvation is indissoluble: whom God predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; whom He justified, these He also glorified, Romans 8:30. All thus reconciled to God through the death of His Son receive the remission of sins, adoption as children, peace with God, the right to eternal life and a heavenly inheritance, Romans 5:1, Romans 8:17, Galatians 4:5. They have fellowship with Christ, have been crucified, buried, resurrected and put into heaven with Him, and are becoming more and more like His image, Romans 6:3 ff, Romans 8:29, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 4:22-24. They receive the Holy Spirit, who renews them, leads them in the truth, testifies of their childhood and seals them until the day of redemption, John 3:6, John 16:13, Romans 8:15, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Ephesians 4:30. In this fellowship of the Fathers, the Sons and the Holy Spirit, believers are free from the law, Romans 7:1, Galatians 2:19, Galatians 3:13, Galatians 3:25, Galatians 4:5, Galatians 5:1, and are exalted above all power of the world and death, of hell and Satan, John 16:33, Romans 8:38, 1 Corinthians 15:55, 1 John 3:8, Revelation 12:10. God is before them; who then shall be against them? Romans 8:31. The perfect sacrifice which Christ brought on the cross is of infinite power and dignity, abundantly sufficient for the atonement of the sins of the whole world. After all, Scripture always connects the whole world with redemption and re-creation. The world has been the object of God's love, John 3:16; Christ came to earth, not to condemn the world, but to save it, John 3:17, John 4:42, John 6:33, John 6:51, John 12:47; in him God has reconciled the world, all things in heaven and on earth, to himself, John 1:29, 2 Corinthians 5:9,

Colossians 1:20. As it was created by the Son, so it is also destined for the Son as its heir, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 1:2, Revelation 11:15. It is the Father's will that in the fullness of time all things should again be gathered together into Christ as the head, both those in heaven and those on earth, Eph. Times are coming of the re-establishment of all things; according to God's promise we expect new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness, Acts 3:21, 2 Peter 2:13, Revelation 21:1.

Because of this abundant sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for the whole world, the Gospel of reconciliation must also be preached to all creatures. The promise of the Gospel is that everyone who believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life; and this promise must be preached and presented indiscriminately to all peoples and human beings to whom God sends His Gospel according to His will, with the command of conversion and faith (Dordrecht Doctrines 11 5). Scripture leaves no room for the slightest doubt in this regard. Already in the Old Testament it is said that the Lord has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but in his conversion and life, Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 33:11, and that in the blessings of Israel all nations will one day share, Genesis 9:27, Genesis 12:3, Deuteronomy 32:21, Isaiah 42:1, etc. The missionary idea is already locked up in the promise of the Old Testament covenant of grace. But it is expressed clearly and unambiguously when Christ himself appears on earth and has completed his work. For he is the light of the world, the Saviour, who gives life to the world's sheep, John 3:19, John 4:42, John 6:33, John 6:51, John 8:12, who has other sheep besides Israel, whom he must bring to them, John 10:16, and who therefore foretells and commands that his Gospel shall be preached to the whole world, Matthew 24:14, Matthew 26:14, Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15. When the apostles, from the day of Pentecost onwards, bring this Gospel to Jews and Gentiles and found congregations all over the world, it may well be said that their sound has gone out over the whole earth and their words to the ends of the earth, Romans 10:18, that the saving grace of God has appeared to all mankind, Titus 2:11. Even the intercession for all men, and especially for kings and all who are in authority, is therefore good and pleasing to God, because He wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, 1 Timothy 2:4. And the delaying of Christ's return is a proof of God's forbearance, since He does not want any to perish, but all to come to repentance, 2 Peter 3:9. This general proclamation of the Gospel has its advantages for the world at large, and also for those who will never believe in Christ as their Savior. Through His incarnation, Christ honored the entire human race and became a brother of all men according to the flesh. The light shines in the darkness and by His coming into the world enlightens everyone; the world was made through Him and remains so, even though it has not known Him, John 1:3-5. Through the call to faith and repentance that Christ sends out to all who live under the Gospel, He bestows many external blessings in the family and society, in church and state, which are also enjoyed by those who do not respond to that call with their hearts. They are under the influence of the Word, are protected from terrible sins, and, unlike the heathen peoples, share in many external privileges. It should also be remembered that Christ, through his suffering and death, also secured the liberation of mankind from the servitude of destruction, the renewal of heaven and earth, the reunion and mutual reconciliation of all things, including angels and men. In Christ the organism of the human race, the world as God's creation, is preserved and restored, Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:20. But however much this absolute generality of the preaching of the Gospel and of the offer of grace must be resolutely maintained, it may not be inferred from it that therefore the benefits of Christ are acquired and destined for all men, head by head. This is already conclusively refuted by the

fact that in the days of the Old Testament God let the Gentiles walk in their own ways and chose for Himself only the people of Israel, and that also in the fullness of time, notwithstanding the fundamental generality of the Gospel proclamation, He limited the promises of His grace throughout all ages to a small part of mankind. The general statements which occasionally occur in Scripture, e.g., Romans 10:18, 1 Timothy 2:4, Titus 2:11, 2 Peter 3:9, cannot be understood by anyone in an absolute, and must be understood by all in a relative sense. They are all written under the deep impression of the difference between the division of the Old and the New Covenant. We can no longer imagine it, but the Apostles, who had all been brought up in the private life of Judaism, deeply felt the great change which Christ brought about in the relationship between the nations. They repeatedly spoke of this as a great mystery, which had been hidden for centuries, but which had now been revealed to His holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit, namely, that the Gentiles were co-heirs and members of the same body and co-partners of the promise in Christ. The middle wall of separation is broken down; the blood of the cross has made peace; in Christ there is no Jew or Greek, no barbarian or Scyth; all limitations of nation and language, of descent and color, of age and sex, of time and place, have been done away with; in Christ there is only a new creat- sel; the church is gathered from all genders and languages and people and nations, Romans 16:25-26, Ephesians 1:10, Ephesians 3:3-9,Colossians 1:26-27, 2 Timothy 1:10-11, Revelation 5:9, etc. But as soon as the Scriptures deal with the question of for whom Christ acquired His benefits, to whom He gives and applies them, and who therefore actually shares in them, they always relate His work to the church. Just as there was a special people in the Old Testament, whom God chose to inherit, so this idea of a special people of God also lives on in the New Testament. Certainly, this people no longer coincides with the fleshly descendants of Abraham; on the contrary, it is now called and gathered from Jews and Gentiles, from all nations and from all people. But this congregation is the actual assembly of God’s people, Matthew 16:18, Matthew 18:20, the New Testament Israel, 2 Corinthians 6:16, Galatians 6:16, the true seed of Abraham, Romans 9:8, Galatians 4:29. And for this people Christ shed His blood and obtained salvation. He came to save his people, Matthew 1:21, to give life to his sheep, John 10:11, to gather all God’s children into one, John 11:52, to give life to all those given to him by the Father and to raise them up at the last day, John 6:39, John 17:2, to obtain the congregation of God by his blood and to cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 5:25-26. As high priest, Christ does not even pray for the world, but for those whom the Father has given Him and who will believe in Him through the word of the apostles, John 17:9, John 17:20.

There is thus the most perfect harmony between the work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As many as were chosen by the Father are bought by the Son, and reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Scriptures explicitly tell us that there are many, very many, Isaiah 53:11-12, Matthew 20:28; Matthew 26:28, Romans 5:15, Romans 5:19, Hebrews 2:10, Hebrews 9:28; and it teaches us all this, not that we should limit and shrink this number according to our imperfect understanding and arbitrary measure, but that in the midst of all the strife and waste we should be firmly assured that the work of salvation is God’s work from beginning to end, and therefore, in spite of all opposition, is being continued and completed. The pleasure of the Lord continues happily through the hand of His servant, Isaiah 53:10.

Since the work of salvation is God’s work and his alone, the benefits of Christ could not be ours if he had not been raised from the dead and exalted at God’s right hand. A dead Jesus would be

enough for us, if Christianity were no more, and had to be no more for our salvation, than a doctrine that we had to instill in our minds, or a moral precept and example that we had to follow. But the Christian religion is something else and much more than that; it is the complete redemption of all mankind, of all the organs of humanity and of the whole world. And Christ came to earth to save the world in this full sense. He did not come only to acquire the possibility of salvation for us, and then to leave it to our free will whether we should make use of that possibility. But He humbled Himself and became obedient until the death of the cross, in order to make us truly, perfectly and eternally blessed. That is why His work did not end with His death and burial. It is true that in His supreme prayer He said that He had finished the work that the Father had given Him to do, John 17:4, and on the Cross He exclaimed, "It is finished", John 19:30. But this related to the work that Christ had to do on earth, it concerned the work of His humiliation, the acquisition of our salvation. And this work is finished, it is completed and perfect; salvation has been so completely acquired by his suffering and death that no creature can or need do anything more. From the acquisition of salvation, however, the application and distribution are distinct. And this is no less necessary than the other. What use would a treasure of goods be to us, which remained beyond our reach and were never put into our possession? What would be the profit of a Christ who died for our sins, but was not raised for our justification? What would be the profit of a Lord who had died, but was not exalted at the Father's right hand ? But now, as Christians, we confess and glorify a crucified and also risen Saviour, a humiliated and also glorified Saviour, in a King who is the first and also the last, who has been dead but now lives forever and ever, and who has the keys of hell and of death, Revelation 1:19. In His exaltation He rises and completes the building of which He laid the foundation in His first crucifixion. He is exalted far above all government and power and might, and given to the church as its head, that He might fulfill all in all, Ephesians 1:20-23. He was made Lord and Christ, Prince and Saviour by the resurrection, that He might give Israel repentance and the forgiveness of sins and put all enemies under His feet, Acts 2:36, Acts 5:31, 1 Corinthians 15:25. He is exalted by God and has received a name above all names, that in the name of Jesus every knee of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth may bow and every tongue may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, Php 2:9-11. The exaltation of Christ is therefore not an accidental appendage or arbitrary addition to the humiliation which He underwent in the days of His flesh. But it is, like humiliation, an indispensable part of the work of redemption, which Christ has to accomplish; in the exaltation humiliation receives its seal and crown; the same Christ, who came down to the lowest parts of the earth, has also ascended above all heavens, that He might accomplish all things, Ephesians 4:9-10. He must do it; it is His work; no one else can do it. The Father exalted Him" precisely because He humbled Himself so deeply, Phil. He has given the judgment to His Son, because he wanted to become the son of man, John 5:22. And the Son is exalted and continues His work in exaltation, to prove that He is the perfect, true and almighty Saviour. He will not rest until He can hand over the kingdom to God and the Father, completed, and present the congregation to Him as His bride, without spot or wrinkle (1 Corinthians 15:24, Ephesians 5:25). On the completion of this work of salvation hangs the honor of Christ Himself; His own name is involved, His own fame is involved. He exalts His own and brings them to where He is, that they may behold His glory, John 17:24 and He will Himself return at the end of the ages, to be glorified in His own saints, and to become wonderful in all who believe, 2 Thessalonians 1:10. The exaltation of Christ began, according to the Reformed confession, with his resurrection, but according to many other confessions already earlier, with his descent into

hell. However, this is interpreted very differently. The Greek Church understands it as meaning that Christ went down to the underworld with his divine nature and his human soul, in order to free the souls of the holy forefathers and to bring them with those of the murderer on the cross to paradise.

According to the Roman Church, Christ really did descend into the underworld with his soul and remained there as long as his body rested in the tomb, in order to free the souls of the pious, who remained there painlessly until salvation was attained, from the state of death, to bring them to heaven and share in the blissful sight of God. The Lutheran Church distinguishes between the actual resurrection of Christ and his resurrection or rising from the grave, and now teaches that Christ, in that brief interval, went to hell specifically, with soul and body both, in order to make known his victory there to devils and the damned. Many theologians, especially in recent times, interpret the Article to mean that Christ went to the underworld before his resurrection, either with the soul or the body, to preach the Gospel to those who had died in their sins and to give them the opportunity to turn around and believe. The great diversity of feelings proves that the original meaning of the words: descended into hell, has been lost. We do not know where the article comes from, nor what was actually meant by it. And the Scriptures know nothing of a literal, real, local descent of Christ into hell. In Acts 2:26, Peter applies the words of Psalms 16:1-11 to Christ: Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor deliver up thy Holy One to see corruption; but the annotation rightly notes that hell must be taken here in the sense of grave; although Christ was in paradise for his soul, he was in the grave for his body, and between his death and his resurrection he was in the state of death. In Ephesians 4:9 Paul says that the same One who ascended first descended to the lowest parts of the earth; but this is not a descent into hell, but either the incarnation of Christ on earth, or His death, in which He descended into the grave. And in 1 Peter 3:19-21, the Apostle in no way speaks of what Christ did between His Resurrection, but either of what He did before His incarnation by His Spirit in the days of Noah, or of what He did after His Resurrection, when He was already alive in the Spirit. There is not the slightest basis in Scripture for the doctrine of the local descent of Christ into the underworld or hell. The Reformed Church has therefore abandoned this interpretation of the Article and has either taken it to mean the infernal anguish and pain that Christ suffered before His death in Gethsemane and on Golgotha, or the state of death in which Christ found Himself during the time in which He lay in the grave. Both interpretations find their unity in the Scriptural idea that Christ’s surrender in death was the hour of his enemies and the power of darkness (Luke 22:53). Christ knew that this hour would come and voluntarily surrendered to it (John 8:20, John 12:23, John 12:27, John 13:1, John 17:1). In that hour, when He actually displayed the highest, spiritual power of His love and obedience (John 10:17-18), He seemed utterly powerless; the enemies did with Him what they pleased; the darkness triumphed over Him; indeed, not in a local, but in a spiritual sense, He came down to hell. But the power of darkness was not her own; it was given her by the Father (John 19:11). Christ’s enemies did not understand that they were merely instruments, performing, without knowing or intending to, what God’s hand and counsel had previously decreed should happen (Acts 2:23 and Acts 4:28). Even in His humiliation Christ was the mighty one, who voluntarily gave up His life and gave His soul as a ransom for many. - The hour of the power of darkness was His own, John 7:30, John 8:20; in His death He conquered death by the power of His love, by His complete self-denial, by His absolute obedience to the will of the Father. Therefore it was not possible that He, the Holy One, should be kept from death, or abandoned by God and given up to

destruction (Acts 2:25, Acts 2:27). On the contrary, the Father raised Him, Acts 2:24, Acts 3:26, Acts 5:30, Acts 13:37, Romans 4:25, 1 Corinthians 15:14, etc., and Christ Himself rose according to His own right and by His own power, John 11:25, Acts 2:31, Romans 1:4, Romans 14:9, 1 Corinthians 15:21, 1 Thessalonians 4:14, etc., and He is the Son of God. The sorrows of death were, as it were, the travail of his new life, Acts 2:24; Christ is the firstborn from the dead, Colossians 1:18. This resurrection consisted in the quickening of His dead body and in the resurrection from the grave. The opponents of the resurrection are in no small embarrassment with this fact. In the past they tried to explain the story of this event by supposing that Jesus had only been seemingly dead, or that his body had been stolen by the disciples, or that the disciples were suffering from self-deception and imagined they saw him. But all these suppositions have been abandoned one after another, and today many resort to spiritism and see in it a welcome explanation of the resurrection of Christ. They then say that something objective [objectively] occurred; the disciples did indeed see something; they saw an appearance of Christ who had died in body, but who lived on in spirit. The spirit of Christ has appeared to them and revealed itself to them. It is even said that God Himself caused the spirit of Christ to appear to them in order to lift them out of their sorrow and to make them aware of the victory over death and the immortality of life. The apparitions of Christ were then so much as a ■telegram from heaven", a divine message of the spiritual power of Christ. But this whole spiritist explanation is unworthy of the Scriptures and in direct conflict with their testimony. According to all the Evangelists, the tomb was found empty on the third day, and the first apparition took place on that same day, Matthew 28:6, Mark 16:6, Luke 24:3, John 20:2, 1 Corinthians 15:4-5. Without order or full enumeration the Evangelists and Paul tell us that Jesus appeared to the women, especially to Mary Magdalene, to Peter, to the disciples without and with Thomas, and to many others, even to five hundred brethren at one time. The appearances took place first at and in Jerusalem, and later in Galilee, where, as Mark expressly says, He went before them, Mark 16:7. And all agree that Jesus appeared in the same body that had been laid in the tomb. It was a body of flesh and bone, such as a spirit does not have, Luke 24:39; it could be touched, John 20:27, and eat food, Luke 24:41, John 21:10. But nevertheless Jesus made an altogether different impression after His resurrection than before His death; those who saw Him were frightened and fearful, threw themselves down before Him and worshipped Him, Matthew 28:9-10, Luke 24:37, He appeared in a different form than He had shown before, Mark 16:12, and was sometimes not immediately recognized, Luke 24:16, Luke 24:31. There is a great difference between the resurrection of Lazarus and that of Jesus; the former returns from death to his former, earthly life, but Jesus does not return, but continues on the road that leads from his resurrection to his ascension. When Mary thinks that she has regained her Master and Lord from the dead and will renew her former relationship with Him, then Jesus rejects this and says: do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brothers and say to them: I ascend to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God. After his resurrection, Christ no longer belongs to earth, but to heaven. That is why His form has changed, even though He has taken on the same body that He had laid in the tomb. Paul summarizes this by saying that a natural body is sown at death, but that a spiritual body is raised up in the resurrection (of Christ as well as of the faithful), 1 Corinthians 15:44. In both cases it is a body, because spiritual is not opposed to material, but to natural. In the natural (psychic) body received by the first man, however, there is a large area of life that has been withdrawn from the dominion of the spirit and continues more or less independently; in the spiritual body, on the other

hand, stomach and food have been destroyed, 1 Corinthians 6:13, and all material things are completely subject to and subservient to the spirit. The bodily resurrection of Christ is not an isolated historical fact, but is inexhaustibly rich in meaning and of the greatest significance for Christ himself, for his congregation and for the entire world. In general, it contains within itself the fundamental victory over death. Death entered the world through a human being; the transgression of God's commandment has opened the door for death to enter the world of man, for death is the wages of sin (Romans 5:12, Romans 6:23 and 1 Corinthians 15:21). Even if an angel, or the Son of the Father, had descended into the realm of the dead and then returned to heaven, it would not be of any use to us. But Christ was not only the Father's only begotten, but also truly and fully human, God's and man's Son. As a man He suffered, He died and was buried, but also as a man He rose again and returned from the realm of the dead. The resurrection of Christ proved that there was a man who could not be held by death, whom Satan, who had the violence of death, could not control, who was stronger than grave and death and hell. In fact, in principle, Satan no longer has the power and dominion of death; Christ conquered him by means of death, Hebrews 2:14. The gates of the kingdom of the dead, which had been closed behind him, had to be opened at his command. The ruler of the world had nothing on Him, John 14:30.

If this is so, it goes without saying that the resurrection of Christ is about the physical resurrection. A spiritual resurrection would not have been enough and would have been only half, in fact not a victory at all, but a defeat. Then not the whole man, not man as such, in soul and body, would have been removed from the dominion of death; then Satan would have remained victorious in a large area. If He were to prove His strength above death, He could only do so by physically returning from the realm of the dead, and thus revealing His spiritual power in the world of matter. In his bodily resurrection it was first shown that, by His obedience to the cross and the grave, He had completely conquered sin with all its consequences, thus also death, had been cast out of the world of men once more, and had brought a new life to light in immortality. Through a man, therefore, death may have Death entered the world, the resurrection of the dead is also through a man, 1 Corinthians 15:21. Christ himself is the resurrection and the life, John 11:25. With this, the general meaning of the resurrection of Christ is already sufficiently highlighted, but it can also be determined in more detail in particulars. First of all for Christ Himself. If death on the Cross had been the end of Jesus' life and not followed by resurrection, the Jews would have been right in their condemnation. After all, in Deuteronomy 21:23 it is written that a hanged man is a curse to God, which is cited there as a reason why the corpse of a criminal brought to death may not remain hanging on the wood after his death, but must be buried on the same day; if it were to remain hanging, it would pollute the land that God gave to his people to inherit. Now the Mosaic law does not know the penalty of death on the cross; but when Jesus is delivered to the Gentiles, Matthew 20:19, and at the hands of the unrighteous to the cross, Acts 2:23, then he is, not only after, but already before and in his death an example of the implacable severity of the law and a curse before God's face. For the Jews, who knew the law, the death on the cross was not only a painful and shameful punishment, but also proof that the crucified one was burdened by God with His wrath and curse. Jesus, the hanged man on the wood, was in the eyes of the Jews an annoyance and anathema, 1 Corinthians 1:23, 1 Corinthians 12:3. But now the resurrection comes and reverses all judgment. He, whom God made sin for us, is the one who personally knew no sin. He who became a curse for us is in himself the blessed one of the Father. The one who was abandoned of God on the cross is the Son in whom the Father has all his pleasure. The one cast

out from the earth is the one crowned in heaven. The resurrection is thus the proof of Christ's Sonship; He, who became of the seed of David according to the flesh, was proved (declared) by it to be the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness which was in Him, Romans 1:3-4. Christ spoke the truth and made the right confession before Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate, when He testified to be the Son of God. It was not the Jews and the Romans who were right in their judgment and sentence, but Christ is the Righteous One, who was attached to the cross and killed by the hands of the unrighteous. The resurrection is the Divine revision of the judgment, which the world passed on Jesus. In this proof of His Sonship and Messianic nature, however, the resurrection is by no means an end; it is also the entrance for Christ into a completely new state of life, the beginning of His ever-increasing elevation. Not only in eternity, Hebrews 1:5, and at the appointment to the priesthood, Hebrews 5:5, but also at the resurrection, Acts 13:33, God said to him: Thou art my Son, this day have I raised thee. The resurrection is the day of Christ's coronation; He was already Son and Messiah before He became man; He was so also in His humiliation; but then His inner being was hidden under His servant form. Now, however, He is openly declared by God and proclaimed as Lord and Christ, as Sovereign and Saviour, Acts 2:36, Acts 5:31, Php 2:9. He now takes back the glory, which He had before with the Father, John 17:5, assumes a different form, a different stature and a different way of being, Mark 16:12. He is the Prince of life, the source of salvation, and the ordained of God to judge the living and the dead, Acts 3:15, Acts 4:12, Acts 10:42.

Furthermore, the resurrection of Christ is a fountain of salvation for his congregation and for the whole world. It is the Father's Amen to the Son's Accomplishment. After all, Christ was delivered up for (the sake of) our sins, and raised up for (the sake of) our justification, Romans 4:25. Just as our sins and Christ's death are intimately connected, so too is there a very close relationship between Christ's resurrection and our justification. Our sins are the cause of His death, and so our justification is the cause of His resurrection. He did not obtain our justification by His resurrection, but by His death (Romans 5:9, Romans 5:19), for that death was a sacrifice, which fully atoned for our sins and provided an eternal righteousness. But because He had obtained the complete atonement and forgiveness of all our sins by His suffering and death, He arose and had to rise. In the resurrection He became Himself and we were justified in Him and with Him; His resurrection from the dead is the public proclamation of our acquittal. And not only that, but Christ was also raised for our justification in this other sense and for this other purpose, that He might personally appropriate the acquittal contained in His resurrection. Without the Resurrection, the reconciliation effected by His death would have remained without effect and application; it would have been like a dead capital. But now Christ has been exalted by his resurrection as Lord, Prince and Saviour, who can make the acquired reconciliation part of us in the way of faith. His resurrection is both the proof and the source of our justification. But if Christ arose for that purpose, in order to personally appropriate the acquired reconciliation and forgiveness for us, then another benefit is immediately included in this. Because just as there is no forgiveness without prior reconciliation, there is also no forgiveness without subsequent sanctification and glorification. The objective (subjective) basis for this inseparable connection of justification and sanctification lies in Christ Himself. For He has not only died, but also been raised; and what He has died, He has died once for sin (in respect of sin, to atone for it and to remove it), so that what He lives, He lives for God, Romans 6:10. Therefore, when Christ grants man the fruits of his death in faith, namely the atonement and forgiveness of sin, he also grants him a new life at that same moment. He cannot divide himself,

cannot separate his death from his resurrection; yes, he can only divide and apply the fruits of his death because he himself was raised; as the Prince of Life he alone disposes of the benefits of his death. Therefore, as He died once for sin, so that henceforth He alone might live for God, so He died in His death for all, that those who live (namely, by dying and rising with Christ) might no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died and rose again for them, 2 Corinthians 5:15, Galatians 2:20.

Likewise, from the subjective side, there is an indissoluble connection between the forgiveness of sins and the renewal of life. For he who accepts the forgiveness of sins with a believing heart, has at that same moment, like Christ in his death, broken off all relation to sin. He has ceased to have any fellowship with it, for sin that has been forgiven, and whose forgiveness has been accepted in faith with great joy, cannot but be hated; he has, as Paul says, died of sin, Romans 6:2, and therefore can live in it no longer. He has entered the fellowship of Christ through faith and through baptism as its sign and seal, has been crucified, died, and been buried with Him, that he might walk in newness of life, Romans 6:3 f. To this sanctification is further linked glorification. After all, through the resurrection of Christ the faithful have been born again into a living hope, 1 Peter 1:3. Through it they have received the irrefutable assurance that the work of salvation has not only been begun and continued, but will be completed to the end. In heaven the immortal and immaculate and undefilable inheritance is preserved for them, and on earth they are preserved by faith in the power of God for the salvation that will be revealed in the last time, 1 Peter 1:4-5. How could it be otherwise? After all, God has confirmed his love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, after we have been justified by the blood of Christ, we shall be saved by God from His wrath, especially from that wrath which will be manifest in the last judgment. For those who are in Christ, there is no wrath and no damnation, but only peace with God and the hope of His glory. In the past, when they were still His enemies and subject to His wrath, God reconciled Himself to them through the death of the Son; so now that God has renounced His wrath against them and bestowed His peace and love upon them, they will be much more saved through the life which Christ now shares through His resurrection, and in which He is active as their intercessor with the Father. The resurrection of Christ thus continues for all eternity; in due time it brings with it the resurrection of the faithful and the rebirth, the victory of heaven and earth, Acts 4:2, Romans 6:5, and the resurrection of the Holy Spirit. 2, Romans 6:5, Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 15:12.

Only when we understand the rich, eternal significance of the resurrection of Christ, can we understand why the apostles, and especially Paul, lay such strong emphasis on its historical character. All the apostles are witnesses to the resurrection, Acts 1:21, Acts 2:32. And Paul argues that without that resurrection the preaching of the apostles is vain and false; the forgiveness of sins, based on the atonement and accepted in faith, has not taken place; and the hope of a blessed resurrection is all but groundless. With the resurrection the divine Sonship and the Messianic dignity of Christ falls away and all that is left of Him is a teacher of virtue. But if the Resurrection has taken place, then Christ has also been openly proclaimed and crowned by the Father as the Redeemer of sins, the Prince of Life and the Saviour of the world. The Resurrection is the beginning of Jesus' exaltation and is followed after forty-four days by the Ascension. Its event is recounted only in brief words, Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, Acts 1:1-12. But it was foretold by Christ, Matthew 26:64, John 6:62, John 13:3, John 13:33, John 14:28, John 16:5, John 16:10,

John 16:17, John 16:28, and forms a component of the apostolic preaching, Acts 2:33, Acts 3:21, Acts 5:31, Acts 7:55-56, Ephesians 4:10, Php 2:9, Php 3:20, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16, 1 Timothy 3:16, 1 Peter 3:22, Hebrews 4:14, Hebrews 6:20, Hebrews 9:24, Revelation 1:13 etc. Everywhere the Apostles start from the idea that Christ is now in heaven according to his human nature, both in body and in soul. In fact, the forty days that Christ spent on earth after His resurrection were already a preparation and a transition to His ascension. Everything showed that He no longer belonged to the earth. His appearance was different from what it had been before his death. He appeared and disappeared in a mysterious manner. The disciples felt that their relationship with Him was very different from their former relationship. His life no longer belonged to the earth, but to heaven. In the Ascension, therefore, He does not become invisible through a process of spiritualization or deification, but changes place. He was on earth and He went to heaven. He ascended from a certain place, the Mount of Olives, which is only a quarter of an hour from Jerusalem and lies in the direction of Bethany, Luke 24:50, Acts 1:12. Before He separated from His disciples He blessed them; blessing He left the earth and blessing He ascended into heaven; that is how He came, that is how He lived, and that is how He went again; He is Himself the including of all God's blessings, the acquirer, the possessor and the distributor of them, Ephesians 1:3. His ascension was therefore also his own act; he had the right and the power to do it, he ascended by his own power, John 3:13, John 20:17, Ephesians 4:8-10, 1 Peter 3:22. For in it He triumphs over the whole earth, over all the laws of nature, over the entire gravity of matter. Yes, even more so, His Ascension is a triumph over all the hostile, demoniacal and human powers, which God, in the Cross of Christ, stripped of their armor, exhibited in their powerlessness, bound to Christ's chariot, Colossians 2:15, and now are carried off by Christ Himself as captives, Ephesians 4:8. Peter expresses the same idea by saying that Christ, after his resurrection, ascended in spirit (the same word is used in Greek for ascending and sailing in 1 Peter 3:20 and 1 Peter 3:22, so that 1 Peter 3:22, with the addition of the words 'to heaven', explains where he has gone) to heaven, announced his victory to the spirits in prison, and took his seat at God's right hand, while the angels and powers and forces were made subservient to him. The ascension, which is Christ's own act, is also a taking up by God into His heaven, Mark. Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, Acts 1:2, Acts 1:9, Acts 1:11, Acts 1:22, 1 Timothy 3:16. Since Christ has completely fulfilled the Father's work, He is not only raised up by the Father, but is also admitted into His immediate presence. The heavens are open to Him, the angels go to meet Him and lead Him in, Acts 2:10; He has even passed through the heavens and ascended far above them all, Hebrews 4:14, Hebrews 7:26, Ephesians 4:10, to sit at God's right hand on the throne of His majesty. The highest place next to God belongs to Christ.

Just as the resurrection prepares the ascension, so it leads to the sitting at the right hand of God. Already in the Old Testament this place was promised to the Messiah, Psalms 110:1. Jesus said several times that He would soon be seated on the throne of His glory, Matthew 19:28, Matthew 25:31, Matthew 26:64, and took possession of that place after His ascension, Mark 16:19. And in the apostolic preaching this sitting at the right hand of God is very often mentioned and shown in its great significance, Acts 2:34, Romans 8:34, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 1:13, Hebrews 8:1, Hebrews 10:12, 1 Peter 3:22, Revelation 3:21 etc. In the expressions, of which the Scriptures make use at this stage of Jesus' exaltation, some alternation can be discerned. Just as at the resurrection and ascension, it is also said here, sometimes, that Christ himself has set himself down, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 8:1 (is seated, better:

has sat down, has set himself), sometimes, that the Father has said to him: sit down at my right hand, Acts 2:34, Hebrews 1:13, or has also put him there, Ephesians 1:20. Sometimes the emphasis is on the act of sitting down, Mark 16:19, and sometimes on the state of being seated, Matthew 26:64, Colossians 3:1. The place where Christ is seated is indicated by the words: at the right hand of power, Matthew 26:64, at the right hand of the power of God, Luke 22:69, at the right hand of the majesty in the highest heavens, Hebrews 1:3, at the right hand of the throne of majesty in the heavens, Hebrews 8:1, or at the right hand of the throne of God, Hebrews 12:2. Usually it is said that Christ is seated there, but sometimes the expression occurs that He is at the right hand of God, Romans 8:34, or that He is standing there, Acts 7:55-56, or that He is walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, Revelation 2:1, etc. But always the thought is the same: Christ is seated at the right hand of God, Romans 8:34. But always the idea is the same: Christ, after His resurrection and ascension, has the highest place next to God in the entire universe. This idea, however, is expressed in the form of an image, derived from earthly relations; we cannot speak of heavenly things in any other way than in human terms, in parables. Just as Solomon honoured his mother Bathsheba, by placing her in a chair at his right hand, 1 Kings 2:19, ver. The sitting at the right hand of God indicates that Christ, by virtue of his perfect obedience, has been exalted to the highest sovereignty, majesty, dignity, honour and glory. He not only received back the glory, which He had according to His divine nature with the Father before the world was, John 17:5, but we now see Him crowned with honor and glory according to His humanity, Hebrews 2:9, Php 2:9-11. All things are subject to His feet, except Him, who has subjected all things to Him, 1 Corinthians 15:27. And though we do not yet see that all things are subject to Him, yet He will reign as King until He has put all enemies under His feet, Hebrews 2:8, 1 Corinthians 15:25. His sitting at the right hand of God and His whole exaltation ends and reaches its climax in the Second Coming in judgment, Matthew 25:31-32. In this state of exaltation Christ continues the work that He began on earth. Of course, there is a great difference between the work Christ accomplished in His humiliation and that which He accomplishes in His exaltation. Just as His person appears in a different guise, His work also assumes a different form and a different shape. After His resurrection He is no longer a servant, but a Lord and Prince; and so His work is no longer the sacrifice of obedience, which He brought to perfection on the Cross, but the Mediatorial work of Christ nevertheless continues in another form. At His ascension, He did not enter into an empty rest - after all, the Son, like the Father, always works, John 5:17 - but He now applies the fullness of His acquired benefits to His congregation. Just as Christ, by His suffering and death, was exalted in the resurrection and ascension to the head of the congregation, so must that congregation now be formed into the body of Christ and be filled to the fullness of God. The work of mediation is one great, mighty, divine work, which began in eternity and will continue until eternity. But at the moment of the resurrection it was divided into two halves; up to that moment Chris' humiliation took place, and from that moment his exaltation began. And both are equally indispensable to the work of salvation.

Thus, in the state of His exaltation, Christ continued to work as prophet, priest and king. As such he had already been anointed from eternity; these ministerial activities he had exercised in the state of his humiliation; and in a modified sense he continues these also in heaven. That He remained a prophet even after His resurrection is immediately evident from the sermon He preached to His disciples until His ascension. The forty days that Jesus remained on earth after His resurrection form an important part of His life and teaching. Usually not enough attention is

paid to them here. But as soon as we carefully examine what Jesus did and said during those forty days, we soon realize that they shed a whole new light on his person and his work. Of course we do not realize this as deeply as the apostles, because we live after them and have enjoyed their teachings; but the disciples, who had dealt with Jesus and had lost almost all hope in his death, have become completely different people in that short time and have learned to understand Jesus' person and work as was not possible before. The Resurrection itself cast such a surprising light on death and on the entire previous life of Christ. But the fact of salvation did not remain isolated; just as it had been preceded, so it was now accompanied and followed by the word of salvation. The angels at the tomb immediately announced to the women who were looking for Jesus that he was not here, but had risen according to his own words (Matthew 28:5-6). And Jesus Himself made it clear to the disciples at Emmaus that the Christ had to suffer and thus enter into His glory, and showed them this from everything that was written about Him in the Scriptures, Luke 24:26-27, Luke 24:44-47. The disciples now get to know Him in a different form than in which He walked with them before. He is no longer the humble Son of Man, who came not to serve but to be served and to give his soul as a ransom for many. He has laid aside the form of a servant and appears in a form of glory and power. He now belongs to another world; He is going to His Father, while the disciples still have to remain here and still have a calling to fulfill on earth. The former confidential relationship no longer returns. Soon, however, there will be another and even more intimate fellowship between Jesus and his disciples, so that they will understand that it was to their advantage for Jesus to go; but it will be a fellowship in the Spirit, entirely different from the one they enjoyed with Jesus before. And now, after the Resurrection, Jesus reveals Himself in such great glory and wisdom to His disciples that Thomas comes to a confession, which had never been made by any disciple before, that Jesus was his Lord and his God.

During these forty days Jesus not only shed light on His own person and work, but He also explained in more detail what the role and the task of His disciples were. When Jesus was buried and everything seemed to be over, the disciples may have planned to return to Galilee in silence and resume their earlier work. But on the third day they heard of apparitions that had taken place, to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, Matthew 28:1, Matthew 28:9, John 20:14 ff, to Peter, Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:5, to the disciples at Emmaus, Luke 24:13 ff, and then remained in Jerusalem for some time. On the evening of that same day the disciples without Thomas received an apparition, and eight days later they received another apparition, but now in contrast to Thomas. Then they followed Jesus, who had gone before them, to Galilee, Matthew 28:10, and here again several apparitions took place, Luke 24:44 ff, John 21:1-25. But at the same time He gave them the order to return to Jerusalem and witness His ascension. In all these appearances He now revealed to the disciples what their future calling was. They were not to return to their former occupation, but were to act as his witnesses and preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name among all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47-48, Acts 1:8. So the apostles receive all kinds of commands, Acts 1:2; they are taught about the things of the kingdom of God, Acts 1:3; their power is described, John 20:21-23, John 21:15-17, and their heart is set on preaching the gospel to all creatures. So now they know what to do; first of all they are to remain in Jerusalem until they are touched with power from on high, Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-5, Acts 1:8, and then act as His witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth, Acts 1:8.

All this teaching of the forty days is drawn together in the last words which Jesus spoke to His disciples, Matthew 28:18-20. It is true that He had also received that power before, Matthew 11:27, but He now takes possession of it on the basis of His merits and uses it to distribute the benefits He acquired to the congregation, which He bought with His blood. By virtue of that fulfillment of power He then instructs His Apostles to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all that He has commanded them. Because He has been given all power in heaven and on earth, Jesus lays claim to the discipleship of all peoples; and He acknowledges as His disciples those who through baptism have been received into the fellowship with that God who in His completed revelation has made Himself known as Father, Son and Spirit, and who now walk in His commandments. And to encourage them He finally adds that He will be with them all the days until the end of the world. Physically He leaves them, spiritually He remains with them, so that it is not they, but He who through their word gathers, rules and protects His congregation.

Therefore, even after His ascension, Christ continues to work as a prophet. The preaching of the Apostles, both orally and in writing in their Letters, is in keeping with the teaching of Jesus, not only with the teaching that Jesus gave before His death, but also with the teaching that He imparted to them in the forty days between His resurrection and ascension. This last point must not be overlooked. It is only by this that it becomes comprehensible that all the Apostles from the beginning were convinced that Christ had not only died, but had also been raised up by God and exalted at His right hand as Lord and Christ, Prince and Saviour, and that especially in the love of the Father, the grace of the Son and the communion of the Holy Spirit, all salvation for the sinner was contained. But the Apostles' preaching is not only in keeping with Jesus' teaching, it is also its explanation and expansion. Jesus Himself continued His prophetic activity through His Spirit in the hearts of the apostles. By the Spirit of truth He led them into all the truth, for that Spirit did not speak of Himself, but testified of Christ, made them remember what He had said to them, and also announced to them things to come (John 14:26, John 15:26, John 16:13). Thus the apostles were enabled to bring about the Holy Scripture of the New Testament, which, in connection with the books of the Old Covenant, is a light in the path of the church of all ages and a lamp for its feet. It is Christ Himself who gave this Word to His congregation and through it continually carries out His prophetic ministry on earth. He preserves and spreads it, He explains and clarifies it; that Word is the instrument by which He makes the peoples His disciples, draws them into the fellowship of the triune God and walks them through His commandments. Through His Word and Spirit, Christ is still with us, until the end of the world.

What applies to Christ's prophetic office also applies to his priestly office. He did not receive it for a time, but exercises it for eternity. In the Old Testament, the eternal character of the priesthood was foreshadowed in the separation of the house of Aaron and the tribe of Levi for service in the Temple. The special persons performing this service died, but were immediately replaced by others; the priesthood remained. The future Messiah, however, would not be an ordinary priest who served for a time and then made way for another, but He would be a priest for all eternity, according to the order of Melchizedek, Psalms 110:4. In distinction to the descendants of Aaron and Levi, who became many priests because death prevented them from remaining forever, Hebrews 7:24, Melchizedek in his mysterious persona gives us a picture of the eternal duration of Christ's high priesthood. After all, he is a king of righteousness and of peace as well, and stands

alone in the history of revelation, without any mention of his lineage, of his birth and his death; in a typical sense he was thereby made like the Zone of God and remained a priest for all eternity, Hebrews 7:3. But what Melchizedek was in example, Christ is in reality. Christ could be an eternal High Priest in the full sense of the word, because He was the Zone of God, who existed from eternity, Hebrews 1:2-3. Although He sacrificed Himself on earth and in time, He was nevertheless from above, belonged in His being to eternity, and could therefore also sacrifice Himself in time through the eternal Spirit, Hebrews 9:14. Inasmuch as Christ as the Zone of God was prepared from eternity to come into the world and accomplish God's will, Hebrews 10:5-9, He was already a priest from eternity. In view of the accomplishment of God's will in the days of His flesh, it may be said that the priesthood of Christ began on earth, Hebrews 2:17, Hebrews 5:10, Hebrews 6:20, Hebrews 7:26-28. And this priesthood on earth was a means and a way for Christ to become High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary through His resurrection and ascension, and to remain so for all eternity. It is a curious idea from the letter to the Hebrews that Christ's life and work on earth are not to be seen as an end, but as a preparation for his eternal priestly service in heaven.

Some have deduced from this that, according to this letter, Christ was not yet a priest on earth at all, but only accepted his priesthood when he ascended into heaven and entered the inner sanctum. They argue that Christ was not a priest on earth because the law required priests who belonged to the tribe of Levi to offer sacrifices according to the law, whereas Christ was not of Levi but of Judah and never offered sacrifices as a priest in the temple in Jerusalem (Hebrews 7:14, Hebrews 8:4). So if Christ was a priest, He could only be so in heaven, and He had to have something to sacrifice there, Hebrews 8:3. And what He offered there was His own blood, with which He entered the heavenly sanctuary, Hebrews 9:11-12. But this inference is without doubt false. For like all other apostolic writings, this letter to the Hebrews also lays the greatest emphasis on the fact that Christ sacrificed himself once, namely on the cross, and thereby brought about eternal salvation (Hebrews 7:27, Hebrews 9:12, Hebrews 9:26, Hebrews 9:28, Hebrews 10:10-14). The forgiveness of sins, this great benefit of the New Covenant, was fully obtained by that sacrifice, and the New Testament, which was founded in His blood, put an end to the Old Covenant, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 8:6-13, Hebrews 9:14-22. Sin, death and the devil were put to death by his sacrifice, Hebrews 2:14, Hebrews 7:27, Hebrews 9:26, Hebrews 9:28, and by his blood he sanctified and perfected all who obey him, Hebrews 10:10, Hebrews 10:14, Hebrews 13:12. Precisely because Christ offered this one perfect sacrifice on the cross, He can sit as High Priest at God's right hand, Hebrews 8:1. He suffers and He no longer dies there, but - sits as a victor on the throne, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 1:13, Hebrews 2:8-9, Hebrews 10:12. And a main point, an important point in the apostle's speech, is precisely that we have such a high priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of majesty in the heavens (Hebrews 8:1). There can be no question of a sacrifice, as Christ did on earth, now in heaven.

Yet Christ is and remains the High Priest in heaven; as such He has been placed by God at His right hand. Yes, in a certain sense one can say with our letter that He first became High Priest there according to the order of Melchizedek and accepted His eternal priesthood, Hebrews 2:17, Hebrews 5:10, Hebrews 6:20. After all, He was the Son and had to be so to be able to become our High Priest (Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 3:6, Hebrews 5:5), but that was not enough; although He was the Son, He had to learn obedience from suffering (Hebrews 5:8). The obedience which He possessed as the Son, Hebrews 10:5-7, He had to show here on earth as a human being in His

suffering, in order to become our High Priest, Hebrews 2:10 ff, Hebrews 4:15, Hebrews 5:7-10, Hebrews 7:28. All the suffering that Christ has endured, the temptations to which He has been exposed, the death to which He has been subjected, everything has served in God's hand as a means of sanctifying Christ and making Him perfect for the priestly service which He now has to perform in heaven before God. Of course, this sanctification and perfection of Christ is not to be understood in a moral sense, as if He had only gradually become obedient through struggle, but the Apostle is thinking of a sanctification in a strict and ministerial sense. Christ had to maintain his obedience as a Son in the face of all temptations, and at the same time thereby equip himself completely for his eternal high priesthood in heaven. In the way of obedience, Christ also fully obtained this high priesthood at God's right hand on the throne of majesty. On the basis of His suffering and death, on the basis of the one perfect sacrifice, He is now seated at the right hand of His Majesty in the highest heavens. He entered (not with, but) by His own blood once into the sanctuary, Hebrews 9:12, and is now there, in the true tabernacle built by God Himself, working as a minister (liturgist), Hebrews 8:2. Now He is first fully and eternally a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, Hebrews 5:10, Hebrews 6:20. Just as the high priest in the Old Testament, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of the goat slaughtered for himself and with the blood of the goat slaughtered for the people, to sprinkle it on and before the mercy seat, so Christ, through the blood of His sacrifice on the cross, opened the way to the true sanctuary in heaven (Hebrews 9:12). He does not take the blood that He shed on Calvary with Him to heaven in a literal sense, nor does He offer and sprinkle it there in an actual sense, but through His own blood He enters the true tabernacle; He returns to heaven as the Christ who died and was raised, as the Christ who was dead but is now alive for all eternity, Revelation 1:18, and stands as the slaughtered Lamb in the midst of the throne, Revelation 5:6; He is now in His person the means of atonement for our sins and for the whole world, 1 John 2:2.

Thus his high priestly service in heaven consists in that he appears there before the face of God for our sakes, Hebrews 9:24, in all things that God has to do to atone for the sins of the people, shows himself to be a merciful and faithful high priest, Hebrews 2:17, comes to the aid of those who are tempted, Hebrews 2:18, Hebrews 4:15, and leads his children to glory, Hebrews 2:10. In the way of obedience He Himself has become a guide for all, who go to God through Him. He is the guide of their faith, for He Himself has exercised faith and can therefore bring others to that faith and preserve that faith to the end, Hebrews 12:2. He is the Author of their lives, Acts 3:15 (in Greek this is the same word, which in Hebrew is translated by Author), because He first acquired that life Himself by His death, and now He can give it to others. He is the Author of their salvation, Hebrews 2:10, because He paved the way of salvation Himself, and therefore can lead others there and bring them into the sanctuary, Hebrews 10:20.

Thus, Christ is always and in all things our intercessor with the Father. Just as He prayed on earth for His disciples, Luke 22:23, and for His enemies, Luke 23:34, and in the supreme prayers He commended His entire congregation to the Father, John 17:1-26, so He continues this intercession in heaven for all His own. Of course we must not interpret this as if Christ in heaven was on his knees before his Father as a supplicant, begging him for mercy, because the Father himself loves us and gave us his Son as proof of this love. But it is expressed that this love of the Father is never given to us except in the Son, who became obedient unto death on the cross. Christ's intercession is therefore not a plea for mercy, but the expression of a powerful will, John 17:24, the Son's

demand that the Gentiles be given to him for his inheritance and the ends of the earth for his possession, Psalms 2:8. It is the crucified and glorified Christ, it is the Father's own Son, who was obedient but also exalted on the throne of majesty; it is the merciful and faithful High Priest, who himself was sanctified and perfected for this service in heaven, through whom intercession to the Father is sent. In the face of all the accusations that the law, Satan and our own hearts can make against us, He takes up our defense, Hebrews 7:25, 1 John 2:2. He comes to our aid in all our temptations. He has compassion on all our weaknesses. He cleanses our consciences. He sanctifies and completes all those who go to God through Him. He prepares a place for them in the Father's house, where there are many mansions and therefore room for many, John 14:2-3, and preserves for them the heavenly inheritance, 1 Peter 1:4. Thus the believers have nothing to fear. They may boldly approach the throne of grace, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 10:22, and have themselves received from Christ from heaven the Spirit of adoption, which calls in them Abba, Father, and pours out God's love in their hearts, Romans 5:5, Romans 8:15. As Christ is their intercessor with the Father in the heavens, so the Holy Spirit is the Father's intercessor in their hearts, John 14:16, John 15:26, John 16:7. An important point in our Christian confession is that we have such a high priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of majesty in the heavens, Hebrews 8:1; a priest, an offering, an altar and a temple are therefore no longer needed on earth.

Christ also continues to exercise the royal office in the heavens after his resurrection. There can be less difference of opinion about this, since Christ, by his resurrection and ascension, has been exalted to the position of Lord and Christ, as Prince (Guide) and Saviour, has been set' by the Father at his right hand on the throne, and has received a name above all names, Acts 2:36, Acts 5:31, Php 2:9-11, Hebrews 1:3-4. The kingship of Christ comes to light much more clearly in His exaltation than in His humiliation. But in this kingship the Holy Scriptures make a clear distinction. There is a kingship of Christ over Zion, over His people, over the church, Psalms 2:6, Psalms 72:2-7, Isaiah 9:5, Isaiah 11:1-5, Luke 1:33, John 18:33, and there is also a kingship,' which He exercises over all His enemies, Psalms 2:8-9, Psalms 72:8, Psalms 110:1-2, Matthew 28:18, 1 Corinthians 15:25-27, Revelation 1:5, Revelation 17:14, etc. The first is a kingship of grace and the other a kingship of power. In relation to the church the name of Viscount alternates very often with that of Head in the New Testament. Christ stands in such close relation to the church, which He bought with His blood, that one single name is not enough to give us an idea of its contents. And so the Scriptures use all kinds of images to give us an idea of what Christ is to his congregation. What the bridegroom is to his bride, John 3:29, Revelation 21:2, the husband to his wife, Ephesians 5:25, Revelation 21:9, the firstborn to his brothers, Romans 8:29, Hebrews 2:11, the foundation stone for the church, the foundation stone for the church. Hebrews 2:11, the foundation stone for the building, Matthew 21:42, Acts 4:11, 1 Peter 2:4-8, the vine for the branches, John 15:1-2, the head for the body, all this and much more is Christ for His congregation.

Especially the last image occurs repeatedly. Jesus Himself says in Matthew 21:42 that the word of Psalms 118:22 has been fulfilled in Him: the stone, which the builders rejected, has become the head of the corner. Just as the cornerstone serves to bind and secure the walls of a building, so Christ, although rejected by the Jews, has been chosen by God to be a cornerstone, so that the theocracy, the government of God over His people, may receive its fulfilment in Him. The apostle Peter already repeats this thought in Acts 4:11, but elaborates it in his first letter, by linking it not

only to Psalms 118:22, but also to Isaiah 28:16. He presents Christ as the living stone, which God has laid in Zion, and to which believers are added as living stones, 1 Peter 2:4-6. And Paul develops the image in the sense that the church is built on the foundation, which was laid by apostles and prophets in their preaching of the Gospel, and that now Chris himself is the cornerstone of the building of the church, which has risen on that foundation. Elsewhere, Christ himself is called the foundation of the church, 1 Corinthians 3:10. But here, in Ephesians 2:20, he is called the cornerstone; for as the building has its foundation in the cornerstone, so the church has its strength only in the living Christ. But the image of a building, although it already represented Christ as the head of the corner, was still insufficient to express the intimacy of the union between Christ and His congregation. Between a cornerstone and the walls of a building there is only an artificial connection, but the union of Christ and his congregation is a bond of life. Jesus therefore spoke of himself not only as the stone that God had raised up to be the head of the corner, but also as the vine that brings forth the branches and feeds them with his own juices (John 15:1-2). Peter ventures and speaks of living stones, and Paul not only mentions a temple that is being built, and a body that is being built, Ephesians 2:21, Ephesians 4:12, but repeatedly presents Christ as the head of the body of the church.

Each local congregation is a body of Christ, and the members of the congregation stand in relation to one another as members of the same body, who all need and must serve one another (Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). But also the whole congregation of Christ is His body, over which He has been exalted as the head by His resurrection and ascension, Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 4:15-16, Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 1:18, Colossians 2:19. As such, He is the life principle of the church; He gives it life in the beginning, but furthermore He nurtures, cares for, preserves and protects that life; He makes the church grow and flourish, He makes each member grow to its full maturity, and He also binds them all together and makes them work for the benefit of each other. In a word, He fills her to the fullness of God. In the days of the Apostle Paul there were some erroneous teachers who said that from the depths of the divine being all kinds of spiritual luminaries came forth in descending order, who together made up his fullness (pleroma). But Paul opposes this, saying that the entire fullness of God dwells exclusively in Christ and in Him physically, Colossians 1:19, Colossians 2:9, comp. John 1:14, John 1:16, and this fullness is in turn what makes Christ dwell in the church, which is His body and the fulfillment (the fullness, the body filled by Christ) of Him who fulfills all in all, Ephesians 1:23. There is nothing in the church, no gift, no power, no office, no ministry, no faith, no hope, no love, no salvation and no bliss, or it comes to her from Christ. And with this fulfilment (completion, Colossians 2:10) Christ continues, until the church, in its entirety and in all its members, is completely filled to the fullness of God, John 1:16, Ephesians 3:19, Ephesians 4:13; then the church will be completely formed, and God will be all in all, 1 Corinthians 15:28. But Christ is also called head in another sense. In 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul says, that Christ is the head of oak man; in Colossians 2:10 he calls Him the head of all government and power, that is, of all angels, because He is the firstborn of all creation, Colossians 1:15 ; and in Ephesians 1:10 he speaks of the intention of God, to gather together in Christ (the Greek word means: to gather together under one head, to recapitulate) all that is in heaven and on earth, in the fullness of time. It is clear, however, that the term ’head’ here has a different meaning than when Christ is called the head of his congregation. In the latter case, Paul is thinking primarily of the organic relationship, of the life relationship, in which Christ stands to his congregation. But when Christ is called the head of man, of the angels or of the world, the idea of

sovereign and king comes to the fore. All" creatures are without exception subordinate to Christ, just as He Himself, as Mediator, is subordinate to the Father (1 Corinthians 11:3). While He exercises the kingship of grace over His congregation and is therefore often called its head, He is vested with a kingship of power over all creatures and in that relationship He is rarely called head, but very often King and Lord. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the Chief of all the kings of the earth, and will reign as king until all enemies are put under his feet, 1 Corinthians 15:25, 1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 1:5, Revelation 17:14, Revelation 19:16. This kingship of power must not be confused with the absolute power which Christ shares with the Father and the Spirit according to His divine nature. The omnipotence to which the Son is entitled from eternity is distinct from all the power of which Christ speaks in Matthew 28:18, and which is specifically granted to Him as Mediator according to both natures. As Mediator, Christ has to assemble, rule and protect His congregation; and to be able to do that, He must already be more powerful than all His and her enemies. But this is not the only reason why the kingship of power was given to Christ. There is also another reason: As Mediator, He must also triumph over all His enemies. He does not approach them or defeat them by His divine omnipotence, but He shows them that power which He has acquired by His suffering and death. The battle between God and His creatures is a battle of right and justice. Just as the congregation is redeemed in the way of justice, so too Christ’s enemies will one day be judged in the way of justice. God will not use His omnipotence against them as He could, but He will triumph over them on the Cross (Colossians 2:15). If God pursued His enemies with His omnipotence, they could not exist for a moment. But He gives them birth and life, generation after generation and century after century, He lavishes His benefits on them, and bestows on them all the gifts which they possess in body and soul, but which they themselves misuse against His name. God can do all this, and does all this, because Christ is Mediator; even though not all things are subject to Him at present, He is nevertheless crowned with honor and glory, and He will reign as King as long as all enemies will pretend to submit to Him. Finally, at the end of time, when everyone looks back on the history of the world and especially of his own life, and notices therein all the material and spiritual gifts that God has given him for the sake of the Mediator, everyone will finally have to make Christ his equals in his own conscience; in His name, willingly or unwillingly, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Christ will also once as the Son of Man pronounce the final judgment on all creatures; and He will judge no one, except him who has been condemned by the Holy Spirit in his own conscience, John 3:18, John 16:8-11.

01.19. The gift of the Holy Spirit.

19. The gift of the Holy Spirit. The first activity exercised by Christ after his exaltation at the right hand of the Father is the sending of the Holy Spirit. At that exaltation He received from His Father the Holy Spirit promised in the Old Testament, and therefore, according to His own promise, He can now communicate Him to His disciples on earth, Acts 2:33. The Spirit, whom he grants, goes out from the Father, is received by him from the Father, and is then distributed by him to his congregation, Luke 24:49, John 15:26 It is the Father himself who sends the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name, John 14:26. This sending of the Holy Spirit, which took place on the day of Pentecost, is a unique event in the history of Christ's church; like the creation and incarnation, it took place only once; it was not preceded by any manifestation of the Spirit, which was equivalent in significance, and it can never be repeated. Just as Christ in His conception took on human nature, never to be severed from it again, so on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit consecrated the congregation to His dwelling and temple, never to be severed from it again. Scripture clearly indicates this unique significance of the event on the day of Pentecost, when it speaks of the outpouring or pouring out of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:17-18, Acts 2:33, Acts 10:45, Titus 3:6.

However, this does not exclude the possibility that there was also activity and gift of the Holy Spirit before Pentecost. We have already seen (pages 156 and 157) that, together with the Father and the Son, He is the Creator of all things, and that in the sphere of re-creation He is the Employer of all life and salvation, of all gifts and abilities. However, there is a significant and essential difference between the activity and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the days of the Old Testament and in the days of the New Testament. This is shown, first of all, by the fact that the old dispensation still looked forward to the appearance of the Servant of the Lord, upon whom the Spirit of the Lord would rest in all his fullness, as the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of strength, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, Isaiah 11:2. And, secondly, the Old Testament itself predicts that, although there was already some participation and activity of the Holy Spirit, nevertheless, it would not be poured out on all flesh, on sons and daughters, old and young, servants and maids, until the last of days, Isaiah 44:3, Ezekiel 39:29, Joel 2:28.

Both promises are fulfilled in the New Testament. Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One of God. He not only received the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb, and was anointed with that Spirit without measure at baptism, but He also lived and worked continually by that Spirit. By that Spirit He was led into the wilderness, Luke 4:1, returned to Galilee, Luke 4:14, preached the gospel, healed the sick, cast out devils, Matthew 12:28, Luke 4:18-19, gave Himself up to death, Hebrews 9:14, was raised up and revealed as the Son of God in power, Romans 1:3. During the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, He gave instructions to His disciples by the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:3, cf. And at the ascension, in which He subdued all enemies and made all angels, powers and forces subject to Himself, Ephesians 4:8, 1 Peter 3:22, He became a full partaker of the Holy Spirit with all His gifts. Ascending into the heavens, He took captivity, gave gifts to men, and was exalted above all heavens, that He might accomplish all things, Ephesians 4:8-10. This taking possession

of the Holy Spirit through Christ is so complete that the apostle Paul can say in 2 Corinthians 3:17 that the Lord (i.e. Christ as the exalted Lord) is the Spirit. Of course Paul does not want to erase the distinction between the two, because in the next verse he immediately speaks again of the Spirit of the Lord (or according to another translation, of the Lord of the Spirit). But the Holy Spirit has become the property of Christ, and has, as it were, been taken up by Christ into Himself. Through resurrection and ascension Christ became the Spirit of life, 1 Corinthians 15:45. He now possesses the seven Spirits (the Spirit in all His fullness), as He has the seven stars, Revelation 3:1. The Spirit of God the Father has become the Spirit of the Son, the Spirit of Christ, who emanates from both Father and Son, not only in the divine essence, but also consequently in the conception of salvation, and who is sent by the Son as well as by the Father, John 14:26, John 15:26, John 16:7. By virtue of his perfect obedience, Christ received full and free disposal of the Holy Spirit and of all his gifts and powers. He can now distribute it as and when He wishes, not in contradiction of course, but in complete harmony with the will of the Father and the Spirit Himself, for the Son sends the Spirit of the Father, John 15:26; the Father sends Him Him in the name of Christ, John 14:26; and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father, the Father of the Father, the Father of the Father. John 14:26; and the Holy Spirit does not speak of himself, but speaks as he hears; as Christ himself glorified the Father on earth, so the Spirit in his turn will glorify Christ, take everything from him, and then proclaim it to his disciples, John 16:13-14.

Christ does not rule by force or violence in the kingdom given to Him by the Father. He did not do so in His humiliation, nor does He do so in His exaltation. His entire prophetic, priestly and royal activity continues to be performed from heaven in a spiritual manner; He fights only with spiritual weapons; He is a King of grace and a King of power, but in both senses He carries out His reign through the Holy Spirit, who uses the Word as a means of grace. By that Spirit he teaches, comforts, leads and inhabits his congregation; and by that same Spirit he convinces the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, John 16:8-11. The final victory, which Christ will gain over all his enemies, will be a triumph of the Holy Spirit.

After Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God, therefore, only the second promise of the Old Testament can be fulfilled, which mentions an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all flesh. Christ must first have fully acquired and made His own that Spirit before He can give Him to His congregation. Before that time, that is, before the ascension, the Holy Spirit was not yet, since Christ had not yet been glorified, John 7:39. Of course, this does not mean that the Holy Spirit did not exist before the glorification of Christ, because not only is the Holy Spirit constantly mentioned in the Old Testament, but the Gospels also relate that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit, Luke 1:15, that Simeon was led by the Holy Spirit to the temple, Luke 2:26-27, that Jesus was received from Him and anointed with Him, etc. Nor can it be the intention that the disciples did not know before Pentecost that there was a Holy Spirit. For they had been taught differently by the Old Testament and by Jesus Himself. Even the disciples of John, who said to Paul at Ephesus that not only had they not received the Holy Spirit at their baptism, but also had not heard whether there was a Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2), could not have meant to indicate their ignorance of the existence of the Spirit, but only meant to say that they had not heard of an extraordinary working of the Holy Spirit, that is, of the event on Pentecost. They knew that John was a prophet sent by God and empowered by his Spirit, but they had remained disciples of John, had not joined Jesus, and therefore lived outside the congregation that received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. On this day

there was an outpouring of the Spirit like nothing before. The Old Testament already spoke of this promise, and Jesus also took it up and repeatedly came back to it in his teaching. John the Baptist already said of the Messiah who would come after him that he would not, like himself, baptize with water, but with the Holy Spirit and fire (with the cleansing and consuming fire of the Holy Spirit), Matthew 3:11 and John 3:11. Here He clearly distinguishes between two kinds of activity of the Holy Spirit. The first activity consists of the fact that the Holy Spirit, poured into the hearts of the disciples, comforts them, leads them into the truth and will remain with them forever (John 14:16, John 15:26, John 16:7). But this Spirit of comfort and guidance is given only to the disciples of Jesus; the world cannot receive this Spirit, for it neither sees Him nor knows Him, John 14:17. On the other hand, the Holy. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit exercises an entirely different activity in the world, namely, that He, dwelling in the church and acting from it on the world, convinces it of sin, righteousness and judgment, and in all three respects rules it out, John 16:8-11.

Jesus fulfills this promise to His disciples in the narrow sense, that is, to the Apostles even before His ascension. When He appeared to His disciples for the first time in the evening of the day of His resurrection, He formally initiated them into their apostolic mission and breathed on them, saying: Receive the Holy Spirit; if you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven them; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained' (John 20:22-23). For the apostolic office which they will soon have to exercise, they need a special gift and power of the Holy Spirit, which is currently still being given to them by Christ Himself before His ascension, in distinction to the gift they will receive on the day of Pentecost in fellowship with all believers. The actual outpouring took place forty days later. The Jews then celebrated their feast of Pentecost, in commemoration of the completed harvest and the legislation on Sinai. The disciples waited in Jerusalem for the fulfillment of Jesus' promise, and were all the time in the temple, praising and thanking God (Luke 24:49, Luke 24:53). But now they were not alone, but persisted in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren, and with many others, numbering about one hundred and twenty persons, Acts 1:14-15, Acts 2:1. And while they were thus assembled, there came suddenly and unexpectedly a noise from above, from heaven, which resembled the rustling of a strong wind, driven on, and which filled and penetrated not only the room where the disciples were assembled, but the whole house. At the same time tongues of lightning-like flames appeared and spread out over the heads of the assembly and remained there. Under these signs, which showed the cleansing and illuminating activity of the Holy Spirit, the outpouring took place; they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:4. The same expression occurs already earlier, Exodus 31:3, Micah 3:8, Luke 1:41, but the distinction is nevertheless obvious. Whereas in the past the Holy Spirit was given to some isolated individuals temporarily for a specific purpose, He now descended upon all the members of the congregation and from now on continues to dwell and work in them all. Just as the Son of God appeared several times on earth in the days of the Old Testament, but only chose human nature for a permanent home when he was conceived in Mary's womb, so too there was formerly all kinds of activity and gift of the Holy Spirit, but only on the Day of Pentecost did he make the congregation his temple, which he constantly sanctifies and builds up, and never leaves. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit gives the congregation of Christ an independent existence; it is no longer part of the nation of Israel and within the borders of Palestine, but it now lives independently through the Spirit who dwells in it, and it extends throughout the whole earth. Out of the temple on Zion, God through his Spirit is now dwelling in the body of the church of Christ, and the latter is thereby born on this very day as a missionary church and a world church. The ascension of Christ

has its inevitable consequence and proves its truth in the descent of the Holy Spirit. Just as the latter first sanctified and perfected Christ through suffering, and raised him to the highest level, so now, in the same manner and by the same means, He must form the body of Christ until it reaches maturity and constitutes the fulfillment, the pleroma, of Him who fulfills all in all. In the early days of Christ's disciples, this outpouring of the Holy Spirit was accompanied by all kinds of extraordinary powers and effects. As soon as they were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4). According to the description of Luke, we are not dealing here with a hearing miracle, but with a speaking miracle. Luke was a friend and co-worker of Paul and was very familiar with speaking in tongues (the glossolalia), as occurred for example in Corinth; he speaks of it himself in Acts 10:46-47 and Acts 19:6. Without doubt the phenomenon that took place on the day of Pentecost was related to speaking in tongues, for otherwise Peter could not have said that Cornelius and his people had received the Holy Spirit, as we also do, Acts 10:47, cf. Acts 11:17, Acts 15:8. But nevertheless there was a difference. For in 1 Corinthians 14:1-40, as well as in Acts 10:46 and Acts 19:6, there is mention of speaking in tongues, without the adjective foreign, which our translation therefore wrongly included; but Acts 2:4, speaks explicitly of other languages. As if the members of the congregation in Corinth speak in tongues, they are not understood, unless there is a later interpretation, 1 Corinthians 14:2 f; but in Jerusalem the disciples already spoke in other languages, before the crowd came running and heard them, so that a hearing miracle is excluded, Acts 2:4. And when the multitude heard them, they understood what was spoken; for each one heard them speak in his own language, in the language in which they had been born, Acts 2:6, Acts 2:8. The other languages spoken in verse 4 are thus undoubtedly the same as those which in Acts 2:6 are called the hearers' own languages, and in Acts 2:8 are further indicated as the languages in which they were born. They were therefore not unintelligible sounds in which the disciples spoke, but other languages, new languages, as Mark 16:17 says, and such as the untrained Galileans were not expected to speak (Acts 2:7). And in all these languages they proclaimed the great works of God, especially those which He had wrought in the last days in the raising and exaltation of Christ, Acts 2:4 and Acts 2:14 ff.

Now 'this report of Luke must not be taken to mean that the disciples of Jesus knew and spoke all the languages of the earth at that time. Nor does it imply that they all spoke head to head in all foreign languages. Even the purpose of the language miracle was not that the disciples should preach the Gospel to foreigners in their own language, because otherwise they could not understand it. For the fifteen names listed in Acts 2:9-11 do not refer to as many different languages, but are indications of the countries from which the foreigners had come to Jerusalem on the occasion of Pentecost; and all these foreigners understood Aramaic or Greek, so that there was no need to equip the Apostles with the gift of foreign languages. Later on, this gift of foreign languages is never mentioned in the New Testament; Paul, the gentile apostle, who would have received it before everyone else, never mentions it; with Aramaic and Greek he could go anywhere in the world at that time.

Speaking in foreign languages on Pentecost was thus a separate event; it was related to glossolalia, but was a special kind and a higher form of it. While glossolalia is to be regarded as a weakening and diminishing of prophecy, which the Apostle Paul therefore regards as much lower than prophecy, speaking in foreign languages in Jerusalem was a combination of glossolalia and

prophecy, an intelligible proclamation of God's great works in foreign languages. The working of the newly poured-out Spirit was so powerful then that it dominated the whole consciousness and expressed itself in the speaking of articulate sounds, which the hearers recognized as their own national languages. The purpose of this linguistic miracle was not to equip the disciples with the knowledge of foreign languages, but to give them an extraordinary impression of the great event that had just taken place. How could this be better accomplished than by having the small, newly founded world church proclaim the great works of God in many languages? At the creation the morning stars sang and all God's children rejoiced; at the birth of Christ a multitude of the heavenly hosts sang the jubilant song of God's good pleasure; on the day of the congregation's birth they themselves sang in many tones the great works of God.

Although speaking languages occupies a special place on the day of Pentecost, the outpouring of the Spirit was manifested in many extraordinary powers and effects. The gift of the Spirit was usually given after coming to faith, and then sometimes at baptism, Acts 2:38, or at the laying on of hands before baptism, Acts 9:17, or at the laying on of hands after baptism, Acts 8:17, Acts 19:6; but regularly it consisted in the communication of a special power. Thus we read that through the Spirit the disciples were given boldness to speak the word, Acts 4:8, Acts 4:31 a special power. Acts 4:8, Acts 4:31 a special strength of faith, Acts 6:5, Acts 11:24, consolation and joy, Acts 9:31, Acts 13:52, wisdom, Acts 6:3, Acts 6:10, speaking with tongues, Acts 10:46, Acts 15:8, Acts 19:6, prophecy, Acts 11:28, Acts 20:23, Acts 21:11, appearances and revelations, Acts 7:55, Acts 8:39, Acts 10:19, Acts 13:2, Acts 15:28, Acts 16:6, Acts 20:22, miraculous healings, Acts 3:6, Acts 5:5, Acts 5:12, Acts 5:16, Acts 8:7, Acts 8:13 etc. Like the works which Jesus did, these extraordinary powers which became manifest in the congregation also brought about fear and dismay, Acts 2:7, Acts 2:37, Acts 2:43, Acts 3:10, Acts 4:13, Acts 5:5, Acts 5:11, Acts 5:13, Acts 5:24. On the one hand they stirred up opposition and stirred up the hearts of enemies to hatred and persecution; but on the other hand they also prepared the ground for the reception of the seed of the gospel. They were necessary in the first instance to give the Christian confession access and stability in the world.

Throughout the apostolic era, these extraordinary workings of the Spirit continued. We know this especially from the testimony of the Apostle Paul. He himself, in his own person, was amply endowed with these special gifts of the Spirit. In an extraordinary way, by a revelation from Jesus Christ Himself, he was converted on the road to Damascus and called an apostle, Acts 9:3 f, and later revelations continued to come to him, Acts 16:6-7, Acts 16:9, 2 Corinthians 12:1-7, Galatians 2:2. He knows himself to be in possession of the gift of knowledge, of prophecy, of teaching, of speaking with tongues, 1 Corinthians 14:6, 1 Corinthians 14:18; signs, wonders and powers are performed by him, which are proofs of his apostleship, 2 Corinthians 12:12. He preaches in demonstration of spirit and power, 1 Corinthians 2:4; Christ Himself works through him, for the obedience of the Gentiles, with words and works, by power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, Romans 15:18-19.

But, although Paul was fully aware of his apostolic dignity and always maintained it as strictly as possible, the gifts of the Spirit were given not only to him, but to all believers. In 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, cf. Romans 12:6-8, he lists several of them, saying that they are distributed by the Spirit in different degrees and given to each according to his will. All these gifts are highly esteemed by the apostle; they are not due to the believers themselves, for they have nothing that they have not

received, and therefore lack any reason to exalt themselves and despise others (1 Corinthians 4:6-7), but all the gifts that are given to the believers are given to them. 1 Corinthians 4:6-7; but all these gifts and powers are wrought by one and the same Spirit; they are a fulfillment of the promise already made in the Old Testament, Galatians 3:14, and are to be regarded as first fruits, guaranteeing a great harvest and providing a pledge of the heavenly inheritance to come, Romans 8:23, 2 Corinthians 1:22, 2 Corinthians 5:5, Ephesians 1:14, Ephesians 4:30.

Nevertheless, the apostle makes a judgment about all these extraordinary gifts that differs significantly from that of many members of the congregation.

There were those in Corinth who prided themselves on the gifts bestowed on them by the manifestation of the Spirit, and who looked down with pride on those who were less fortunate than themselves; they did not use these gifts for the benefit of others, but flaunted them, and attached great importance to the mysterious and unintelligible speech of tongues. But Paul teaches them quite differently (1 Corinthians 12:1-31, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, 1 Corinthians 14:1-40). In the first place he points out the criterion by which all spiritual gifts must be judged; and this criterion lies in the confession of Jesus as Lord. He who speaks through the Spirit of God cannot call Jesus an abomination; but only he who confesses Jesus as Lord, proves by this that he speaks through the Holy Spirit; the characteristic of the Spirit and of all his gifts and workings lies in his being bound to the confession of Jesus as the Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:3.

He goes on to point out that the gifts of the Spirit, although all conforming to the same standard, are nevertheless very distinctive, and are given to each one in particular, not according to his merit or worthiness, but according to the free will of the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

Therefore they may not be a reason or a ground for self-exaltation and contempt of others, but should all be applied wholeheartedly and willingly for the benefit of one another, because all believers are members of one body and need each other, 1 Corinthians 12:12-30. But if the gifts serve this purpose, if they are given for what is proper, 1 Corinthians 12:7, that is to say, for the benefit of others, for the edification of the church, as it says in 1 Corinthians 14:12; then there is also a distinction of rank among the gifts themselves, for one is more conducive to that edification than the other; then there are good and better and best gifts. Therefore, in 1 Corinthians 12:31 the Apostle advises the believers to strive diligently for the best gifts.

Love is the most excellent way of striving diligently for the best gifts. For without it the greatest gifts are worthless, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3; it far surpasses them all in virtues, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; it surpasses them all in duration, for all gifts cease once, but love is eternal; among the three virtues, faith, hope and love, it is again the highest in value, 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. Therefore it must be pursued before all things, although the pursuit of spiritual gifts is in itself not to be rejected, 1 Corinthians 14:1. But in this striving, attention should be directed above all to those gifts that serve to edify the congregation and therefore put love into action the most. Seen from this perspective, prophecy is much higher than glossolalia. For he who speaks in tongues is not understood, speaks mysteries which are incomprehensible to the hearers, speaks in the air, leaves his mind unused, does not bring the unbelievers to faith, but makes an impression on them as if they were delusional. If there are members of the congregation who have this gift, they must use it sparingly and preferably add an interpretation; if this cannot be given, let them rather remain silent in the congregation. On the other hand, he who prophesies, he who proclaims the Word of God through

revelation of the Spirit, he speaks to mankind foundation, exhortation and consolation; he builds up the congregation and wins the unbelievers. Whatever gift someone may have received, it has its measure in the confession of Jesus as Lord, and its goal in the edification of the church. God is not the God of confusion but of peace, 1 Corinthians 14:1-40. This beautiful treatise on the spiritual gifts did not only bear fruit for the church of Cephalus, but continues to have significance for the church of all ages. Again and again, there are persons and parties who attach greater value to extraordinary phenomena, to revelations and miracles, than to the activity of the Spirit in rebirth, conversion, and the renewal of life. The abnormal attracts attention, and the normal remains unnoticed; people revel in apparitions, soul-searching, and sensational excesses, and turn a blind eye to the slow and steady growth of the Kingdom of God. But Paul had a different idea; however much he appreciated the unusual gifts of the Spirit, he admonished the brothers in Corinth: do not become children of intellect, but be children of wickedness, and grow up in the intellect. In this way the Apostle shifts the focus from the temporary and transitory manifestations of the Spirit to the regular, religious and moral work that He is constantly carrying out in the congregation. This view was already prepared in the days of the Old Testament. For it is true that all kinds of extraordinary gifts and powers were then attributed to the Holy Spirit, but as the prophets and psalmists became more deeply acquainted with the aversion of the people of Israel and with the deceitfulness and wickedness of the human heart, they pronounced it all the more strongly and clearly, that only a renewal through the Holy Spirit could make the people of Israel a people of God in the true sense. A Moor cannot change his skin, nor a leopard his spots; nor can they do good who have been taught to do evil (Jeremiah 13:23). God must by his Spirit change the heart of the people, if they will walk in his ways and keep his statutes. The Spirit of the Lord alone is the master of the true, spiritual and moral life, Psalms 51:13-14, Isaiah 32:15, Ezekiel 36:27. To this the preaching of Jes-! in the Gospel of John joins. For in the conversation with Nicodemus, Christ explains that there is no entrance to and no participation in the kingdom of heaven except through rebirth, and that this rebirth can only be effected by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3, John 3:5). And in the farewell discourses, John 14:1-31, John 15:1-27, John 16:1-33, he explains in detail that the Spirit, whom he will send from the Father after his glorification, will take his place among the disciples. It is therefore beneficial to them that Christ himself should go, for otherwise the Comforter would not come to them; but if he himself goes to the Father, he can and will send it to them. For when Christ goes to the Father, it is proof that He has completely fulfilled the task assigned to Him on earth. In heaven, He can and may then stand at the right hand of the Father, as the High Priest and Advocate for His congregation on earth, and ask the Father for everything they need. He can then especially ask the Father for the Holy Spirit in all his fulness, and send this to his disciples. And this Spirit will then take his place with them; he will be their comforter, their guide, their intercessor and guardian. And in this the disciples will not lose. For when Christ walked on earth, He did associate with His disciples, but there was still all kinds of distance and misunderstanding among them. But the Spirit who is to come to them will not remain outside and beside them, but will make his home with them. Christ’s stay on earth was temporary, but the Spirit whom He will send will never leave them again, but will remain with them for all eternity. Yes, Christ Himself will come to them again in that Spirit; He will not leave them orphans, but will come to them again and, in that Spirit, will unite Himself with His disciples in a way that has never happened before. They will see Him again, they will live as He lives, they will know that Christ is in the Father, and they in Him, and He in them. And in Christ the Father Himself comes to them; through the Spirit both the Father

and the Son come to the disciples and will dwell with them. This, then, is what the Holy Spirit will bring about in the first place: a community between the Father and the Son on the one hand, and the disciples on the other, which has never existed before. And when the disciples have partaken of this fellowship and live by it, when they are united to Christ as the vine to the branch, when they are not servants but friends, then the same Spirit who has made them partakers of this fellowship will also, as the Spirit of truth, lead them into all the truth; He will not only remind them of what Christ personally said and taught them, but He will continually testify to them concerning Christ; He will say what He heard of Christ and what He took from Him, and He will even proclaim to them the things to come. The disciples will not only have fellowship with Christ and the Father, but will also be aware of it. The Holy Spirit will inform them about Christ, about His oneness with the Father, and about their fellowship with both. The ultimate goal is that all believers be one, just as - so Christ himself says - just as You, Father, are in me and I in You, that they also be one in us, so that the world may know that You have sent Me. When the outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place on the day of Pentecost, it was initially very understandable that the extraordinary phenomena in which this rich spiritual outpouring manifested itself, attracted attention. But we must not close our eyes to that other, and in fact much more significant, fact that the disciples, through the gift of the Spirit, were most intimately united to form a single, independent, holy congregation. They were one heart and one soul, and no one said that anything he had was his own, but all things were common to him. The unity of which Christ had spoken was realized for a time in the church at Jerusalem. Later, when the fervor of the first love gave way to a calmer frame of mind, when congregations were added in other places and among other peoples, when still later all sorts of divisions and schisms arose in the Christian church, then the unity that binds all believers did take on a different form and was much less lively and deep, sometimes even very weak and almost not felt at all; But we must not forget, in the midst of all the differences and struggles, that it has continued to exist in essence to the present day, and that it will come to light in the future in a much more magnificent way than it did for a short time in Jerusalem.

Among the Apostles, it is St. Paul who places this ideal of the unity of the church before our eyes and who holds to it himself, despite all the divisions he already witnessed in his days. The church is one body, of which all the members need and must serve one another (Romans 12:4, 1 Corinthians 12:12 ff). But it is such a unity because it is the body of Christ (Romans 12:5, Ephesians 1:23, Colossians 1:24). The unity of the church is rooted in and arises from the fellowship with Christ. He is the head of every believer, of every local church, and also of the church as a whole. All believers are new creatures, whom God created in Christ for good works, that they might walk in them (2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:10). Christ lives and dwells in them, and they live, move and are in Christ, Christ being their very life, Romans 6:11, Romans 8:1, Romans 8:10, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Galatians 2:20, Php 1:21, Colossians 3:4. The formula: in Christ (in the Lord, in Him) occurs more than one hundred and fifty times in the New Testament, and indicates that Christ is not only the constant source of spiritual life, but that He also, as such, directly and immediately lives in the believer. The unity is as close as that between the cornerstone and the temple, man and woman, head and body, vine and branch. The faithful are in Christ, just as all things are in God by virtue of their creation and maintenance, just as the fish lives in the water, the bird in the sky, the man in his work, the scholar in his study. They have been crucified with Him, died, buried, raised up, put at God’s right hand, glorified, Romans 6:4, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 6:14, Ephesians 2:6, Colossians 2:12, Colossians 2:20, Colossians 3:3

etc., etc. They have put on Him, take on His form, reveal in their bodies both the suffering and the life of Christ, and are made perfect (fulfilled) in Him; in a word, Christ is all and in all, Romans 13:14, 2 Corinthians 4:11, Galatians 4:19, Colossians 1:24, Colossians 2:10, Colossians 3:11. This intimate fellowship is made possible by the fact that Christ communicates Himself to the believers through His Spirit. Since Christ, through his suffering and death, has so completely acquired and made the Spirit with all his gifts and powers his property, that he himself can be called the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17), he has also acquired the right to distribute this Spirit to whomever he wishes. The Spirit of God has become the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Son, the Spirit of the Lord, Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 2:16, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 4:6, Php 1:19. Receiving the Spirit is the same as having Christ in one, for he who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ and is not his property, Romans 8:9-10. The faithful are one Spirit with Him, 1 Corinthians 6:7, they are temples of the Holy Spirit, through whom God Himself dwells in them, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 1 Corinthians 8:2, 1 Corinthians 2:14; they are continually led by the Spirit and sealed until the day of redemption, Romans 8:15-16, 2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 4:30; by the same Spirit they all have access to the Father and are built together on the foundation of the apostles and prophets into a dwelling place of God. Ephesians 2:18, Ephesians 2:22. With these words the Holy Scriptures give us a description of that wonderful union which exists between Christ and his congregation, and which later is called unio mystica (mystical union; mysterious, hidden union). We cannot understand this union in its depth and intimacy; it is far beyond our imagination. It is certainly distinct in nature and character from that union which exists in the divine being between the three persons, for all three share the same divine essence, and Christ and the faithful remain distinct in essence. The union between Christ and the church is often compared to the union between Him and the Father (John 10:38, John 14:11, John 14:20, John 17:21-23). But then Christ does not speak of himself as the Son, the only begotten, but of himself as the Mediator, who will be exalted at the right hand of God and through whom the Father will perform all his good pleasure. Just as the Father chose His own in Christ before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 1:3, and has blessed and redeemed them in the Beloved, Ephesians 1:6-7, Acts 20:28, so He also gathers them all into one in Christ, Ephesians 1:10. But as close and indissoluble as the union between the Father and the Mediator is, is that between Christ and the believers. It surpasses in its inner strength any other union found between creatures, and even that which exists between God and His world. While on the one hand it is distinct from all pantheistic associations, on the other it is far superior to all deistic juxtapositions and contractual relationships. Scripture shows us something of its essence by comparing it with the relationship between vine and branches, head and members, man and woman. It is a union that unites the whole of Christ with the whole of His congregation and each of its members in the depth of their being, in the core of their personality, fully and forever. It began in eternity, when the Son of God declared himself ready for the mediumship; it acquired its objective (subjective) substance in the fullness of time, when Christ took on human nature, entered into the fellowship of his people, and gave himself up to death for his own sake; and it is realized in each person personally, when the Holy Spirit descends into him, incorporates him into Christ, and he, for his part, acknowledges and declares this union with Christ in faith. But this fellowship with the person of Christ also entails fellowship in all his goods and benefits. There is no participation in the benefits of Christ without our sharing in his person, for the benefits are inseparable from his person. This would be conceivable, at least to a certain extent, if the goods that Christ gave were

of a material nature; for someone can give us his money and goods without giving himself to us. But the goods which Christ gives are of a spiritual nature; they consist, first and foremost, in His favor, in His mercy, in His love, and these are thoroughly personal and cannot be separated from Christ. The "treasure of merit" is therefore not deposited anywhere on earth by Christ in the hands of pope or priest, in church or sacrament; but the treasure of merit lies solely with and in Christ himself. He is that treasure Himself; in Him the Father turns His kind, benevolent face toward us, and that is all our salvation.

Conversely, therefore, there can be no communion with the person of Christ without at the same time sharing in all his treasures and goods. The relationship between the Father and Christ is again the basis and example for that between Christ and his congregation. The Father has given Himself to the Son, and specifically also to the Son as the Mediator of God and man; so that the Father has retained nothing for Himself, but has given everything to Christ. All things were given him by the Father, Matthew 11:27. John 5:35; whatever the Father has is His own, John 16:15, John 17:10; the Father and Christ are one, the Father is in Him, and He is in the Father, John 10:38, John 14:11, John 14:20, John 17:21-23. But in return Christ communicates himself and everything he possesses to the congregation through the Holy Spirit, John 16:13-15. He reserves nothing for Himself. As the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him physically, Colossians 1:19, Colossians 2:9, so He also fills the congregation, until she reaches the measure of His fullness and is filled to the fullness of God, Ephesians 1:23, Ephesians 3:19, Ephesians 4:13, Ephesians 4:16; He is all in all, Colossians 3:11.

It is a fullness which we receive from Christ, a divine fullness, a fullness of grace and truth, a fullness which never runs out, and which gives grace for grace, John 1:14, John 1:16. This fullness dwells in Christ himself, in his person, in his divine and in his human nature, during the state of his humiliation and his exaltation. There is a fullness of grace in his incarnation, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, being rich, he became poor for your sake, so that you might become rich through his poverty (2 Corinthians 8:9). There is a fullness of grace in His life and death, for in the days of His flesh He learned obedience from that which He suffered, and, being sanctified, He became a cause of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, Hebrews 5:7-9. There is a fullness of grace in His resurrection, for by it He was proved to be the Son of God in power, and He has regenerated us into a living hope, Romans 1:3, 1 Peter 1:3. There is a fullness of grace in His ascension into heaven, for by it He took prisoner and gave gifts to mankind, Ephesians 4:8. There is a fullness of grace in His intercession, for through it He can completely save all those who go to God through Him, Hebrews 7:25. It is a long, broad, deep stream of grace, which carries the believers from the beginning to the end, and to eternity. It is a fullness that gives grace for grace, grace instead of grace, that replaces one grace with another, alternates with another, merges into another. There is no delay and no interruption. It is all grace and it is pure grace that flows from Christ to the church. The benefits which Christ bestows on his own people in his communion may very well be summed up under the single name of grace. But that one name then encompasses a fullness, an incalculable wealth of blessings. The beginning of the previous paragraph already mentioned the reconciliation, which Christ brought about with the Father through his sufficient sacrifice. In Christ, God has renounced His wrath and established a relationship of peace with the world (2 Corinthians 5:19). The Holy Scriptures list a multitude of them: vocation, regeneration, faith, conversion, justification, remission of sins, adoption as children, redemption from the law,

religious freedom, faith, hope, love, peace, joy, gladness, consolation, sanctification, preservation, perseverance, glorification, etc.; there is actually no list of them. They comprise everything that the congregation as a whole, and every believer in particular, has received, is receiving and will receive from the fullness of Christ through all times, in all situations and circumstances, in prosperity and adversity, in need and death, in life and death, on this side of the grave and hereafter for all eternity.

Owing to this multitude and wealth it is impossible to develop them fully, - it is extremely difficult to obtain a good overview of them; and it even presents many difficulties in dealing with them in a regular order and in assigning each benefit its rightful place in relation to the whole. The ranking therefore varies widely among various theologians. But in the main three groups of benefits can be clearly distinguished. In the first place, there is a group of benefits that prepare mankind and introduce him to the covenant of grace and give him the strength to receive and accept the blessings of that covenant with a willing heart; these are the benefits of vocation, regeneration (in a narrow sense), faith and conversion. A second group contains those blessings which change the state of a man in relation to God, free him from guilt and thus renew his consciousness; these are especially the blessings of justification, forgiveness of sins, adoption as children, the testimony of the Holy Spirit with our spirit, deliverance from the law, spiritual freedom, peace and joy. And finally, there is a third group of benefits that change a person’s situation, free him from the stain of sin and renew him in the image of God; these include in particular rebirth (in a broader sense), dying and rising with Christ, ongoing conversion, walking in the Spirit, and endurance to the end. All these acts of well-being are perfected and completed in that heavenly glory and bliss which God is preparing for His own hereafter and which must be discussed in a separate paragraph at the end of this teaching of the Christian religion.

Before we focus on these three groups of benefits, it is important to note that they, as well as the person of Christ himself, are only given to us by the Holy Spirit. We have seen above that the Father is in Christ, that only in Christ does He show us His favourable face, and that only in and through Him does He make His home with us. But likewise Christ is in the Holy Spirit, and He cannot and will not come to us except through that Spirit. Through Him He shares Himself, through Him He also communicates His benefits to us. The Spirit is called the Holy Spirit precisely because He stands in a special relationship to the Father and to Christ, and consequently places us in such a special relationship to both. We must not think, therefore, that we can ever have fellowship with the Father and Christ in any other way than through the Holy Spirit. Everyone who mentions the name of Christ should desist from iniquity (2 Timothy 2:19).

According to the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration and faith, John 3:5, 1 Corinthians 12:3. He is the Spirit of truth, who leads in all truth and makes us know the things which are given us by God, John 16:13, 1 Corinthians 2:12. He justifies us in our consciousness and testifies of our childhood, Romans 8:15, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Galatians 4:6. He pours out the love of God in our hearts, gives peace and joy, and makes us free from law, flesh, sin and death, Romans 5:5, Romans 8:2, Romans 14:17. He is the comforter, the intercessor, who defends our interests, protects and supports us, and does not, like Christ according to his human nature, leave us, but always remains with us, comforts us and prays in us, John 14:16, Acts 9:31, Romans 8:26. The spiritual life is not only awakened by Him, but also constantly maintained and guided by Him; He is the law and rule of it all, Romans 8:2, Romans 8:14, Galatians 5:18. He renews and

sanctifies that life, makes it bear fruit, and makes it pleasing to God, Romans 15:13, Romans 15:16, Galatians 5:22, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 1:2; the Christian's whole life is a walk in the Spirit, Romans 8:4 ff, Galatians 5:16, Galatians 5:25. He unites all believers in one body and builds them all up into one temple, the one dwelling place of God, Ephesians 2:18-22, Ephesians 4:3-4. He guarantees their heavenly inheritance, 2 Corinthians 1:22, 2 Corinthians 5:5, Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 4:30, and also brings about their resurrection and exaltation, Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 15:44. In a word, Christ and all his benefits, the love of the Father and the grace of the Son, they only become our portion in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

01.20. The Vocation.

20. The Vocation. To make us partakers of this communion with his person and his benefits, Christ makes use not only of the Spirit, whom he poured out in the congregation, but also of the Word, which he gave to instruct and instruct it. He has linked the two in such a way that together they serve in the exercise of His prophetic, priestly and royal office. But it is not easy to grasp this relationship and define it clearly; there have always been very different views about the relationship between the Word and the Spirit, and these different views continue to exist side by side to this day.

There are those on the one side who consider the preaching of the word sufficient and who do not consider the working of the Spirit sufficient. It is the followers of Pelagius who, in earlier and later times, were guilty of this error. They understood Christianity exclusively as a doctrine, saw in Jesus nothing but an exalted example, and turned the Gospel into a new law. Since man has been weakened by sin but has not died spiritually, and has retained the freedom of his will, the preaching of the Gospel is sufficient to bring man to repentance, if he so desires, and to cause him to walk after the example of Jesus. No need is felt for the regenerating action of the Holy Spirit; his personality and divinity are denied and contested; at best, the Holy Spirit is thought of as a force emanating from God, or more precisely, from the person of Jesus, and creating in the congregation a moral disposition and an ideal will. In an entirely opposite direction are those who are known as "spiritists" (antinomians, enthusiasts, mystics), who speak a great deal about the Spirit but underestimate the significance of the word in converting people. In their view, the word (Scripture, the preaching of the Gospel) is not the spiritual thing itself, but is merely a sign and symbol of it; in itself it is a dead letter which cannot penetrate to the heart of man and implant the principle of the new life there; at most it has an instructive effect on the state of affairs, but no power to change and transform the heart. This can only happen, and only happens, through the Holy Spirit, who penetrates directly from God into the innermost being of man and makes him partakers of the thing of which the word is a sign. Spiritual man, therefore, is born of God and taught by God; he alone understands the Scriptures, goes beyond their letter to their heart and essence, and, for a time, makes use of them as a standard and guide; but the Scriptures are not really the source of his religious knowledge, for he is internally taught by the Spirit of God and gradually grows beyond the Scriptures. As the workings of the Spirit within the heart become more and more independent of Scripture, they also become more detached from the person of Christ and historical Christianity as a whole. Mysticism then develops into rationalism. For when the inner working of the Spirit is separated from the word of Scripture, it loses its special character, and it can no longer be distinguished from the ordinary working of God’s Spirit in man’s reason and conscience. God by his Spirit naturally dwells in each person; the inner word is written in each person’s heart from birth, and Christ only gave it sound. Something is not true because it is in the Bible, but it is in the Bible because it is true. Christianity is the original, natural religion; it is as old as the world, and in its essence underlies all historical religions. Mysticism always advances towards rationalism, just as the latter continually falls back into mysticism. Here the extremes meet

and give each other a hand. The Christian Church has always tried to avoid these errors and to keep the Word and the Spirit in harmony. But in doing so, she has diverged into different directions in her various confessions. The Roman Church, for example, does not see in Holy Scripture and Church Tradition an actual means of grace, but only a source of truth. The intellectual acceptance of that truth is called faith; but since this faith is only an assent, it is insufficient for salvation and therefore has only a preparatory significance. The actual salvation is first communicated in the sacrament, and thus Rome sees the work of the Holy Spirit first and foremost in the foundation and maintenance of the church with its teaching, pastoral and priestly functions, and then in the supernatural grace, virtues and gifts communicated to the faithful through the sacrament. The Reformation resisted this attempt to separate the salvific working of the Spirit from the word and to bind it only to the sacrament. It not only restored Scripture as the one, clear, and sufficient source of truth, excluding Tradition; but it also honored it as the means of the faithful and restored the Word's place before the Sacrament. But because of this, the Reformation was also forced to think more deeply about the relationship between Word and Spirit. She was forced to do so all the more because left and right old errors revived and found powerful defenders. While the Socinians returned to the teachings of Arius and Pelagius, regarded the Gospel as a new law, and felt no need for a special working of the Holy Spirit, the Anabaptists again took the path of mysticism, glorified the inner word and spoke of the Holy Scriptures as a dead letter and an empty symbol.

It took much effort to find the right way; and Lutherans and Reformed soon diverged on this point as well. The Lutherans bound the Word and the Spirit together so tightly that they were in danger of losing sight of the distinction between the two. They even came to confine the salvific working of the Spirit to the word and to allow man to enter only through the word. Since the Holy Scriptures were created by the Holy Spirit, He had infused them with His power for conversion and had them rest in a vessel. Just as the bread possesses a natural, internal power to nourish, so the Scriptures, through the Holy Spirit who brought them into being, received an inner, spiritual power to sanctify mankind. Thus, Scripture is not only endowed with a moral effect that teaches the mind or focuses on the will, but through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit it has an inner, heart-renewing, sanctifying power; and the Holy Spirit never works except through it. The Reformed could by no means agree with this view, because here too their principle applied that the finite can never absorb and contain the infinite. Word and. Spirit were still so closely related, they remained distinct. The Spirit can work, and sometimes does work, without the word; when he commits himself to the word, then that rests on his free choice; in accordance with his own will, he usually works in connection with the word, where the word is present and proclaimed, that is, in the circle of the covenant of grace, in the fellowship of the Church. But even then, He does not dwell, as the Lutherans imagined, in the Holy Scriptures or in the word preached, but in the congregation as the living body of Christ. Nor does He work through the word as a vehicle of His power; but while He combines His own working with that of the word, He Himself personally penetrates the heart of man and renews it for eternal life. In order to gain a proper understanding of the relationship between the Word and the Spirit, we must start from the fact that God makes use of the word as a means not only in the presentation of Christ and his benefits, but in all his outward works. In the Holy Scriptures the word is never a vain sound or an empty sign, but always has power and life in it; it carries within it something of the personality, of the soul of the speaker and therefore always brings something about. This is especially true of God; when He speaks, something happens, Psalms 33:9; His word never returns empty, but does everything that pleases Him and is

prosperous in what He sends it to do, Isaiah 55:11. This word therefore has such creative and sustaining power, because God utters it in the Son, John 1:3, Colossians 1:15, and through the Spirit, Psalms 33:6, Psalms 104:30, and in both as it were communicates it to his creatures. There is a discourse of God in all creatures; they are all based on thoughts spoken by Him; they all owe their existence and what they are to the word of God. But these thoughts, embodied by God in the world, are not understood by all creatures, but only by reasonable beings, especially by man. Because he has been created in God's image, man can also think and speak for himself, can absorb God's thoughts laid down in creation into his consciousness, make them his spiritual property and then also give them back in his own words. Just as he first emerged perfectly from the hands of his Creator, he could also understand the words of God that came to him internally in the moral law written in his heart, and that came to him externally in the trial commandment added to the moral law. Then, as with no other creature, God dealt with man. He entered into a covenant with him, accepted him into His community, and required him to walk in His ways willingly and knowingly. The moral law was the content and the proclamation, the rule and the standard of that original bond which God established with the newly created man.

Now man, by his willful disobedience, did break that covenant and deprive himself of the spiritual power to keep God's law and thus to attain eternal life. But God, for His part, has not withdrawn from creation and has not completely withdrawn His hand from mankind. Although it may be said of the Gentiles that God, unlike Israel, allowed them to walk in their own ways, He continues to reveal Himself to them in His eternal power and divinity, He does not leave them indifferent, He appoints their times and determines their dwellings, that they may seek the Lord, whether they may seek Him and find Him, Acts 14:17, Acts 17:26-27, Romans 1:20.

Thus God continues to speak to every human being. The professors of the Reformed religion have always recognized this by speaking of a "business vocation," which is also found outside the Christian world, and is the privilege of all people and all nations. The Gentiles do not share in the calling by the word of the Gospel, but they are by no means deprived of all calling. God still speaks to them also, by nature, Romans 1:2, and by history, Acts 17:26, by reason, John 1:9, and by conscience, Romans 2:14-15. This calling is not sufficient for salvation, because it does not know of Christ, who is the only way to the Father and the only name under heaven for salvation, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, but it is nevertheless of great value and its significance should not be underestimated.

After all, this call, which God in His general mercy makes to all men, may not be a preaching of the Gospel; it is still a preaching of the Law. Although man, through the obscurity of his understanding, often misunderstands, misinterprets, and misapplies it, it nevertheless has as its object, in substance, that same moral law which God originally gave to man and wrote in his heart. It therefore contains, however corrupted and de-natured, still a requirement to love God above all else and one's neighbor as oneself. For the Gentiles do not have the law in the perfect form that God gave it again to Israel; but they do the things that are the law, they allow themselves to be governed by moral rules in all their thoughts and deeds, and thus prove that these things of the law are written in their hearts and that in their lives they are in harmony with God, and that they feel bound to it in their conscience, (Romans 2:14-15).

Thus the bond between God and man, in spite of sin, is not completely broken. God does not let go of man, and man cannot let go of God; he remains under the power of His revelation and under the power of His law. God continues to speak to mankind, in nature and history, in reason and conscience, in blessings and judgments, in directions of life and experiences of the soul. Through that rich and powerful speech God maintains in man the consciousness of his dependence and the awareness of his responsibility. He makes him strive for a religious, moral life and, if he transgresses, allows his own conscience to accuse and condemn him. It is not an external compulsion, but an internal, moral bond that binds man to God and his revelation. It is a testimony of God's Spirit, which can still be heard in fallen man and which exhorts him to do good. For inasmuch as there is a general speaking of God and a general illumination by the Word (the Logos) in man, there is also a general working of God's Spirit. By that Spirit, God dwells in all creatures, and we live, move and are all in God, Acts 17:28. The general, ■material" vocation is not only external and subjective, in that it makes God's revelation and specifically His law known to mankind through nature and history, through reason and conscience; but it also has an internal and subjective side, in that it morally establishes each man on his part to that revelation of God and obliges him in his own conviction to observe God's law.

It is true that God does not renew and sanctify man through this preaching of the law, for that is impossible for the law, since it is powerless through the flesh (Romans 8:3); but He nevertheless binds sin, restrains passions and stops the flow of iniquity. It makes possible a human society and a civil righteousness, which in turn pave the way for a higher civilization, for a richer culture, for the blossoming of arts and sciences. Truly, the earth is still full of God's goods. The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works. He raiseth his sun over the evil and the good, and reigneth over the just and the unjust. He does not let himself be idle, but does good from heaven, gives rain and fruitful times, and strengthens our hearts with food and cheerfulness, Psalms 104:24, Psalms 145:7, Matthew 5:45, Acts 14:7.

Distinct from this general word of God, which comes to us in nature and conscience, is the special calling, which is contained in the word of the Gospel and is addressed to all who live within the boundaries of Christianity. The general calling, however, is not abolished and nullified in this special preaching, but rather included and strengthened. This is already proven by the fact that the Holy Scriptures, which are the word of special revelation, acknowledge the general revelation in nature and history, confirm it and cleanse it from all false admixtures. That the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament is the work of His hands (Psalms 19:2), that the invisible things of God have been known from the creation of the world through the creatures (Romans 1:20), and that the work of the law is written in the heart of man (Romans 2:15), are much better understood by a Christian who is taught by the Scriptures than by those who live by the light of reason alone. But much more telling is the fact that the moral law, which was only imperfectly and imprecisely known to the Gentiles, was again purely and perfectly proclaimed by God on Sinai and presented to His people Israel as a rule of life. When Christ came to earth, He did not abolish this law, but fulfilled it (Matthew 5:17), first of all in His own person and life, but also in the lives of all who follow in His footsteps and walk in the Spirit (Romans 3:31, Romans 8:3, Romans 11:8-10, Galatians 5:14).

Law and Gospel are therefore the two parts of the Word of God; they are distinct, but never separated; they accompany each other throughout Scripture, from the beginning to the end of

Revelation. The distinction between law and gospel is thus entirely different from that between the Old and New Testaments. It is confused with it, or identified with it, by all those who see in the Law an imperfect Gospel and in the Gospel a perfect Law. But nevertheless the two distinctions are very different from one another and therefore must be kept strictly apart. Old and New Testament are the names for two successive dispensations in one and the same covenant of grace and consequently for the two groups of Bible books, each of which has as its content one dispensation of this covenant of grace. But the distinction between Law and Gospel takes us to an entirely different terrain. These names do not indicate two dispensations of the same covenant, but two completely different covenants. The law actually belongs to the so-called covenant of works, which was established with the first man and promised him eternal life in the way of perfect obedience. But the Gospel is the proclamation of the covenant of grace, which was not made known to man until after the fall and which grants him eternal life by grace through faith in Christ. The covenant of grace is, however, again not the abolition and nullification, but rather the fulfillment of the covenant of works; the difference between the two lies primarily in the fact that Christ fulfills in our place the demands that God, by virtue of the covenant of works, can make upon us (cf. p. 308). Hence, the covenant of grace, although in itself purely grace, is from the beginning able to employ the law of the covenant of work, to bind it to itself, and also to bring it to fulfillment in the believers through the Spirit of Christ. The law retains its place in the covenant of grace, not so that we might try to gain eternal life by its observance, for to that end it is powerless because of the flesh. Romans 8:3; but first, that through it we might learn to know our sin, our guilt, our misery, our powerlessness, and, being stricken with guilt and defeated, might have recourse to the grace of God in Christ, Romans 7:7, Galatians 3:24, and secondly, that we, having died and been raised with Christ, might walk in newness of life and therein fulfil the law, Romans 6:4, Romans 8:4.

Thus there is no place in Christianity for antinomianism, contempt for the law and the violation of the law. Law and Gospel, as in Scripture, as in preaching and teaching, in doctrine and life, are to be linked together; they are both indispensable and essential constituents of the one and complete Word of God. Nevertheless, identification is as wrong as separation; nominalism, which transforms the Gospel into a new law, is no less erroneous than antinomianism; the law and the Gospel are not distinguished in degree, but in essence; they differ as demand and gift, as command and promise, as supply and demand. The law, like the Gospel, may contain God’s will, be holy, wise, good and spiritual, Romans 2:12, Romans 2:14, Romans 12:7, Romans 12:20, Romans 12:18; yet it is rendered powerless by sin, does not justify but increases sin, arouses wrath, doom and death, Romans 3:20, Romans 4:15, Romans 5:20, Romans 7:5, Romans 8:9, Romans 8:13, 2 Corinthians 3:6, Galatians 3:10, Galatians 3:13, Galatians 3:19. And over against this is the Evangelie, which has Christ as its substance, Romans 1:3, Ephesians 3:6, and brings nothing but grace, reconciliation, forgiveness, righteousness, peace and eternal life, Acts 2:38, Acts 20:24, Romans 3:21-26, Romans 4:3-8, Romans 5:1-2 etc. What the law demands of us, the Gospel gives us freely. When law and Gospel are distinguished in this way, it follows that the general calling, which comes to all men by nature and conscience, and the special calling, which reaches all who live under Christianity, differ not only in degree but also in essence. The difference lies not only in the fact that Christianity presents us with a better and more perfect law than that known to the Gentiles, but it lies above all in the fact that Christianity presents us with something new, that it brings us the Gospel and that, in that Gospel, it introduces us to the person of Christ. The distinction between Paganism and Christianity, between general and special revelation, between

the calling to which all men are called and that to which only Christians are called, lies not only in the law, but especially in the Gospel of the grace of God.

These two vocations were usually distinguished in earlier times as a ■material" and a ■wordly" one. The general calling, which is addressed to all people, is not contained in a literal, clear and distinct word of God, but lies intricately locked up in the revelation which God also gives to the Gentiles in the works of His hands and in their own reason and conscience, and must be deduced from this by their own investigation and reflection. But as soon as they tried this, they became lost, both in religion and in the moral law. Outside of the special revelation mankind, although knowing God, did not glorify Him or give Him thanks, but were thwarted in their deliberations and their unwise hearts were darkened; they fell into all kinds of idolatry and immorality, Romans 1:21.

Revelation in nature and calling in the reason and conscience of man thus proved to be wholly inadequate. In special revelation God therefore no longer speaks to man through ■matter', through the nature of creatures, but He makes use of the actual, literal word, which man himself uses as the highest and best expression of his thoughts. This use of the word in special revelation was also necessary for another reason. Nature, both outside and inside mankind, always remains the same; the heavens still tell God's praises in the same way as they did thousands of years ago; and in spite of all development and civilization, mankind today is still, in his essence and nature, in his heart and conscience, completely equal to his oldest forefathers. But special revelation is not included in nature; it came about historically, in centuries of history, and has its center in the historical person of Christ. No nature can save us, only a person can heal us. But of historical facts and persons, who, like nature, do not always surround us, but who come and go, appear and disappear, we can never know anything according to God's order except through words, whether spoken or written, in letters or in other signs. It follows from the nature of special, historical revelation that it must employ the word to make itself known from generation to generation and from place to place. General calling is effected by nature, whereas special calling makes use of the word; the latter has only the Law, and the former primarily the Gospel as its content. The Gospel word already began its course in paradise. God himself first revealed it in paradise, then had it proclaimed by the holy patriarchs and prophets, and exemplified it by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law, and finally fulfilled it through his only begotten Son. And it did not stop there. But He also had that word of the Gospel written down in the books of the Old and New Testaments, and furthermore entrusted the preservation, proclamation, interpretation, defense and propagation thereof to the church, that it might be known to all creatures. On the same day that the church receives this task from Christ and begins its execution, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit takes place. And vice versa, in the same moment in which the Holy Spirit makes the church his dwelling place, the hour of birth of the church as an independent community of believers, as the bearer of the word of the Gospel, as the pillar and anchor of the truth, occurs. Although they have been united in preparation at an earlier date, on the Day of Pentecost the Word and the Spirit definitively and fully join forces. They work together in the service of Christ, who is the King of the Church and the Lord of the Spirit, who is presented to us in the Word and communicated to us by the Spirit. Truth and grace go hand in hand, for Christ is full of both, John 1:14.

Calling by the Word far exceeds calling by nature. For while the latter only makes man hear the voice of the law and makes the demand: do this and you will live, vocation by word proceeds from Christ, has the substance of God's grace and offers man the richest benefits, forgiveness of sins

and eternal life, free of charge, in the way of faith and conversion. If one only pays attention to the content of this call, one might for a moment entertain the expectation that, when hearing it, all people would immediately receive it with joy and accept it with gladness of heart. For what can a man, who is a sinner and is about to perish, object to a gospel that assures him of the grace of God and wishes to grant him perfect salvation, without any work on his part, except that he should accept this glad tidings with childlike faith? But reality teaches us quite differently. Throughout the ages there has been a separation between those who serve the Lord and those who do not serve Him. In the family of Adam, Abel and Cain were already separated; the human race before the Flood was divided into the lineage of Seth and Cain, and after the Flood this separation continued in the lineage of Shem and his brothers. The families of the patriarchs saw the contrast between Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, and later that between Israel and the nations. Even under the people of the covenant, not all of them were Israel, who descended from Abraham fleshly, but the children of the promise were counted as the seed, Romans 9:6-8. And in the days of the New Testament we are faced with the same fact. Many are called, but few are chosen, Mattli. Not only is there a sharp contrast between the church and the world, but in the church itself there are thousands who are hearers, but not doers of the word, James 1:22. Even if one were to reject all of Christianity, one would still not get rid of this contrast. For everywhere there are and always will be good and bad, righteous and unrighteous. Among men there is not only a difference in rank and station, in gift and power, in wealth and honor, but there is among them a much deeper religious and moral difference. This fact of inequality speaks so strongly and at the same time has such a serious character that everyone must take it into account. But there have always been many who have tried to explain this moral inequality, as well as all other differences among people, by the free will they have been given. They represent it as meaning that man’s will has remained free in spite of sin and has retained the power to do good, or that, although weakened to some extent by sin, it has been strengthened by the general enlightenment of the Word (the Logos), John 1:9, or by the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is given before or in baptism, and has received sufficient power to obey the call of the Gospel.

Apart from the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, however, this explanation in itself is completely implausible. According to it, it is not God, but man, who makes a distinction between himself. But if God is God, this implies that His counsel is over all things, that He is the Creator of heaven and earth, and that He maintains and governs all creatures through His providence. It is a preposterous idea that He should govern all nature and regulate all things, even the smallest details, and that He should exclude from His counsel and providence the great, all-embracing and everlasting fact of spiritual unevenness among mankind and leave it to mankind to decide. Whoever holds this view, in principle, nullifies God’s counsel and providence, removes the whole history of the world from God’s hands, makes its outcome unpredictable, robs it of its purpose and goal, and ascribes to God an attitude of passivity and wait-and-see, contrary to His nature and works.

However, the spiritual difference among mankind is the most important, but by no means the only one. There are all kinds of differences among the creatures, also and especially among those who are endowed with reason. People differ in rank and station, in sex and age, in the gifts of the soul and the powers of the body. They also differ in that they are born within or without the confines of Christianity and may or may not hear the call of the Gospel. All these differences cannot be

explained by the wills and conduct of men, for they precede them and often have a weaker or stronger influence on them. If, however, one does not want to rest in the good pleasure of God and continues to look for an explanation in the different behaviour of mankind, one must resort to impossible hypotheses. The Lutherans, for example, did not want to acknowledge God's free will in the fact that one person was born under the light of the Gospel and another was not, but they maintained that the calling through the word had been known to all peoples at the time of Adam, Noah and also the Apostles (with particular reference to Romans 1:18 and Colossians 1:23) and had been lost again through their own fault. Along the same lines is the idea, already mentioned by Origen and shared by many today, that the human souls were originally created by God at the same time and equally, but that they received a different body and fate here on earth, according to the different behaviour in their pre-existence.

All these assumptions increase the difficulties that arise here and do not contribute anything substantial to the explanation. Here, too, man will not rest until he rests at the fatherly heart of God and recognizes in his free and incomprehensible will the deepest reason for the inequality among creatures. The differentiation between the general and special callings is not caused by the dignity of one people above the other, or by the better use of the light of nature, but by the completely free will and undeserved love of God (Dordrecht Precepts 111 IV 7). And the same is true of the spiritual inequality that exists between those who accept the call of the Gospel with a believing heart and those who reject it and choose to go their own ways. It is not man, but God who makes the distinction. The calling itself is different, with which He comes to some, and with which He comes to others. In calling by word, again on the basis of Scripture, a distinction can be made between an external and an internal one. But before the rightness of this distinction is argued, it should be strongly emphasized that it in no way intends to deprive the so-called external calling of its power or value. For in the first place, this call from God's side is and remains serious and well-meant. As many as are called by the Gospel are called seriously. For God earnestly and truly shows in His Word what is pleasing to Him, namely, that the called should come to Him; and He also earnestly promises rest of soul and eternal life to all who come to Him and believe. Those who accept the distinction between outward and inward calling, still attribute the same power and significance to the former, which the opponents of this distinction believe to be true of all calling. They do not bring mankind by this distinction into a more unfavorable condition than all men are in according to their opponents. For the word of the Gospel, in which this outward calling comes to them, is not a dead letter, but a power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, Romans 1:16, living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, Hebrews 4:12, the means of regeneration, 1 Peter 1:23. It is the same word, which God uses at the inner calling, and it is not entirely devoid of all effect of the Spirit. For the Holy Spirit not only testifies in the hearts of believers that they are God's children, Romans 8:16, but He also indicts the consciences of those whom He convinces of sin, righteousness and judgment, John 16:8-11. And Calvin therefore spoke, not unjustly, of a lower working of the Spirit, which accompanies the outward calling.

Consequently, in the second place, the rejection of this calling never occurs without guilt. Those who reject the Gospel cannot appeal to their powerlessness, for they do not reject it because they are powerless; even then they would plead for the grace of God, which the Gospel offers them. But they reject it on the contrary, because they feel strong, think they can save themselves, and think they can be saved without the grace of God. That many, being called by the Gospel, do not

come and are not converted, therefore, the fault is not in the Gospel, nor in Christ, being offered by the Gospel, nor in God, who calls by the Gospel, and even to whom He calls, communicates various gifts; but in those who are called, some of whom, being careless, do not accept the word of life; Others do accept it, but not from within their hearts, and therefore it is that they, after a momentary joy of temporary faith, turn back again; others choke on the word through the thorns of the cares and lusts of the world and bring forth no fruit, which our Saviour teaches in the parable of the seed (Dordrecht Doctrine, Ill IV 9). And thirdly, also this external calling is not without fruit. In general it can be said that God achieves His intention with it. For it is also true of His word in this external calling that it does not return empty, but that it does everything that pleases Him and that it is successful in everything to which He sends it, Isaiah 55:11. But furthermore it is not at all indifferent how people behave towards this external calling. Among the pagans there is a great difference in the attitude which they adopt toward the call of nature; Socrates and Plato cannot be mentioned in the same breath as Caligula and Nero. And so it is by no means the same whether the Gospel is mocked and blasphemed or accepted with a historical or temporal faith. It is true that between these two types of faith and the salutary faith of the heart there is an essential difference. But that does not mean that they are on a par with utter unbelief. On the contrary, they are fruits of God's general grace and bring many temporary blessings. They bind men to the truth, keep them from many terrible sins, make them lead modest and honorable lives, and contribute greatly to the formation of Christian society, which are of the greatest importance to the life of mankind and to the influence of the church.

Above all, it deserves attention that this external vocation often serves in God's hand as a means of preparing the work of grace in the hearts of His people. There is certainly no preparatory grace in the sense that the external calling progresses without leap to the internal or that the natural man gradually grows up to become a child of God. For just as in nature, in grace there is no gradual transition from death to life or from darkness to light. But there is a preparatory grace, if it is understood that God, who is the Master of all grace, is also the Creator of nature, and establishes a link between both, which He constantly maintains. In the execution of the counsel of redemption He walks in the track that He Himself has laid by the work of creation and providence. Just as He worked up the desire in Zacheus to see Jesus, Luke 19:3, and brought about success among the multitude that heard Peter, Acts 2:37, so He also cares for and governs His own before the hour in which He glorifies His grace in them, and leads them towards that hour with His almighty hand. But whatever power and value this outward calling may have, it is in itself insufficient to change a man's heart and to forcefully induce him to faithfully accept the Gospel. This inadequacy of the external calling, however, must be clearly understood. The Gospel which it proclaims is not an inadequate Gospel, for it contains the whole counsel of salvation, presents Christ with all His benefits before our eyes, and needs no further supplement to its contents. Nor is it a dead letter that must be quickened by the Spirit, nor an empty sound or vain sign that has no essential connection with the matter it designates. Paul says of the ministers that they are nothing (1 Corinthians 3:7), because they can be replaced by others or even be dispensed with altogether. On the contrary, it is the power of God unto salvation, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 15:2, not the word of man, but the word of God, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, living and powerful, John 6:63, Hebrews 5:12, 1 Peter 1:25, and in a certain sense always efficacious, for if it be not the fragrance of life unto life, it is the fragrance of death unto death, 2 Corinthians 2:16. Christ, who is the substance of the Gospel, leaves no one neutral; He brings a crisis, a judgment, a separation in the world, John

3:19, John 9:39, and reveals the inclinations and thoughts of the heart by His word, which penetrates the innermost being of man, Luke 2:35, Hebrews 4:12. He becomes a stone of annoyance to those who reject Him as a rock of salvation; is foolishness to those who reject Him as wisdom; and is a downfall to those for whom He is not a resurrection, Luke 2:34, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Peter 2:7. But this twofold working of the word of the gospel proves precisely, that the difference of result among those who accept it and those who reject it, cannot be explained from that word itself, without more, and therefore not from the outward calling. It is true that the Gospel, by whomsoever and to whomsoever it is brought, is always a word of God, living and powerful. But the word of God does not always have the same meaning in Scripture. Sometimes it means the power of God by which He creates and sustains the world, Genesis 1:3, Psalms 33:6, Matthew 4:4, Hebrews 1:3; other times it is the name of the special revelation by which God makes something known to the prophets, Jeremiah 1:2.

Another time it is the name of the special revelation by which God makes something known to the prophets, Jeremiah 1:2, Jeremiah 1:4, Jeremiah 2:1, etc., and it is also used several times to indicate the content of that revelation, whether it consists of law or of the Gospel, Exodus 20:1, Luke 5:1, etc. In the latter case, the word remains a word of God, as far as its content is concerned, but it is not spoken directly and immediately by God, as is the word that emanates from His mouth at the creation and maintenance of all things. It is clothed in the form of the human word, can be spoken and written down by human beings, and has therefore, as it were, acquired an independent existence. In this sense it also remains a living and powerful word according to its content, but as a word it shares the characteristics of all human words and as such can only have a moral effect. This moral effect is not to be underestimated; it is much stronger than mere rational instruction, because the word of the Gospel is not only a source for our knowledge of God and divine matters, but it is also a means of grace. But such a rational and religious-moral working of the Gospel is not sufficient. It would be sufficient if man had not fallen or been deprived of his spiritual freedom by the fall. But the Scriptures testify, and experience confirms every day, that man is darkened in his understanding, Ephesians 4:18, Ephesians 5:8, bound in his will by sin, John 8:34, Romans 6:20, and dead in sins and crimes, Ephesians 2:2-3. Therefore he cannot see the kingdom of God, John 8:3, grasp the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Corinthians 2:14, submit to the law of God, Romans 8:7, of himself think or do nothing good, John 15:5, 2 Corinthians 3:5. The Gospel may be for man, but it is not according to man, not in accordance with his wishes and thoughts, Galatians 1:11; and therefore, if left to himself, it is always rejected and opposed by him. But herein lies the riches of God’s grace, that, notwithstanding, He links the calling by word to the working of His Spirit in those whom He has elected to eternal life. Already in the Old Testament, the Spirit of the Lord was the Master and Guide of the spiritual life, Psalms 51:12, Psalms 143:10, but especially there He is still promised as the one who in the days of the New Covenant would teach all, would give them a new heart and would write in that heart the Law of God, Isaiah 32:15, Jeremiah 31:33, Jeremiah 32:39, Ezekiel 11:19, Ezekiel 36:26, Joel 2:28. For that purpose He was poured out on the day of Pentecost. He had to testify of Christ with and through the apostles and then live in the congregation, to regenerate it, John 3:5, to bring it to the confession of Jesus as its Lord, 1 Corinthians 12:3, to comfort it, to lead it and to remain with it forever, John 14:16, Romans 8:14, Ephesians 4:30 etc., and likewise to penetrate the world from the congregation and to convince it of sin, righteousness and judgment, John 16:8-11. The work of redemption is not only God’s, but also his alone, subjective work. It is not of him who wills, nor of him who walks, but of

the compassionate God, Romans 9:16. There is an outward calling, which comes to many, Matthew 22:14, but there is also an inward, powerful calling, which is the result of election, Romans 8:28-30. God not only gives the Gospel, but He also preaches it in power and in the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 2:4, 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6, and gives the growth Himself, 1 Corinthians 3:6-9. He opens the heart, Acts 16:14, enlightens the mind, Ephesians 1:18, Colossians 1:9-11, bends the will, Acts 9:6, and works both the will and the work according to His will, Php 2:13. That those who are called in this way come to Christ and are converted is therefore not to be ascribed to man as if his free will distinguished him from others; But one must attribute it to God, who, as He elected His own from eternity in Christ, so also powerfully calls those in time, endows them with faith and conversion, and brings them into the kingdom of His Son, having been delivered from the power of darkness, That they may proclaim the virtues of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light, and that they may not glory in themselves, but in the Lord, as the apostolic writings repeatedly testify. The nature of this inner calling is explained to us in many ways in Scripture; although it does not use this term, it repeatedly brings to our attention the matter which it denotes. Nature already gives us an explanation of what happens in grace; creation elucidates the re-creation, just as it sheds its light on the other; Jesus explained the nature, the characteristics, and the laws of the kingdom of heaven in parables, for which He borrowed the material from nature and everyday life. Specifically, in the parable of the Sower, He shed light on the various effects that the word of the Gospel has in the hearts of men. The law of nature is that for all perception and knowledge a certain relation is necessary between man and the object he wishes to perceive and know. To see, one needs not only an object but also an open eye and, in addition, a light that illuminates both. To hear, there are not only air vibrations and sounds necessary, but man also needs an opened ear to catch these sounds. And behind these two senses, in order to understand the meaning of the objects we see and the sounds we hear, a heart is needed to notice. We must relate to what we perceive in order to truly take it in and make it our spiritual property. A blind man cannot see, a deaf man cannot hear, an indifferent man cannot understand, an unmusical man cannot grasp the world of tones, and a man who lacks any sense of beauty cannot take pleasure in a work of poetry or painting. There must be a certain relationship, a harmonious connection, between man and the world if there is to be perception and knowledge.

Now, in the natural sphere, that connection has generally continued to exist. It is true that sin has also had its effect here, so that it is almost completely broken in the case of the blind, the deaf, the insane and many other unfortunate people, and more or less weakened and disturbed in the case of all people without distinction. But in general one can say that God has left that connection in the natural sphere; man can still see and hear, perceive and think, learn and know. But on the spiritual level, that connection has been completely severed by sin. The pattern of a man’s heart is evil from childhood, Genesis 8:21. An ox knows its owner and a donkey the manger of its master, but Israel has no knowledge and the Lord’s people do not abide, Isaiah 1:3. The generation of mankind is like the children who sit in the markets and call their companions and say: We played to you the flute and you did not dance, We sang to you songs of lamentation and you did not weep, Matthew 11:16-17. They have no eyes to see, no ears to hear, no hearts to understand, Isaiah 6:9, Matthew 13:14-15, Matthew 1:21, and when He reveals Himself to them in the gospel, they do not understand the things of the Spirit of God, are annoyed at the foolishness of the cross, and beat their heels against the stimuli, Acts 9:5, 1 Corinthians 1:23, 1 Corinthians 2:14. Man by

nature is dead to God, to His revelation, to all spiritual and heavenly things; he has no interest in them, is indifferent to them, thinks only of things that are beneath him, and has no desire to know the ways of the Lord. The bond between God and man is broken; there is no longer any spiritual kinship or fellowship between the two.

Therefore, inward calling generally consists of restoring that broken bond and making mankind spiritually related to God again, so that he will hear God's word again and be able to understand it. Scripture even refers to this working of the Holy Spirit in internal calling as revelation. When Simon Peter in the parts of Caesarea Philippi confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Saviour said to him: Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And likewise the apostle Paul testifies that at his conversion it pleased God to reveal His Son in him, Galatians 1:16. This revelation is not to be understood as the actual appearance of Christ, because when Peter confessed Him as the Christ, the Saviour had already lived and worked on earth for years; He had also made Himself known as the Messiah several times, e.g. Matthew 11:5 ff, and had already been recognized as such by others, Matthew 8:29, Matthew 14:33. But so clear and decisive as now by Peter, Jesus had never before been confessed as Messiah and Zone of God, and therefore he says that only a subjective revelation in the heart and consciousness of Peter could bring him to such a firm and clear confession. God Himself enlightened the Apostle internally so that he now saw in Christ what he had never before seen so clearly in Him. In other words, the revelation referred to here consists of an internal illumination. In the natural world our eye is enlightened by the sun, and then it in turn enlightens the whole body, just as a candle enlightens a house, Matthew 6:23. Man's mind and reason are enlightened by the word that was with God, that made all things, that was the light of man, and yet enlightens every man coming into the world, John 1:1-9; and by that enlightenment of his consciousness man can perceive, investigate and know the world; and the wisdom of man lightens his face, Ecclesiastes 8:1. Already in the Old Testament the poet prayed for it, when he said: discover my eyes, remove the lid from them, that I may behold the wonders of your law, Psalms 119:18. God, who is the creator of light, has also shone in his heart, so that as an apostle he might make the glory of God shine before others in the preaching of Christ and thus lead them to the knowledge of it. 2 Corinthians 4:6, comp. Ephesians 3:9.

Elsewhere this activity of the Holy Spirit in the internal calling is described as an opening of the heart by the Lord Christ, Acts 16:14, or of the mind, Luke 14:45, so that the word of God is understood and accepted in its true sense; or it is also presented as a growth that God gives to the word preached by the apostles, 1 Corinthians 3:5-9. For the apostles are but servants, fellow workers of God, instruments in His hand, so that it is not actually they who labor, but the grace of God which is with them, 1 Corinthians 15:10. Yes, they are nothing, but God is everything, because He gives the seed of the word its growth, and the church is therefore entirely His work and building. Besides, such power as is necessary to bring a dead sinner to life is in the hand of no creature, angel or apostle. It requires no less than divine, omnipotent power, the same power that raised Christ from the dead. For the believers in Ephesus, the Apostle Paul prays that God may continually give them the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation, that they may know Him and enlighten their eyes (their hearts), so that they may know, first, the exceeding hope and expectation that God gives to those He has called, and second, the riches of the glory that He has promised; Secondly, what riches of glory of inheritance await them among the saints in the future; and thirdly,

what is the exceeding greatness of His power, which He displays to the faithful from the beginning of their calling, through their whole life up to the glory. They can form some idea of the greatness of this power by measuring it against that which God has wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and placed Him at His right hand in the heavens, far above all power and name. The same power of God is manifested in the calling, regeneration, birth and glorification of believers as in the resurrection, ascension and exaltation of Christ (Ephesians 1:17-20). In full agreement with the Holy Scriptures, the Reformed Church therefore confesses that when God works his good pleasure in the elect and effectuates true conversion in them, he not only externally preaches the Gospel to them and powerfully enlightens their minds through the Holy Spirit, so that they may rightly understand and discern the things that are of the Spirit of God, but also reaches into the innermost parts of man with the powerful working of the same regenerating Spirit. And this working 'is, according to the same confession, a wholly supernatural one, a very powerful and at the same time very sweet, wonderful, hidden and inexpressible working, which, according to the testimony of the Scriptures (which are inspired by the author of this working), is in its power no less and no less than the creation or the raising of the dead' (Dordrecht Precepts 111 IV 11, 12). The change which is brought about in man by this working of the Holy Spirit is called rebirth. The word does not occur only and not for the first time in Scripture, but has been used from ancient times in the religion of the Indians to denote the change which every soul undergoes at death. According to the Indians, the soul does not remain in a state of separation after death, but immediately passes into another body, whether human, animal or plant, according to how it behaved in its previous body. Every birth leads to death, but every death also leads to a new birth; every human being is subjected to a centuries-long series of ■rebirths," that is, of the indwelling of his soul in ever other bodies ; And according to Buddhism, salvation from this terrible law and from all the suffering in the world is only possible when man knows how to quench his thirst for being within himself and works on his own destruction, or at least on the numbing of his consciousness, through all kinds of abstinence. From India this doctrine of "rebirths" was transmitted to Europe in ancient times and again in the last century; and today there are not a few who see in it the essence of all wisdom. But Scripture speaks of rebirth in an entirely different sense. She uses this noun in two places; once in Matthew 19:28, where Jesus thinks of regeneration as the renewal of the world, which will precede the kingdom of glory, and another time in Titus 3:5, where Paul says that God has saved us, not by our works, but according to His mercy, through the bath of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. It is difficult to determine whether Paul is thinking of baptism by means of this bath, as a sign and seal of the rebirth, or whether he is comparing and presenting the acts of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit themselves in the image of a bath, into which the believers have descended. However, the addition of the renewal of the Holy Spirit proves that we have to think of a spiritual, moral change, which took place in the believers during their conversion. The context confirms this view, for formerly they, who are now believers, were unwise, disobedient, erring, etc., Titus 3:3, but now they have been saved, reborn and renewed, in hope becoming heirs of life, Titus 3:4-7, and are thus exhorted to contrive good works, Titus 3:8, for which they have received the ability and desire through rebirth and renewal.

Although the noun 'rebirth' occurs only two times in Scripture, the matter itself is often mentioned in other words and images. Already the Old Testament admonishes the people of Israel, that they do not glory in the external sign of circumcision, but that they should circumcise the foreskin of their hearts and harden their necks no more, Deuteronomy 10:16. And it promises that the Lord

their God Himself shall circumcise their hearts and the hearts of their seed, to love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul, Deuteronomy 30:6. The promise has been fulfilled in the history of Israel among the pious, but it will be fulfilled much more abundantly in the future, when God will make a new covenant with His people, pour out the Spirit on all of them, give them a new heart of flesh, and write His law in their hearts, Jeremiah 24:7, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Jeremiah 32:39, Ezekiel 11:19, Ezekiel 36:26-28, Joel 2:28 ff. etc. When that future is at hand and the kingdom of heaven has come near, John the Baptist therefore appears with the demand for conversion as a condition for entrance into the kingdom. The people of Israel, in spite of all their outward privileges, are rotten to the core; they need, in spite of their circumcision, a baptism, the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, in which man is completely immersed, in order to rise as another man and to a new life. 3:2 f. And Jesus takes the same preaching of conversion and faith on his lips, undergoes baptism himself, and also administers it to all who want to be his disciples, Mark 1:14-15, John 4:1-2. He who wants to enter the kingdom must break with his whole former life, lose his soul, Matthew 10:39, Matthew 16:25, leave everything, Luke 14:33, take up his cross and follow Him, Matthew 10:38, become a child, Matthew 8:3, return to the Father with a confession of his guilt, Luke 15:18, pass through the narrow gates of the Kingdom of Heaven. Luke 15:18, to enter through the narrow gate and the narrow way to eternal life, Matthew 7:14, Matthew 15:19; as an evil tree, they cannot produce good fruit, Matthew 7:17 f. So if there is to be good fruit, the tree must first be made good, and that is something that only God can do, Matthew 19:26 Children of God and citizens of the kingdom of heaven are those who, like a plant, have been planted by the heavenly Father, Matthew 15:13, to whom the Sovereign Lord has given His blessing. Matthew 15:13, to whom the Son has revealed the Father and the Father the Son, Matthew 11:27, Matthew 13:11, Matthew 16:17; while they were formerly dead spiritually, they are now partakers of the true life and await eternal life, Matthew 8:22, Luke 15:24, Luke 18:30. In this entire teaching of Christ, as the first three Evangels tell us, the word ’rebirth’ does not occur, but the matter is clearly presented in it. So when Jesus, in His conversation with Nicodemus, says that no one can see the kingdom of God and enter it unless he is born again (from above), of water and the Spirit, John 3:3-8, He is not contradicting the teaching in the other Gospels, but is merely summarizing in a brief and sharp manner towards the teacher Nicodemus what He has explained elsewhere in a broader and more popular form. Nicodemus was an important man, a teacher of Israel, a member of the Sanhedrin; he had heard of Jesus’ miracles and therefore considered him to be a teacher sent by God; but he was still undecided, still in doubt, and in order not to arouse the distrust and enmity of the Jews, went to Jesus by night to have a confidential conversation with him in order to find out whether he was indeed the Messiah. Nicodemus began his conversation by admitting that he thought Jesus was a teacher who had come from God and was qualified by God to do his work, and apparently wanted to ask what a man had to do to enter the kingdom of heaven. But Jesus does not give him time to ask this question, and immediately answers: verily, verily, I say unto you, Except one be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And with this He cuts off from Nicodemus all human work, all Pharisaic law, as the way to the kingdom. That is why Jesus does not speak literally of being born again (a new birth), but of being born from above. The emphasis is not on the fact that a second birth is necessary for entrance into the kingdom (although rebirth can of course be called that), but Jesus wants to make clear to Nicodemus that only a birth from above, John 3:3, from water and the Spirit, John 3:5, from the Spirit, John 3:8, opens the entrance to the kingdom. This birth is opposed to that of the flesh, for

what is born of the flesh is the flesh, John 3:6; it is not of the blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, John 1:13. Therefore it is as incomprehensible in its origin and direction as the wind, but it is nevertheless possible, for it is a birth of the Spirit, John 3:8. After Jesus first said in general that it is a birth of water and Spirit (both without an article), John 3:5, He speaks in John 3:7-8 specifically of the Spirit (with the article), to indicate that this Spirit, as the Spirit of God, can bring about this great work of birth from above. With the water, John 3:5, Jesus does not think of baptism, but He describes the nature of the birth from above with it; it is a birth that bears the character of a renewal and purification (of which the water is an image, Ezekiel 36:25, verg, the conjoining of Spirit and fire, Matthew 3:11), and gives birth to a new, spiritual life. And this can be done by this birth from above, because it is a birth from the Spirit, from God Himself, John 3:6-8.

Other places in the New Testament expand on this foundational teaching of Christ. The rebirth is a work of God; it is He by Whom the believers are born, John 1:13, 1 John 3:9, 1 John 5:18, 1 John 5:10, 1 John 5:7-8, 1 John 3:9, 1 John 5:18, who calls them by force, Romans 8:30, who brings them to life from the dead, Ephesians 2:18, who gives them a new life. Ephesians 2:1, brings them forth, James 1:17 and regenerates them, 1 Peter 1:3. But He does not bestow this benefit except in the fellowship with Christ, to whom He has given the gift of the Holy Spirit, John 6:37, John 6:39 to whom He draws them, John 6:44, in whom He incorporates them, Romans 6:4, Ephesians 2:1, Galatians 2:20, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit, who penetrates into the heart of man, and is the principle of the new life, John 3:3, John 3:5, John 3:8, John 6:63, Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 12:3, 1 Peter 1:2. By virtue of this birth from God, believers are therefore His workmanship, created in Christ, Ephesians 2:10, His fieldwork and building, 1 Corinthians 3:9, a new creature, 2 Corinthians 5:17. Regeneration is not a work of man’s strength, not the product of a slow, gradual development of natural life, but a break with the old existence and the creative beginning of a new, spiritual life; the death of the old and the resurrection of the new man, Romans 6:3 ff.

Yet on the other hand it is not a second creation, entirely from nothing, but a re-creation of man, who received existence through birth from his parents. At the time of rebirth he remains essentially the same person, the same I, the same personality. Paul says of himself that he has been crucified with Christ and therefore no longer lives himself, but Christ lives in him; but then he goes on to say: that which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Galatians 2:20; his self has been crucified with Christ and has died, but it has also arisen immediately with Christ; it has not been destroyed and replaced by another, but it has been reborn and renewed. And likewise he says of some of the believers in Corinth that they were formerly fornicators and idolaters and adulterers, but they have been washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God, 1 Corinthians 6:10-11. This change is of a spiritual nature; that which is born of spirit, is spirit, John 3:6, lives and walks according to the Spirit. The rebirth instills a principle of new life, which the Holy Spirit creates in connection with the resurrection of Christ, from whom He takes everything, 1 Peter 1:3. It plants a seed in the heart, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 John 3:9, from which a whole new man arises. It starts, in a very mysterious and hidden way, and has its center in the core of man’s personality, in his very being, Galatians 2:20, but from there it extends to all the faculties of man, to his intellect, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 2:12, Ephesians 4:23, and heart, Hebrews 8:10, Hebrews 10:16, 1 Peter 3:4, to his will, Romans 7:15-21, and affections, Romans 7:22, to his mind and soul and body, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Romans 6:19, Romans 5:17,

yet desires to walk in newness of the Spirit, Romans 6:4, Romans 7:6.

They no longer bear the image of the earthly man, of the first Adam, but present the image of the second man, the Lord from heaven, 1 Corinthians 15:48-49. They have been crucified to the world, and no longer live themselves, but live in the One who died and rose again for them, 2 Corinthians 5:15, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 6:14. They have received another center for all their thinking and their work, for they live, move and are in Christ, have put on Him as a garment in baptism, display His form and are being changed ever more in His image, from glory to Lordship, as of the Lord's Spirit, 2 Cor. And in that communion with Christ they are children of the heavenly Father, who love God and the brethren, and will one day be like God, because they will see Him as He is, 1 John 3:2, 1 John 5:2, etc. Holy Scripture speaks so richly and gloriously about the rebirth, and it does so not in the first place so that we might think rightly of its teachings, but so that we might personally partake of this great benefit of God's grace and walk as God's children in this wicked world. What a power it would be for the church if it did not only describe the image of Christ in its confession, but also showed it in the practice of life to all those around it. This is certain: the tree is known by its fruits. A good tree brings forth good fruit, and a good man brings forth good things from the goodly treasure of his heart, Matthew 7:17, Matthew 12:33, Matthew 12:35. If regeneration produces a new principle of life in the heart, it must and will be manifested in the activities that emanate from that spiritual life. And these are, in particular, two: faith on the part of the mind, and conversion on the part of the will.

Believing is in general, as we speak of it in our daily lives, the acceptance of a testimony. We believe something when we have not seen or observed it ourselves, but are nevertheless assured of it because other reliable persons, orally or in writing, in the past or in the present, have told us about it. The word retains this basic meaning when it is applied to religion, and it must retain this meaning because we know nothing of the entire content of the Gospel, of the person and work of Christ, except through the testimony of the Apostles; it is only through their word that we can believe in Christ, John 17:20, and through fellowship with the Apostles that we come to fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, 1 John 1:3.

Nevertheless, when faith is transferred to the religious sphere, and especially when it is presented in Scripture as the way to the kingdom of heaven, it is significantly modified in accordance with this particular use. It is also possible to accept the Gospel in the same way as one believes the testimony concerning a historical person or fact, but then one does not accept the Gospel as an Evangeline, and the faith with which one accepts it is not the true faith. The experience of all preachers, prophets, apostles, ministers in the church and in the gentile world, even the experience of Jesus Himself, has always been that the word did not find acceptance or effect with many who heard it. Who has believed our preaching, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Isaiah 53:1. The people who hear the Gospel bring a very different state of mind and have a very different attitude towards it.

Jesus depicted these situations in the parable of the Sower. With some, the word's seed falls along the path that borders the field, and the birds come and eat it; these are the indifferent, the insensitive, the vapid, who hear the word, but as a matter that does not concern them; they do not take the slightest interest in it personally and believe that it is not addressed to them. The word does not fall into their hearts, but on the hard, well-worn path; it is not even remembered, but goes

in one ear and out the other; after a few moments it is as if they had not heard it at all; the birds, all kinds of thoughts of contradiction, contempt, disbelief, slander, used by the Evil One as a means, drive the word out of their consciousness; they have heard it, but they do not understand it, Matthew 13:4, Matthew 13:19. With others the seed of the word falls into stony places, where it does not have much earth; it then rises immediately, precisely because it has no depth of earth, but when the sun has risen it burns, and it withers, because it has no root. These are the superficial, shallow, fleeting minds; they not only hear the word, but also accept it immediately with joy; the Gospel attracts them because of its beauty, loftiness, simplicity or loveliness, and also makes some impression on them. They are moved and stirred by it, taste a certain strength from it, and form all kinds of good intentions. But they do not allow the truth to penetrate deeply and take root. hey give it a place in their memory, in their imagination, in their reason and in their intelligence, but they do not open the depths of their soul to it.

There is a thin layer of earth on the surface where the word penetrates, but below that everything is cold, dead, hard as a rock. That is why they cannot endure the oppression and persecution, the trial and temptation; as soon as they come, they are vexed and fall away; they are only for a time, Matthew 13:5-6, Matthew 13:20-21.

There are also others, with whom the seed of the word falls in the midst of thorns, but the thorns, also growing up (with that seed of the word), Luke 8:7, choke it, so that it does not germinate and bear fruit. These are the worldly-minded hearers, whose hearts are full of thorns, full of the cares of the world or the temptations of riches, who are completely taken over by the cares or the temptations of earthly life. They hear the word, they also accept it; sometimes it penetrates their hearts amidst all the worldly cares and pleasures; the thought occurs to them now and then that it would be better to break with the world and seek the kingdom of God; the fear of judgment sometimes takes possession of their minds. But when the seed of the word is about to germinate, then come the thorns, the worldly burdens and lusts, and they choke it in birth. They cannot bring themselves to leave everything, to take up their cross and follow Jesus; the power of the world is too strong for them. So there is a consent and acceptance of the Gospel, which is not the true one. Certainly, there are indifferent people, like Pilate, who turn away from the Gospel with a haughty and contemptuous smile, John 18:38. There are also those, like the proud Pharisees and the wise Greeks, who see the Cross of Christ as an annoyance and a foolishness, and break out in wild enmity and hatred against it, Matthew 12:24, John 8:22, 1 Corinthians 1:23. But there are others who believe, but do not come to confession, and love the honour of men more than the honour of God, John 12:42-43; who remain hearers of the word all their life, until they die, but never become doers of the word, Matthew 7:26, John 13:17, Romans 2:13, James 1:23; who, like Simon of Samaria, accept the Gospel because of the signs and great powers which it produces, Acts 8:13 ff. There are all kinds of faiths, historical, temporal, miraculous, which bear the name, but do not possess the substance; which show a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, 2 Timothy 3:5. The real, the beatific faith, is different from all the mentioned forms of faith in three respects. First, it has a different origin. Historical, temporal and miraculous faith are not in themselves wrong; they are better than utter unbelief and more bitter enmity; they even have a temporary use; but they are only gifts of God’s general grace and are also given to natural men. But the saving faith is a gift of God, like all salvation, Ephesians 2:8, a gift of God’s special grace, Php 1:29, a consequence of election, Acts 13:48, Romans 8:30, Ephesians 1:5, a work of the Holy Spirit, 1

Corinthians 12:3, a fruit of regeneration, John 1:12-13.

Those who only have a natural birth belong to the world, are from below, prefer darkness to light, do not know God and do not understand His word, John 1:11, John 3:3, John 3:19-20, John 6:44, John 8:47, Romans 8:7, 1 Corinthians 2:14, etc. They are born of God, are of the truth, are led by the Father to Christ, hear His voice, understand His word and follow Him, John 3:3, John 3:5, John 6:44, John 8:47, John 10:5, John 10:27. And the Holy Spirit, of whom they are born, testifies with their spirit that they are the children of God, Romans 8:16, and puts on their lips the confession that Christ is their Lord, 1 Corinthians 12:3. By virtue of this origin, secondly, true, beatific faith is also distinguished in essence from all other faiths. It unquestionably includes an element of knowing, for it relates to a testimony concerning unseen, eternal things, which we ourselves have not perceived and cannot perceive. It cannot construct the truth from the born-again life, nor from religious experience and mental experience. For although the faithful have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit (i.e. Chris) and know all things, 1 John 2:20, they owe this Spirit precisely to Christ, remain bound by the word of truth which they heard from the beginning, 1 John 2:21-24, and with the whole church are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Ephesians 2:20. But the knowledge that is inherent to salvation faith is of a special kind. It is not merely a theoretical knowledge, which is only absorbed by the mind and the memory and leaves mankind cold. It is not the same as that which is gained in science through research and reflection, and it is not the same as accepting a historical report about something that happened somewhere in the past. The knowledge of faith is a practical knowledge, a knowledge of the heart more than of the head, a knowledge with a personal, deep, soul-searching interest, because it concerns a matter in which I myself am involved at the core of my being, in which my existence, my life, my soul, my salvation is at stake. Faith, then, is an assent and acceptance, a knowing and awareness of a testimony that comes to me; but it is an acceptance of that testimony with application to myself, a reception of the word of God’s preaching, not as the word of man, but as the word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13), a "ministering" of the Gospel as a message sent to me personally by God. And with this, in the third place, we see that salvation faith differs from all other faiths in its object. For historical faith stands by the message and does not penetrate deeper; temporal faith sees some beauty in that message and rejoices in it, but ignores its actual content; and belief in miracles attaches itself to the signs and powers, but is actually indifferent to Him who works them. If, however, we accept the Gospel with a true heart, as a word that God brings to us personally, then this beatific faith cannot leave us empty and unfruitful. Just as no one who learns on a journey that his family is in great danger can calmly continue his journey, no one who truly believes the Gospel, with application to himself, and who knows from it that he is guilty and lost and that there is only salvation in Christ Jesus, can remain cold and unconcerned. On the contrary, true faith is immediately active in those who have received it; it leaves them no rest and drives them to Christ. It does not therefore remain with the testimony as a historical message, but penetrates to the person of whom that testimony speaks. -

It was already like that in the Old Testament. The pious, who appear there before us, are always working with God Himself. A few times this is expressed by believing, Genesis 15:6, Exodus 14:31, Chronicles 20:20, Isaiah 28:16, Habakkuk 2:4, but this is not a rational conviction that God exists, but a wholehearted reliance on God and a standing on His word. Believing therefore alternates with all kinds of other words. It is always said of the pious that they trust in God, take

refuge in Him, hope in Him, fear Him, expect everything from Him, despise Him, lean on Him, follow Him, etc. Their life is a constant walking, interacting with Him, and they are not afraid of Him. Their life is a constant walking, interacting, practicing fellowship with God. And so it is also in the New Testament. The apostles who have described it to us are not historians in the usual sense of the word, but they testify of what they have seen and heard and seen and touched of the Word of Life. They live in the fellowship with Christ and speak from it. Believing is accepting Christ, not merely accepting the testimony given about Him by the apostles, but accepting Christ Himself, John 1:12; it entails putting on Christ as a garment, Galatians 3:27, dying and rising with Christ, Romans 6:4, living in His communion, Galatians 2:20, abiding in Him as the vine, John 15:4, etc.; and through and in Christ, God is their God, their God. And through and in Christ God is their Father, and they are His sons and daughters, 2 Corinthians 6:18. In a word, the faith to be saved is not only a certain knowledge, a firm conviction, an unquestionable certainty about the prophetic and apostolic testimony as the word of God, but it is also, at the same time, a firm trust from person to person in Christ Himself as the fullness of grace and truth, revealed by God in Him. The one is inseparably connected with the other. Without knowledge no trust is possible, for how can we trust someone whom we do not know? But vice versa, if knowing does not lead to trust, then it has not been the right knowing; those who know the name of the Lord, trust in Him, Psalms 9:11, but those who do not trust Him, have not yet learned to know Him from His word, as He truly is. He who seeks Christ apart from His Word, through the Spirit alone, loses the touchstone for the testing of minds and gradually comes to confuse his own mind with the Spirit of Christ.

Therefore Christ gave both, his word and his Spirit; and it is the Spirit of Christ who gives the same testimony in the word of Scripture and in the hearts of the faithful. In regeneration, He plants the word in our hearts (James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 Peter 1:25); and the spiritual life of the faithful, according to its nature, He always leads back to the word, to nourish and strengthen it. We never grow beyond the Scriptures here on earth, because the Scriptures are the only means of bringing us into fellowship with the real Christ, who was crucified, but is now seated at the right hand of the power of God. Christianity is a religion of history, but it is also a religion of the present; it has a Word, which paints the image of Christ before our eyes, and a Spirit through whom the living Christ himself dwells in our hearts. Faith is therefore knowledge and trust at the same time; it is an acceptance of Christ Himself in the garment of the Holy Scriptures.

Just as faith is the fruit of regeneration on the part of the conscious mind, so the new life is revealed on the part of the will in conversion. We find repeated mention of this in the books of the Old Testament. Israel, after the deliverance from Egypt, was led by the Lord to Sinai and there accepted into His covenant. As God’s people it had to keep that covenant and obey His voice; it had to be a priestly kingdom, a holy nation, Exodus 19:5-6. But already in the wilderness they were time and again guilty of infidelity and disobedience. In Canaan this apostasy increased still further amidst the heathen peoples; when the first generation had died out and another arose, which knew neither the Lord nor the work He had done for Israel, then the sons of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and they served the Baals. 2:10, 11.

Hence the preaching of repentance became necessary among Israel. In the early days Judges were appointed by the Lord to deliver the people from the hand of their enemies and to lead them back to the service of the Lord. Later, from Samuel onward, there were prophets who admonished Israel to turn from their evil ways and keep God’s commandments and statutes in accordance with

the law He had given their fathers. Samuel already began with this, 1 Samuel 7:3, and all the prophets have repeated this preaching; they are all preachers of repentance and conversion, but in that way they have also been preachers of forgiveness of sins and of complete redemption, Jeremiah 3:12, Jeremiah 3:14, Jeremiah 18:11, Jeremiah 25:5, Ezekiel 14:6, Ezekiel 18:30-32, Ezekiel 33:11, Hosea 12:7, Hosea 14:3, Joel 2:12-13 etc. And then sometimes some conversion was seen among the people; when they were subjugated and oppressed by their enemies, they began to cry out to the Lord, Richt. 3 : 9, 15, 4 : 3 etc.; the pious kings, Asa, Josaphat, Josiah, Hezekiah, brought about a smaller or larger reformation, 1 Kings 15:11, 1 Kings 22:47, 2 Kings 23:15, 2 Chronicles 30:6, 2 Chronicles 30:9; Jonah even went to Nineveh, and at his preaching the people of Nineveh believed in God, they proclaimed a fast, clothed themselves with sacks, and repented of their evil way, Jonah 3:5, Jonah 3:10; Ahab is said to have humbled himself before the Lord after Elijah's announcement of his judgment, 1 Kings 21:27, 1 Kings 21:29, and Manasseh is said to have sought the Lord's face at the end of his life and acknowledged that the Lord is God, 2 Chronicles 33:12.

Although the conversion of some was certainly serious and heartfelt, for the mass of the people it consisted of little more than an outward change; they did not convert, as Jeremiah says, with their whole heart, but falsely, Jeremiah 3:10. Therefore the prophets continue their preaching of repentance; they keep the demand and duty of repentance before the people; they urge not only the people as a whole, but also each individual to leave their sinful ways and turn to the Lord their God. And if the people continue to ignore the exhortations, the prophets begin to think that their preaching will bring judgment upon the people, Isaiah 6:10, that Israel is a wild vine, Jer. Jeremiah 2:25, that they cannot turn back, any more than a moor man can change his skin or a leopard his spots, Jeremiah 13:23, and that God must give repentance and a new heart, Psalms 51:12, Jeremiah 31:18, Lamentations 5:21. And they eagerly look forward to that day, when God will make a new covenant, circumcise the heart of the people, and write His law in it, Deuteronomy 30:2, Deuteronomy 30:6, Psalms 22:28, Hosea 3:5, Jeremiah 24:7, Jeremiah 32:33 etc. That day dawns, when, according to the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And both then proclaim that no attempt to keep the law, nor any zealous self-righteousness, but only repentance and faith will open the way to that kingdom and its goods. To indicate this conversion, the Greek New Testament uses two words; the first occurs as a noun or verb in Matthew 3:2, Matthew 3:8, Matthew 3:11, Matthew 9:13, Matthew 11:20, Acts 2:38, 2 Corinthians 7:9-10, and indicates an internal, spiritual change, a change in the moral disposition; the other, which we find e.g. in Matthew 13:16, Luke 1:16-17, Luke 22:32, Acts 9:35, Acts 11:21, Acts 14:15, Acts 15:19, Acts 26:18, Acts 26:20 etc., It is the external change, the change in direction of life, which is the revelation and consequence of the internal change. In Acts 3:18, Acts 26:20 both words are linked together: Repent and be converted, that is, change your mind and your walk, come to repentance and return. When the Gospel was preached to the Jews and the Gentiles in the days of the Apostles and accepted by them, this also required a change that was visible to others. The Jews had to break with their observance of the Mosaic law, including circumcision and the whole sacrificial service, and the Gentiles had to say good-bye to their idolatry, statues and religious practices. It took a great deal of self-denial and courage to come over to Christianity; those who did so usually did so with conviction of heart, in sincerity and truth, for there was no honor or gain in it. Thus the two things expressed by the two words for conversion were usually very closely related; the internal and the external change went together. This radical

change, both internal and external, received its sign and seal in holy baptism, Acts 2:38. He who was baptized broke with his whole past, left his fellowship, was crucified to the world, died with Christ and was buried with Him in His death through baptism; but at the same time rose again with Christ to a new life, put on Christ as a garment, as another pure garment, in which he now appeared to the world, became a disciple, a follower, a servant, a warrior of Christ, a member of His body, and a temple of the Holy Spirit, Romans 6:3, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 2:11-12, etc. As long as the Christian church was to extend into the world of the Jews and Gentiles, conversion was not only an internal change, but also an external turning away from the service of dumb idols, 1 Corinthians 12:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:9, from poor and weak principles and elements of religion, Galatians 4:3, Galatians 4:9, Colossians 2:8, Colossians 2:20, from dead works, Hebrews 9:14, 1 Thessalonians 1:9, from public sins and crimes, 1 Corinthians 6:10, Ephesians 2:2-3, Colossians 3:5, Colossians 3:7, Titus 3:3, to serve henceforth the living and true God, Hebrews 9:14, 1 Thessalonians 1:9, and to adhere to the Lord, 1 Corinthians 6:15-20. But when this missionary period was over and the church continued in the generations, from parents to children, then the conversion did not change in essence, but in the nature of things it gave up the external form in which it used to be revealed. The children were included in the covenant from birth; they received Holy Baptism as a sign and seal of it, and were thereby visibly incorporated into the Church of Christ, even before their consciousness and consent. But of course it often happened that members of the church, who were baptized at a later age or as children, fell back into more or less serious sins after that time. There were sects, such as the Montanists and the Novatians, who believed that the greater sins could not or should not be forgiven by the church; but the church itself took a different view, it allowed the erring and the fallen back into its fellowship, when they returned repented, confessed their sins and submitted to the church’s punishments.

Gradually the sacrament of penance emerged, whereby the faithful, having committed minor or major sins, confess these in the priest’s confession, showing either a perfect (when one regrets the sin because it offended God) or an imperfect (when one regrets the sin for fear of punishment, etc.) repentance, and finally performing the prayers and good works which the father confessor imposes on the penitent. Thus, conversion in the Roman Church gradually became completely externalized; instead of internal change of mind, the emphasis came to lie on confession and satisfaction, because an imperfect repentance was sufficient to obtain forgiveness of sins; and remission of the temporary punishments imposed could even be obtained by means of an indulgence. This is where the Reformation began with Luther. By reading the New Testament he came to understand that conversion in Scripture was something quite different from the penance that Rome had made of it. But Luther still separated repentance and faith too much; he himself had felt the curse of the law in his conscience and then found comfort in the justification of sinners through faith alone. Therefore, in his opinion, repentance in the sense of repentance, penance, and suffering were effected through the law, and faith through the Gospel. Calvin later realized this better, and gave a somewhat different presentation. Like the Scriptures, he distinguished between a false conversion and a true conversion, Jeremiah 3:10, between a sorrow for the world and a sorrow according to God’s will, between regret and repentance for a sinful act, and a heartfelt sorrow that we have offended God by our sins. Repentance for a sinful deed may also fall upon the children of the world; if sin has quite other consequences than expected, if it leads to damage and disgrace, then the world also often feels regret; a Cain, Genesis 4:13, an Esau, Hebrews 12:17, a Judas, Matthew 27:3, are proof of this; such sorrow does not lead to true conversion, but

it works death, it brings about doubt, bitterness, hardening. But true conversion does not consist in such a repentance, deploring only the consequences of sin, but it consists in an inner breaking of the heart (Psalms 51:19, Acts 2:37), in a sorrow for sin itself, because it is contrary to God's will and incurs His wrath, in a heartfelt sorrow for sin, and in a hating and fleeing of sin. It is a sorrow, as God wills it and as God works it, and therefore it reaches out to God immediately and works an unrepentant conversion to salvation (or a conversion to unrepentant salvation), 2 Corinthians 7:10. When the prodigal son has come to his senses and decides to return, he says: I will arise and go to my Father, and I will say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee (Luke 15:18). He already takes the name of Father to his lips, although he is still far from Him; he dares to go to the Father and confess his sins before Him, because he believes in the depth of his heart that the Father is his Father. We would not dare to turn to God if we did not trust in our souls through the Holy Spirit that He, as a Father, will accept our confession and forgive our sins. True conversion is indissolubly connected with true salvation faith. That is why the complete treatment of the conversion of mankind does not belong to the doctrine of misery and salvation, but to that of thankfulness. Catech. Sunday 33. Sometimes the word conversion is taken in a wider sense, and then includes the entire change that must take place in a person to become a child of God and a citizen of His kingdom. Just as Jesus speaks only of regeneration in John 3:1-36, and elsewhere, e.g. Mark 16:16, Jesus only speaks of faith as the way that leads to salvation, so in Matthew 4:17 He only mentions conversion; after all, one cannot have one benefit without the other; in the new life of rebirth faith and conversion are included in principle, and in due course they arise from them with necessity. But although they cannot be separated from one another, they can still be distinguished from one another, and then conversion is a fruit of regeneration, which at the same time presupposes faith. Then, too, conversion is and remains a gift and a work of God, not only in the beginning but also in the progress, Jeremiah 31:18, Lamentations 5:21, Acts 5:31, Acts 11:19; but at the same time, by virtue of the new life that has been poured into it, it is an act of man, Acts 2:38, Acts 11:21, Revelation 2:5, Revelation 2:16 f., which is not limited to one moment but continues throughout life. At the same time, although it is one in essence, it is different in form according to the persons in whom it takes place and the circumstances under which it takes place. It is indeed one path on which all God's children walk, but they are nevertheless led differently and have different experiences. What difference is there in the guidance God gave to the patriarchs; what difference is there in the conversion of Manasseh, Paul and Timothy? How far apart are the conversions of David and Solomon, of John and James! And we find the same diversity outside Scripture in the life of the Church Fathers, of the Reformers and of all the pious. As soon as our eye is opened to this wealth of spiritual life, we refrain from judging others according to our small, narrow standard. There are people who know only one method, and do not consider anyone converted unless they can speak of the same experiences that they themselves have had or claim to have had. But the Scriptures are much richer and wider than the narrowness of their hearts. Here also the word applies: there is diversity of gifts, but it is the same Spirit; and there is diversity of ministries, but it is the same Lord; and there is diversity of works, but it is the same God who works all in all, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6. True conversion does not consist in what men make of it, but in what God says of it; in all the variety of courses and experiences it exists and must exist in the death of the old man and the resurrection of the new.

What is the death of the old man? It is a heartfelt sorrow that we have wroth God through our sins and that we hate and flee Him more and more. And what is the resurrection of the new man? It is a

heartfelt joy in God through Christ, and the desire and love to live according to the will of God in all good works.

01.21. The Justification.

21. The Justification.

Regeneration, revealed in the fruits of faith and conversion, opens the entrance to the kingdom of God. And whoever is a citizen of this kingdom immediately receives all the goods that are its contents, and which can be summarized under three headings: righteousness, holiness and salvation. Here we come to the first of these glorious benefits.

Justice is usually described as that steadfast and enduring will of a reasonable being which gives to each his due. It implies, first, a moral disposition of the person to whom it is conferred and, second, an attitude toward and treatment of other persons which flows from that disposition and recognizes them in the rights to which they are entitled. Although, as we shall see, Scripture makes a peculiar modification of this righteousness, it nevertheless proceeds from the same basic idea. Righteousness is justice, which a person possesses himself, and just treatment, which he does to others. In this sense the Old Testament already attributes justice to God. He is the rock, whose work is complete, for all his ways are judgments. God is truth and no injustice, He is just and right, Deuteronomy 32:4. But this righteousness is not derived in Scripture from a reflection on the Divine nature, but it is attributed to God on the basis of His revelation; thus He has made Himself known to His people from the beginning; He did not speak in the distant past, in a dark place of the earth, and did not say to the seed of Jacob: seek me in vain. He is the Lord who speaks justice, who proclaims righteousness. While the heathen worshiped a God who could not save, He made Himself known to Israel as Jehovah, besides whom there is no God, a just God and a Savior, Isaiah 45:19-21. As the righteous Lord He dwells in the midst of Israel; He does no wrong, but brings all to light in the morning His justice, Zephaniah 3:5. This righteousness of God was expressed first of all in the laws that He gave to His people. For us, justice consists in our conformity to a law in our being and in our actions; but in this sense there can be no talk of justice with God. For there is no law above Him to which He must obey; His justice consists in His perfect agreement with Himself. On the other hand, all rights and laws have their origin in Him; and all these laws are just, because He gave them in accordance with His own being and will. What great nation is there, Moses once asked, that has so many righteous laws and rights as this entire law, which I am giving before you today? Deuteronomy 4:8. And the pious answered, The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, giving wisdom to the ignorant. The commandments of the Lord are right, gladdening the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, abiding for ever. The law of the Lord is true; together they are righteous. They are more desirable than gold, yes than much fine gold, and sweeter than honey and honeycomb, Psalms 19:8-11, Psalms 119:1-176. But God’s righteousness is also revealed in the fact that He keeps these laws and requires His people to live according to them. Already to the first man He laid down His commandment, Genesis 2:16; and also after the fall He left nothing undone of the right which He has towards all creatures. His judgments, such as the flood and the confusion of tongues, are proof of this, but He keeps all the Gentiles bound in their conscience to His law, Romans 1:20, Romans 1:32 and Romans 2:15. In

particular, however, He lays hold of His people Israel, whom He accepted as His property out of free love, and who must therefore keep His covenant, obey His voice and walk in His ways, Exodus 19:5. The Lord demanded nothing unjust of his people, for he had expended all on his part for his vineyard, and now expected it to produce good grapes, Isaiah 5:4. The Lord had made known to them what was good; and what did He demand of them but to do right, to love charity, and to walk with courage with their God? Micah 6:8, Amos 5:14-15, Isaiah 1:16-17.

Finally His righteousness comes to light in that He judges and will judge all peoples and also His people Israel strictly according to the law. God is lawgiver and king, but also judge, Isaiah 33:22, judge of the whole earth, who cannot do anything but justice, Genesis 18:25. Sometimes, in front of the complaining people, who condemn God to be just, Job 40:3, the absolute sovereignty of His actions is maintained, and it is emphasized that all inhabitants of the earth are considered as nothing, and that God, with the heavenly host and the inhabitants of the earth, does according to His will, so that nobody can refuse His hand or say to Him: what are You doing? Daniel 4:35. He is the Maker of all things, with whom no creature can quarrel, Isaiah 45:9, the potter, in whose hand Israel is as clay, Jeremiah 18:6, Isaiah 10:15. Isaiah 55:8-9. He is a fearful majesty and awesome in power; yet He does not scorn, but looks upon mankind and deals with him according to the law, Job 36:5, Job 37:23. And He can do that, because He is all-knowing and strictly righteous. The situation is often different with earthly judges, and that is why they are repeatedly admonished in the Old Testament, not to know their faces in judgment, Deuteronomy 1:17, Leviticus 19:15, Spr. 24:23, not to accept gifts, Deuteronomy 16:19, Exodus 23:8, Isaiah 5:23, not to oppress the poor and the stranger, the orphan and the widow, Exodus 23:6, Exodus 23:9, Psalms 82:2-4, Isaiah 1:12, to speak justly to the righteous and condemn the wicked, and to judge the people with a judgment of righteousness, Deuteronomy 16:19, Deuteronomy 25:1. For he that justifieth the wicked, and condemneth the righteous, is an abomination to the Lord, even both. But the Lord is the righteous judge; He loves justice, Psalms 11:7, Psalms 33:5, Psalms 99:4, Jeremiah 9:23, His right hand is full of righteousness, Psalms 48:11, righteousness and justice are the stability of His throne, Psalms 89:14, Psalms 97:2. He is impartial, knows no respect of persons, and receives no gift, Deuteronomy 10:17, 2 Chronicles 19:7, for the rich and the poor are all his handiwork, Job 34:19. Nor does he stand by the outward appearance, but looks at the heart, 1 Samuel 16:6, 1 Chronicles 28:9, He tests the hearts and the kidneys, Psalms 7:10, Jeremiah 11:20, Jeremiah 20:12, and will one day judge the world in righteousness and the nations in justice, Psalms 9:9, Psalms 96:13, Psalms 98:9. He will be exalted through justice and sanctified through righteousness, Isaiah 5:16. If, however, the righteousness of God consists in His acting strictly according to the law and judging all men according to the standard of His holy law, how can any human child ever be acquitted of guilt by God and obtain from Him the right to eternal life? For there can be no doubt that all men, without exception, are guilty of the transgression of God’s law and worthy of the penalty which He has set for that transgression. Since Adam’s disobedience a stream of iniquities has prevailed over the human race. The pattern of a man’s heart is evil from childhood, Genesis 6:5, Genesis 8:21; all are born unclean, Job 14:4, Job 25:4-6, Psalms 51:7, and all are deviated, there is no one who does good, not even one, Psalms 14:3. There is no one alive who does not sin, and who can say: I have purified my heart and am free from sin, 1 Kings 8:46. When God looks upon iniquities, no one can exist before Him, Psalms 130:3, Psalms 143:2. If this is how things stand with man, how can there ever be any talk of his justification with God? And yet, the same Old Testament, which so clearly expresses the sinfulness and doom of the

whole human race, repeatedly makes mention of righteous and upright people, who exist in the midst of a world filled with resentment. Thus Noah is called a righteous and upright man in his generations, Genesis 6:9, Genesis 7:1, and Job receives the testimony of God Himself, that there was no one on earth like him, a man upright and devout, fearing God and keeping away from evil, Job 1:1, Job 2:3. In the Psalms there is at every moment mention of a small group of righteous people, who stand opposite the wicked and have to endure much oppression from them, Psalms 1:5, Psalms 14:5, Psalms 32:11, Psalms 33:1, Psalms 34:16, Psalms 34:20 etc. The Proverbs constantly deal with this same opposition among men, Proverbs 2:20-22, Proverbs 3:33, Proverbs 4:18, Proverbs 10:3, Proverbs 10:6 etc. And the prophets make the same distinction between a small core of the people, who remain faithful to the Lord, and the great mass, who give themselves over to idolatry and unrighteousness, 1 Kings 19:18, Isaiah 1:8-9, Isaiah 4:3, Isaiah 6:5 etc; especially Ezekiel sharply contrasts the righteous and the godless, and does not think of groups in the people, but of individual persons, Ezekiel 3:18 ff, Ezekiel 18:5 ff, Ezekiel 33:8 ff. But this is not the only thing that strikes us in the Old Testament. Even more strange is the fact that these righteous (upright in heart, pious, or whatever they may be called) have absolutely no fear of God's justice and never fear that they will be crushed by His judgment. Yes, for the wicked that justice will be terrible, Isaiah 59:16-18, Jeremiah 11:20, Jeremiah 20:12, Psalms 7:12-13, Psalms 9:5-6, Psalms 28:4, Psalms 129:4. But the pious plead with her and invoke her; they pray for interrogation and salvation, because God is the God of righteousness, Psalms 4:1, Psalms 143:1, and they expect, that, precisely because he is the righteous God, who tastes hearts and kidneys, he will confirm them, Psalms 7:10, save, Psalms 31:2, acquit, 34:23, do justice, Psalms 35:23, forgive, Psalms 51:16, answer, Psalms 65:6, make alive, Psalms 119:40, hear, Psalms 143:1, execute from distress; Psalms 143:11. This appeal of the pious to God's righteousness sometimes goes a step further, and takes on this for our consciousness first so undeniable a form, that God must hear them and save them according to their righteousness. Job cannot admit that he is guilty, and is aware of his upright and pure walk, Job 29:12 f., Job 31:1 f., and is finally vindicated by the Lord towards his friends, Job 42:7. In the Psalms the tone is repeatedly heard: judge me, Lord, according to my righteousness and my sincerity, which is with me, Psalms 7:9, Psalms 17:1-5, Psalms 18:20-23, Psalms 24:4-6, Psalms 26:1, Psalms 37:18-19, etc. In Isaiah, the people complain: My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right passes from my God, Isaiah 40:27. But the prophet was sent to them precisely to proclaim in the name of the Lord that this is not the case. For after the discipline comes the redemption. The battle is fulfilled, iniquity is reconciled, Isaiah 40:2, and the Lord brings His righteousness near and His salvation will not abide, Isaiah 46:13. As He always intervenes in the life of the pious and devout in redemption, makes their right before Him, Psalms 17:2, executes the trial of the wretched and needy, Psalms 103:6, Psalms 140:13, Psalms 146:7, so He will in the end settle the dispute of His people, Isaiah 49:25, Isaiah 51:22, Jeremiah 50:34, Jeremiah 51:36, Micah 7:9; He will bare His holy arm for the Gentiles, send forth a word of righteousness from His mouth, and confirm His people by righteousness, Isaiah 45:23, Isaiah 51:5, Isaiah 52:10, Isaiah 54:15. In Him are righteousness and strength; from Him is their righteousness; in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory in Him, Isaiah 45:24-25, Isaiah 54:17.

It is thus clearly evident from the Old Testament that there are not only righteous people among Israel, but that these people also expect their salvation and welfare from the righteousness of God. This seems more or less strange to us, because we make a distinction between God's justice and

God's mercy; and we present it in such a way that we are condemned by God's justice, but saved by His mercy. But the pious people of the Old Covenant do not make such a distinction; they relate the righteousness of God most closely to His grace and mercy, to His goodness and truth, to His beneficence and faithfulness. Psalms 33:5, Psalms 40:11, Psalms 51:16, Psalms 89:15, Psalms 103:17, Psalms 143:11-12, Psalms 145:7, Psalms 145:17, Jeremiah 9:24, Hosea 2:18; the Lord is gracious and just, Psalms 112:4, Psalms 116:5; deliverances are proofs of his righteousness, Richt. 5:11, 1 Samuel 12:7, Micah 6:5. And therefore that righteousness, no less than the mercy of God, is for the pious an object of continual praise and honour, Ps. 7:18, 22:32, Psalms 35:28, Psalms 40:10, Psalms 51:16, Psalms 71:15, Psalms 71:19 etc. But how is all this possible? How can people, who are all sinners, ever stand before God's holy face as righteous? How can they ever have the right on their side, and according to God's righteousness be acquitted of their sins and be accepted in His blessed fellowship? Is it perhaps due to this that Israel in the days of the Old Testament was the people of God, had the temple in their midst, and zealously offered sacrifices of swine and goats? There were many among Israel who put their trust in these and believed that evil would not touch them. But the prophets, who acted in the name of the Lord, taught the people differently. When Israel relied on its outward privileges, they all said that these were unreliable rods which pierced the hand of the one leaning on them. Art thou, saith the Lord in Amos 9:7, Art thou not unto me as the children of the Moors, O children of Israel? Have I not brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines out of Caphtor, and the Syrians out of Kir? To those who trusted in false words, saying: the Lord's temple, the Lord's temple, the Lord's temple are these, Jeremiah, Jeremiah 7:14, announces the judgment that the Lord would do to that house, which is called after His name and in which they trusted, as He had done to Silo. And as for the sacrifices, the pious among Israel knew very well that they could not in themselves be pleasing to the Lord, Psalms 40:9, Psalms 51:6; and by the mouth of the prophets He Himself testifies: I am tired of the burnt offerings of the rams and of the fat of the fattening calves; I have no desire for the blood of the fattens, nor for that of the lambs, nor for that of the goats; I want mercy and not sacrifice, Isaiah 1:11. Isaiah 66:2-3, Jeremiah 6:20, Hosea 6:6, Amos 5:21, Micah 6:6-8 etc. Is the basis for the expectation of salvation among the devotees of the Old Testament perhaps their own righteousness? Do they therefore have such good hope for the future, because they think that their good works will enable them to stand in the judgment of God? The thought may occur to us for a moment, when we see that they, e.g. Job, are so strongly convinced of their innocence, Job 29:12 ff, Job 31:1 ff, that they repeatedly appeal to their sincerity, faithfulness and righteousness, Psalms 7:9, Psalms 18:21-22, Psalms 26:1, Psalms 26:11, Psalms 101:2, etc., that they repeatedly speak of their right, Job 27:2, Psalms 17:2, Psalms 26:1, Psalms 35:24, Psalms 43:1, Isaiah 40:27 etc., and that the Lord Himself counts them as righteous, Genesis 7:1, Job 1:7, Job 2:3. But as soon as we penetrate a little deeper, this ground also falls away completely.

After all, this pleading for their righteousness with the devotees of the Old Testament alternates with the most humble confession of their sins. Job does not only speak of the sins of his youth, but at the end he reviles himself and repents in dust and ashes, Job 13:26, Job 42:6. David speaks in Psalms 7:9 of his righteousness, but elsewhere he throws away all his righteousness, confesses before the Lord all his transgressions, and praises only the forgiveness of sins, Ps. 32:51. Daniel casts down his prayers, not on his own righteousness, but on the mercies of the Lord, which are great, Daniel 9:18. By Isaiah 53:4-6, Isaiah 59:12, Isaiah 64:6, the pious Israel confesses that all their righteousnesses are like an unclean garment, that they all went astray like sheep and turned

every one to his own way, but that the Lord has caused all their iniquities to come to his Servant. In Psalms 130:3-4 the poet expresses it, that when the Lord considers the iniquities, no one can exist before Him; but that with Him there is forgiveness, that He may be feared. And all without exception acknowledge the right of God in punishing Israel; they and their fathers have sinned and rebelled against His mouth, Amos 3:2, Lamentations 1:18, Ezra 9:6-7, Nehemiah 9:33, Daniel 9:14 etc. When the devout among Israel mention their righteousness, they certainly also think of their upright walk before the Lord and even pray that the Lord, the knower of hearts, may taste and examine them in this their uprightness, Psalms 7:9-10, Psalms 17:3, Psalms 18:21-25, etc.; but this their righteousness is not the same as the righteousness of their hearts. But this righteousness is by no means meant in the sense of moral perfection, as the Pharisees spoke of it in later days; but they think of a moral righteousness, which has its basis and origin in a religious righteousness, or in other words, in a righteousness of faith. This is evident from the fact that the righteous (the upright, the pious) are also often depicted as the poor, the wretched, the needy, the faithful, the humble and the meek, who fear the Lord and have no other expectations than Him. These are the same people whom Jesus later called the poor in spirit, the sorrowful, the hungry and thirsty for righteousness, the weary and burdened, the children (Matthew 5:3 ff, Matthew 11:25, Matthew 11:28). And the characteristic of these people is not that they are free from sin, but it consists in the fact that, in the midst of all the pressure and persecution they are exposed to from the side of the world, they put their trust in the Lord and seek their salvation and blessing in Him alone. There is no salvation for them, neither in themselves nor in any creature, but only in the Lord their God. But that God is also their God, their sun and shield, their refuge and high place, their compass and anchor, their rock and stronghold, their helper and redeemer, their glory and their strength, their one and all, Psalms 18:3, Psalms 73:25-26, etc., and they are His people, the sheep of His pasture, His servants and His favored ones, Psalms 33:12, Psalms 95:7, Psalms 100:3 etc., who hope for His salvation, hold fast to His word, delight in His law, and expect everything from Him alone. It is a people who, like the later Pharisees, do not take their place opposite God and assert their demands and rights before Him, but who stand on God's side and, with Him, ally themselves against His and their enemies. When these people in their prayer and supplication appeal to their own and the Lord's righteousness, they want to express that the Lord, by virtue of His covenant, is obligated to do justice to the people who are named after Him and who walk in His fear before His adversaries. The cause of God is their cause, and their cause is the cause of God Himself. He chose His people, not because of their multitude, nor because of their righteousness and uprightness, but because the Lord loved them freely and for the sake of the oath He had sworn to the fathers, Deuteronomy 7:7 f., Deuteronomy 7:5-6. The covenant with that people rests on His will alone. But through that covenant He is also bound to that people, and He has, so to speak, taken upon Himself the obligation to maintain, preserve and bestow upon that people that entire salvation which He promised, when He said to Abraham: I will establish My covenant between me and you, and your descendants after you, for an everlasting covenant, to be to you a God and your descendants after you (Genesis 17:7).

God's righteousness, which the pious Israel appeals to again and again in their tribulation, is thus that virtue by which the Lord is obliged by His covenant to deliver His people from all their enemies. It is not so much an obligation that rests on God towards His people, for they have no right to anything; but it is an obligation that rests on the Lord towards Himself. He is no longer free; He has voluntarily bound Himself to His people, and so He owes it to Himself, to His own covenant

and oath, to His own word and promise, to remain the God of His people in spite of all their iniquities. Psalms 25:11, Psalms 31:4, Psalms 79:9, Psalms 106:8, Psalms 109:21, Psalms 143:11; Isaiah 48:9, Isaiah 48:11, Jeremiah 14:7, Jeremiah 14:21, Ezekiel 20:9, Ezekiel 20:14, Ezekiel 20:22, Ezekiel 20:44, Daniel 9:19 etc. The righteousness of God, which the pious Israel pleads for, is not in opposition to, but is related to His mercy and salvation, and is in close connection with His truth and faithfulness; it establishes God by His own word and promise and obliges Him to save His people, out of sheer mercy, from all His afflictions.

Accordingly has God behaved in the past, when He delivered Israel again and again from its enemies, Exodus 2:24, Richt. 2:1, Isaiah 37:20; but He will reveal Himself much more abundantly in the future, when He will set up His kingdom among them. By virtue of His own righteousness, because He is a God of righteousness, of faithfulness and of truth, He will make a new covenant with them, forgive their sins, pour out the Spirit on them and cause them to partake in His ways, Jeremiah 31:31-34 etc. But He does not do this for their sake, but for His own, for His great name's sake. It is I who expiate your transgressions for my sake, and I do not remember your sins, Isaiah 43:25. He Himself brings the righteousness Israel needs, Isaiah 45:24-25, Isaiah 46:13, Isaiah 54:17; He creates new heavens and a new earth, where the former things will not be remembered, Isaiah 65:17. In those days Judah will be redeemed and Israel will dwell for certain; the Gentiles will then see their righteousness and all kings their glory, and they will at once be called by a new name, which the Lord's own mouth will pronounce, and that name will be: The Lord is our righteousness Isaiah 62:2, Jeremiah 23:6, Isaiah 33:16. The idea that God Himself grants righteousness to His people, and thereby justifies them, comes to much richer development in the New Testament, when Christ appears on earth and through His life and death accomplishes all righteousness for His congregation.

Jesus Himself preached that the time had been fulfilled and that the kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1:15). He did not only mean that the kingdom would soon come, but also that it had already come in principle, in His person and work; for He is the Messiah in whom the Old Testament prophecy concerning the Servant of the Lord has been fulfilled, Luke 4:17-21, and who furthermore proves this by His works. For when He heals the sick, raises the dead, casts out devils, preaches the Gospel to the poor, forgives sins, then that is an undeniable proof that He is the one promised in the prophecy, and that the kingdom of God has come to earth, Matthew 9:2, Matthew 9:6, Matthew 10:7-8, Matthew 11:5, Matthew 12:28. In the goods which Christ bestows, in spiritual and physical salvation, the treasures of the kingdom of heaven become manifest.

Among the treasures of that kingdom, Jesus also specifically mentions righteousness. In Matthew 6:33 this is closely connected with the kingdom, because there Jesus exhorts his disciples: Seek first the kingdom of God and his (God's) righteousness. Or according to another interpretation: seek first his kingdom and righteousness, that of the heavenly Father, mentioned in Matthew 6:32. Like the kingdom, also righteousness in that kingdom is the property and gift of God, which He distributes through Christ. Whoever seeks and receives the kingdom of God will also immediately receive the righteousness that is necessary for citizenship in that kingdom. That is why Jesus says elsewhere that the possession of that righteousness is a condition for entering the kingdom of God. Unless your righteousness is more abundant than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven, Matthew 5:20-21, 1 Corinthians 6:10, Galatians 6:18-21, Ephesians 5:5, Revelation 22:15. This righteousness that Jesus demands of His disciples is an

entirely different righteousness, a much deeper and much more intimate righteousness, than the external fulfilment of the law, with which the Jews were content; it is a spiritual and perfect righteousness, a perfection equal to that of the Father. But when Jesus considers such a righteousness necessary for entrance into the kingdom, He does not mean that man must first acquire it by his own efforts; then He would not be a Messiah, and His Gospel would not be a message of joy. But his intention then is to shed light on the nature, the spiritual character, the perfection of God's kingdom; no one can enter it except he who is in perfect conformity with God's law and shares in the perfect righteousness. But this righteousness, which is thus on the one hand a requirement and condition of the kingdom, is on the other hand a gift of that kingdom. It is Christ Himself who distributes all the goods of that kingdom, and also its righteousness. It is a kingdom of God, and the righteousness is the righteousness of God (Matthew 6:33). But as the Father has ordained the kingdom for Him, so He ordains it for His disciples (Luke 22:29, 12:82). For the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand, Matthew 11:27, John 3:35, John 13:3, John 16:15. But the Father hath given him all these things, because he is the Son of man, John 5:27, that is to say, that in the way of obedience unto death he might obtain them for himself. He did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his soul as a ransom (ransom in the place of many, Matthew 20:28; in the death of the cross he had his body broken and his blood shed, that the new Testament might be established and all the sins of his people forgiven, Matthew 26:1-28. On the basis of the appointment of His Father and His own sacrifice, He distributed all the goods of the kingdom to His disciples before and after His death. He not only healed the sick, but also forgave sins and granted eternal life. And He distributed these good deeds, not to the self-righteous Pharisees, but to the tax collectors and sinners, to the weary and burdened, to the poor in spirit and to the hungers and thirsts for righteousness. He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, Matthew 9:13, to seek and to save, Luke 19:10. No righteousness of His own, but regeneration, faith, and repentance open access to the kingdom and all its goods; and that regeneration is itself a gift and a work of the Holy Spirit, John 3:5. As soon as the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the day of Pentecost, the apostles therefore immediately began to proclaim Christ crucified as the Prince and Saviour exalted by God, to give Israel repentance and the forgiveness of sins, Acts 2:36, Acts 2:38, Acts 5:30-31. After the redemption through the death of Christ had taken place, its meaning could be fully unfolded by the apostles in the light of the resurrection and through the guidance of the Spirit. And no apostle did this more abundantly and clearly than Paul, who was circumcised on the eighth day, of the lineage of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew among the Hebrews, a Pharisee according to the law, a persecutor of the church according to zeal, blameless according to the righteousness that is in the law, but who, for Christ's sake, considered what was gainful to him to be loss. Acts 3:5-7.

According to his own testimony, Paul had thus struggled for years and with great zeal to become part of the righteousness that comes from the law. And he had come a long way. According to the righteousness that has its foundation in the law, Php 3:6, and is obtained from the law, Php 3:9, comp. Romans 10:5, Romans 9:32, he was blameless in the opinion of men; no one could say anything about him; on the contrary, everyone praised him, he won name and esteem and honor by it, and would have had a glorious career among his people if he had continued in this way; he obtained a great gain, verse ■. But when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, then he counted all that, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord, a loss, a detriment, a forlorn thing, and held it for a useless and disposable thing, that he might win Christ, and be found in him,

not having his righteousness which is of the law, but that righteousness which is by faith in Christ, and which comes from God by faith.

Why the righteousness which is of the works of the law is insufficient is shown elsewhere by the apostle. The law is holy, righteous, spiritual and good, but man is fleshly, sold as a slave under the dominion of sin, Romans 7:12, Romans 7:14; it cannot quicken and it cannot destroy sin by its judgment, because it is powerless through the flesh, Romans 8:3, Galatians 3:21. It demands, but gives nothing; it only says: The man who does these things shall live by them, Romans 10:5, Galatians 3:10, Galatians 3:12, but it cannot give life in this way, because the flesh does not and cannot submit to God's law, Romans 8:7. Instead of justifying and giving life, the law is now the power of sin, 1 Corinthians 15:56. If there were no law, there would be no sin and no transgression, Romans 4:15, Romans 7:8; but in the sinful state in which man finds himself, the law awakens sin, stimulates desire, and makes man covet what is forbidden; or rather, sin which dwells in man takes occasion through the commandment to awaken all sorts of desire in the heart and to become exceedingly sinful, Romans 5:20, Romans 7:8, Romans 7:13, Galatians 3:19-20, work wrath, Galatians 4:15, bring under the curse, Galatians 3:10; but from her works no man can ever be justified, Acts 13:39, Romans 3:20, Romans 3:28, Romans 8:3, Romans 3:8, Galatians 2:16, Galatians 3:11; judged by the law, the whole world stands guilty before God and is subject to His punishment, Romans 3:19, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven on all the ungodliness and iniquity of mankind, Romans 1:18, Ephesians 5:6, Colossians 3:6.

But, if that is the righteous judgment that God pronounces on mankind according to the law, who can still be saved? Like Jesus, Matthew 19:26, Paul answers: with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. With God the impossible is also possible, that He justifies the wicked and yet remains completely just Himself, Romans 3:26, Romans 4:5. What God in His holy law strictly condemns, namely to justify the wicked, Deuteronomy 25:1, Psalms 82:2, Proverbs 17:15, Isaiah 5:23, what He says of Himself He will never do, Exodus 24:7, He does, but He does it while preserving His righteousness. This is the miracle of the Gospel. For God has made known His righteousness not only in the law, but also in the Gospel. In this Gospel his righteousness is revealed without the law, without its intervention, apart from it, and apparently in opposition to it, Romans 1:17, Romans 3:20-21; Abraham was already justified by it while he was still in the foreskin, Romans 4:1 ff; David blesses the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works, Romans 4:6, and Habakkuk says quite generally that the righteous shall live by faith, Habakkuk 1:17, Galatians 3:11. But now, in the present time, Romans 3:21, Romans 3:26, the righteousness of God is much more clearly seen, because Christ has appeared and become God's righteousness for us, 1 Corinthians 1:30. The law, which was given to Israel, itself served for the full revelation of God's righteousness in the gospel. For by inciting sin and making it known as sin, by working wrath and bringing it under the curse, it has been an educator and guide to Christ, so that those who had been under its discipline might in the fullness of time come to Christ and be justified by faith, Galatians 3:22-25. Thus, on their part, men were prepared by the discipline of the law for the appearance of the Gospel; but also on God's part the law served to bring about the fulfilment of His promise. For in the times before Christ God in His forbearance allowed the Gentiles to walk in their own ways, Acts 14:16, and He overlooked the sins of His people Israel and allowed them to be committed in such a manner that He did not punish them according to merit, Romans 3:25. He decreed all things by the law under the dominion of sin, that the promise

of inheritance might be given to the faithful, not by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ, Galatians 3:22, Romans 3:9, Romans 3:19, Romans 11:32. The righteousness that God reveals in the Gospel thus has a peculiar character. It takes place without the law, and yet it must be in accordance with the law, Romans 3:21; it must condemn, and at the same time preserve; it is a revelation of His law and also of His grace, Romans 3:23-24; it must be such that God can justify the wicked and yet remain fully righteous in it, Romans 3:26, Romans 4:5. And this is done, objectively, by presenting Christ as reconciliation in his blood, and subjectively, by counting faith in this Christ as righteousness, Romans 4:4-5, Galatians 3:6. The righteousness that God reveals in the Gospel consists, in a word, in the bestowal of a righteousness of faith, which as such stands in direct opposition to righteousness by the works of the law, to man's own righteousness, Romans 3:21, Romans 4:2-6, Romans 9:32, Romans 10:3, Php 3:9; it is a righteousness from God through faith in Christ, Php 3:9. In the teaching of Scripture on the justification of sinners before God, therefore, the emphasis is already on the fact that the righteousness by virtue of which we are acquitted of guilt and punishment is a gift from God. If we were justified by the works of the law, by the keeping of its commandments, then by that attitude we could appear in God's judgment with a righteousness of our own, brought about by ourselves, and in a certain sense we would have cause to boast, Romans 4:2. But Scripture teaches otherwise; Abraham had no glory with God, for it was not works, but faith that was imputed to him for righteousness; and the reward was paid to him, not according to guilt, but according to grace, Romans 4:4-5. The righteousness, which God bestows in Christ and with which we can only exist before Him, is therefore in no way the fruit of our labour, but in a complete sense a gift of God, a gift of His grace. We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24). God's grace is the deepest ground and the final cause of our justification. But this grace does not form a contradiction to God's righteousness, but is closely related to it. After all, Paul repeatedly says that God's righteousness was revealed in the Gospel, Romans 1:17, Romans 3:5, Romans 3:21-22, Romans 3:25-26, Romans 10:3, and likewise John says in his first letter 1 John 1:9, that God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and Peter in his second letter 2 Peter 1:1, that we have obtained faith by virtue of the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Here lies the idea that God, the God of law, has created in the Gospel a different legal order, a different legal relationship, than that which applied in the law. This also reveals the justice of God, but in such a way that He gives man His law, obliges him to obedience to that law, and at the end judges him according to his works, rewarding or punishing him. However, since that law has become void through sin, God has established a different legal order in the Gospel, to which mankind must also submit (Romans 10:3), but which itself provides them with the righteousness they need through faith in order to stand trial before God's courts. The Gospel is therefore both an order of right and an order of grace. Grace consists in the fact that God, who could keep the law and judge us according to it, has opened up another way to righteousness and life in Christ. And the right lies in the fact that God does not lead us into His kingdom without righteousness and sanctification, but allows a complete righteousness to be established through the sacrifice of Christ, and grants and imputes this to us by grace. Christ is a gift of God's love (John 3:16, Romans 5:8), and at the same time a demonstration of His righteousness (Romans 3:25); in the Cross on Calvary, law and grace are united with one another; justification is both a judicial and an act of God's grace. To this unity of law and grace we owe Christ and all his benefits, in particular

also the benefit of righteousness, which we need to be able to exist in the divine courts. This righteousness, which is bestowed on us by faith, is, however, to be distinguished from righteousness as an attribute of God's nature, or of Christ's divine or human nature; for if the essential righteousness of God or Christ were the basis of our justification, not only would the entire suffering and death of Christ lose its value, but the boundary between Creator and creature would be erased and both natures mixed in a pantheistic manner. The righteousness that becomes our portion through faith and justifies us before God, however, is acquired through the suffering and death of Christ. God presented Christ as a means of reconciliation through faith in His blood, that is, as a means of atonement, which accomplishes the atonement of sins by the power of the shed blood and through faith (Romans 3:25). He was made sin for us and became a curse for us, that He might redeem us from the curse of the law and that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:13). He has become to them from God for wisdom, for righteousness and holiness, and for redemption, 1 Corinthians 1:30. This righteousness of Christ is so complete and sufficient that it does not need the slightest addition on our part. It cannot even be increased or supplemented by us in any way, because it is one organic whole. Just as the law is a whole, so that he who keeps it in its entirety, but stumbles in one commandment, is guilty of all the commandments, John 2:10; so also righteousness, which fulfills the demand of the law, is a complete unity, like the garment of Jesus without seam, woven into one from above, John 19:23. It is not composed of pieces or parts, but it is there or it is not there; one either has it or one does not; one cannot receive it in part and fill in what is lacking by one's own work. Moreover, what would qualify us for this supplement? There can be no question of the good works which we perform before faith, for there are no such good works; the Scriptures state as clearly as possible that the pattern of a man's heart is evil from the beginning, that what is born of the flesh is flesh, that the mind of the flesh is enmity against God and cannot submit to His law, that all his righteousnesses are even as an unclean garment.

If good works were to supplement the righteousness acquired by Christ, then the only good works that could qualify would be those performed by a born-again man through faith. For believers can indeed do good works; as a good tree bringeth forth good fruit, so the good man bringeth forth good things out of the goodly treasure of his heart, Matthew 12:35; renewed by the Spirit of God, he delighteth in the law of God according to the will of man, Romans 7:22. But first, all these works that come from faith are still very imperfect and tainted with sin; when the believer wants to do good, he always finds that evil is with him, Romans 7:21; and second, all these good works already presuppose the righteousness that is bestowed by Christ and accepted by faith; the believer walks only in the good works that God has prepared, and for which, as God's creation, he was created in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 2:10. Our comfort in justification thus lies in the fact that all the righteousness we need lies outside of us in Christ Jesus. It is not we who must or can bring it about. But God reveals His righteousness in the Gospel in that He Himself provides righteousness through the sacrifice of Christ. The righteousness that justifies us is a righteousness from God through faith in Christ; it is not of our works, either wholly or in part, but it is altogether," completely and sufficiently, a gift of God, a free gift of grace, Php 3:9, 2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 3:5. If now it is by grace, it is no longer grace of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace, Romans 11:6. Christ Himself, in a word, is the righteousness with which alone we can exist before God, Cor. 1:30; He acquired by His suffering and death the right for Himself and His people, to enter into eternal life, free from all guilt and punishment, and to take a seat at the right hand of God. The righteousness

that justifies us cannot therefore be separated from the person of Christ. It does not consist of a material or spiritual gift, which Christ can give us without Himself and which we could receive and accept without the person of Christ Himself. There is no communion with the benefits of Christ without communion with his person, and the latter always necessarily entails the former. To stand in the judgment of God, to be acquitted of all guilt and punishment, and to share in the glory of God and eternal life, we must have Christ, not something of Him, but Himself, and Him in the fullness of His grace and truth, according to His divine and human nature, in His humiliation and exaltation. The crucified and glorified Christ is the righteousness that God grants us in justification by grace. And if - God grants this Christ with all his benefits to us so freely, without any merit on our part, in the way of faith, then he justifies us at the same time, that is, he frees us from all guilt and punishment, and then he gives us the right to eternal life, to heavenly glory, to his own blissful, never-ending fellowship. And then we stand as free before Him as if we had never committed sin, yes, as if we had accomplished all the obedience that Christ accomplished for us.

Now there are two ways in which one or the other thing can be given to us. We can acquire ownership of it by a legal decision, and we can, on the basis of such a legal decision, take possession of it sooner or later. A person who is appointed heir in a legal will already receives the right to the inherited goods in the future, but it can happen that he can only act as the actual owner years later. And even when law and reality coincide at the same time, there is still a big difference between the two. Ownership is the right, possession is the actual power over a thing. With animals we do not find this distinction, or at least not in such a form and to such an extent; an animal takes what it can get. But with a human being it is different; created in the image of God, he must have a right to something in order to possess and use it. It is his honor and privilege not to live by robbery, but to eat his own bread by the work of his hands.

All this also finds its application in the spiritual sphere. For we stand in all kinds of relation to God. He is our Creator and we are His creatures; He is the potter and we are the clay in His fingers; He is the builder and artist and we are His temple; He is the farmer and we are the branches of His vine; He is our Father and we are His children. All the relationships that exist in the world between bridegroom and bride, husband and wife, parents and children, government and subjects, etc., are invoked in Scripture to show us the rich and varied relationship in which people in general and believers in particular stand to Him. And none of this can be neglected without damaging the content of this intimate relationship. The prodigal son continues to bear the name of son in his wanderings, but he is a lost and dead son, and he is only found again and alive when he returns to the Father in confession. But at the same time we are also in a legal relationship with God; He is our Creator, and therefore also our Lawgiver, King and Judge. Scripture expresses this repeatedly, Genesis 18:25, Psalms 47:3, Psalms 47:8, Isaiah 33:22, Hebrews 4:12, James 4:12, but also our own hearts bear witness to this. The sense of justice is deep in our soul and belongs to all peoples and people. The concept of law itself is the same everywhere and at all times; there are differences about the content of the law, about rights and laws, but the concept of law in itself has no history, nor do the concepts of time, place, movement, life, good, evil; it belongs to the consciousnesses that are implanted in the nature of man and that gradually come to consciousness; so wild is no nation, or in certain cases it feels its right has been violated and takes up arms to defend its right. And that right in the broadest sense also includes the relationship to God; every human being feels obliged in his conscience to serve God and to live according to His

law; and every human being has the consciousness that, if he does not do this, he is guilty and worthy of punishment. The law of the broken covenant of works remains in the heart of every human being; and the moral law proclaimed by God on Sinai has only served to reinforce the content of its commandments and thereby to strengthen the obligation to keep them. This legal relationship is not nullified in the Gospel, as many like to imagine, but restored and fulfilled. The distinction between law and gospel does not lie in the fact that in the law God acts only as Judge, and in the gospel only as Father; and still less is the distinction between law and gospel to be equated with that between Old and New Testament. For in the Old Testament, too, God revealed to his people the Gospel of his grace and mercy; the Law stood in the service of the covenant of grace, followed and was subordinate to the promise, and, as such, was also a gift of his fatherly favor and of his educational wisdom. Although, therefore, in the person of Christ the depth of God's mercy has been much more clearly revealed than was possible in the Old Testament, on the one hand the Gospel of grace was not unknown even among Israel, and on the other hand the fullness of the Gospel, which appeared in Christ, was not a destruction but a fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. As strongly as possible, therefore, the apostle Paul says that in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, Romans 1:17, Romans 3:21-26. The unity and harmony of the law and the Gospel consists in the fact that in both, the same righteousness of God is revealed; but the difference lies in this: in the law, that righteousness is revealed according to the rule: the man who does these things shall live; but in the Gospel, that righteousness is revealed without the law, and according to the rule: the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the wicked, his faith is counted as righteousness, Romans 4:5. In the law a personal, perfect, sufficient righteousness is demanded, in the Gospel the same perfect, sufficient righteousness is given by God through grace in Christ. Since man was unwilling and unable to uphold God's law in his law, God himself restored and confirmed his law through the gift of righteousness in Christ. He puts His love and mercy at the service of His righteousness; by giving Himself, He fulfills His own law; and He imputes to us by grace the righteousness of Christ, that we may fully fulfill His law, receive complete forgiveness of all our sins and a bold entrance into His heavenly kingdom.

Justification is therefore most certainly a gracious, but also a righteous act of God, a declaration by which He as Judge acquits us of guilt and punishment and grants us the right to eternal life. Rome and all those who seek the justification of man wholly or partly in man himself (in his faith, in his good works, in Christ in us, in the new principle of life, etc.) always raise this objection against this judicial declaration of justification, that such a judicial declaration is false and unworthy of God. For if, so they say, the basis of our justification lies wholly in Christ outside us, and faith and good works do not at all qualify as a part of our righteousness before God, then the man who is justified is not really righteous, and God passes an untrue and unjust judgment on such a man, for he is not what he is declared to be. To this objection it is sufficient to remark that the Holy Scriptures always understand justification as a judicial act. It repeatedly speaks of the justification of sinners before God, and then uses a word that is borrowed from legal language and always has a legal meaning. To the judges under Israel God gave the command, that they should judge the righteous, and condemn the unrighteous, Deuteronomy 25:1, Psalms 82:2-3, Proverbs 17:15, Proverbs 24:24, Isaiah 5:23, and He Himself shows His righteousness in that He does not justify the wicked and does not kill the righteous, Genesis 18:25, Exodus 23:7, 2 Chronicles 23:7, 2 Chronicles 6:23. When this word is transferred to the spiritual realm, Jesus says for example that the wisdom that appeared in Him was justified, that is to say, recognized as wisdom by the children, Matthew

11:19, and in Luke 7:29 that the people, who were born in Him, were justified, that is to say, they were recognized as wisdom by their children. Luke 7:29, that the people who heard John, and the tax collectors who were baptized with his baptism, thereby justified God, that is, acknowledged God as righteous; the moral meaning of justifying or making holy, is even completely excluded in these two places. And the same is true when the word 'the salvation of sinners' is used. For not only does Paul say, that in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, Romans 1:19, Romans 3:20 f., but he also declares that God justifies those who come by faith, and thereby remains just himself, John 3:36, that he imputes faith for righteousness to the one who does not work, but believes in him who justifies the wicked, John 4:5; he contrasts justifying with accusing and condemning, and exclaims: who will accuse God's elect? It is God who justifies, who condemns? Romans 8:33-34; he alternates justifying with imputing righteousness, Romans 4:3, Romans 4:6, Romans 4:12, and with making righteous, Romans 5:19, and in the preceding verse expresses himself in the following way: by one crime (of Adam) it came to a condemning judgment for all men, so it came by one judgment of righteousness (of Christ) for all men to a justification that brings life. Thus justification is everywhere a judicial act, a judgment of acquittal, which is pronounced by the heavenly Judge upon the sinner who, according to the measure of the law, is an ungodly person, but who has accepted by faith the righteousness bestowed by God Himself in Christ, and who, judged accordingly, is a righteous person.

However, apart from the fact that Holy Scripture very clearly interprets justification as a judicial act, its opponents completely misrepresent its character. They say that such an acquittal of man on the basis of a righteousness which is outside him is false, and leaves man himself entirely unchanged. This accusation falls back on themselves, for if they acquit man on the basis of a righteousness within him, they must admit that man's righteousness here on earth is always deeply flawed and imperfect, and they must come to the conclusion that God justifies someone on the basis of a very flawed righteousness and is thus guilty of an untrue judgment. On the other hand, an acquittal on the basis of the righteousness that is in Christ is perfectly just, because that righteousness is perfect and was made by God Himself in the Son of His love. But moreover, this acquittal does take place only on the basis of the righteousness that is in Christ, but in due course it also works through faith in the consciousness of man, and brings about the greatest change there. Even if someone is accused of a serious crime before a terrestrial judge and is then acquitted, he does not remain the same, but his entire legal relationship is transformed. And thus the acquittal of God also has an effect on man's consciousness and frees him from all sense of guilt. In a certain sense this acquittal has already taken place in the decision of election; it is objectively pronounced in the resurrection of Christ, who was delivered for our sins and raised for our justification (Romans 4:25), and in the Gospel, which contains the joyful message that through the death of Christ God is in a relationship of reconciliation and peace with the world (2 Corinthians 5:19). Justification is but one link in the chain of salvation; it is linked on the one side to foreknowledge and calling, and on the other to sanctification and glorification. Justification in the court of God thus penetrates the consciousness of man in due time through faith: and the righteousness acquired by Christ is not a dead capital that lies outside of Christ, but it is included in his person, and Christ was raised up for that very purpose, in order that in due time he might make himself known to his own with all his benefits through the Holy Spirit. And when man's eye of faith is opened to this, then his whole legal relationship changes. He, who was poor, suddenly becomes rich through the riches which are in Christ Jesus; he, who was guilty of the transgression of all God's commandments, suddenly

sees himself freed from all guilt and punishment; he, who deserved eternal punishment, sees himself granted the right to eternal life! And with Paul he exults: who shall bring an accusation against the elect of God? It is God who justifies, who it is who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes what is more, who was also raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also prays for us. And finally: justification and sanctification are distinct and should be sharply distinguished. For he who neglects or erases this distinction, establishes his own righteousness in man again, disregards the perfection and sufficiency of God's righteousness, which has appeared in Christ, changes the Gospel into a new law, takes away the comfort of souls and makes salvation dependent on man's merits. Faith, therefore, appears in justification only as a receiving organ, as the hand that accepts a gift, as the soul's trust in Christ and His righteousness alone. It is true that the Holy Scriptures repeatedly use the expression that faith is imputed as righteousness, Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:22, Galatians 3:6, James 2:23, and this undoubtedly indicates that faith replaces the righteousness that the law demands, but which the sinner does not possess. But the question arises: why does faith take the place of the righteousness required by the law? Is it because faith has such an outstanding moral value and is such a good and valid work? .

There are many who think so, and who say that faith, without more, quite apart from its content and object, justifies only by its inner quality. But this is certainly not the teaching of Scripture. For if faith, by virtue of its moral nature, justified, it would again appear as an act or a work, and would not stand against works; and yet Paul expresses it as bluntly as possible, that justification, which now takes place in the Gospel by faith, stands diametrically opposed to all justification by the works of the law, Romans 3:20, Romans 3:28, Romans 4:4 ff, Galatians 2:16, Galatians 3:11, etc. Furthermore, this contradiction alternates with the other one, that justification by faith is a justification by grace, and as such excludes all glory and all merit, Romans 3:24, Romans 4:4 ff, Titus 3:5; in Romans 4:16 the apostle expressly says that the inheritance is by faith, precisely so that it may be by grace; but this could not be so said, if faith itself, because of its inner dignity and power, justified man. Finally, if faith performed this service, then Christ would lose all meaning in justification; it would only matter that, but not at all what a person believed. Faith would justify, even if it were faith in an idol, in a demonic power, in a false prophet, just as some unbelieving healers recommend to their patients a visit to Lourdes, etc., because ■faith heals. But the testimony of Scripture is diametrically opposed to this: "It is precisely the content and the object that are important in justifying faith. Faith can take the place of the righteousness required by the law and can be imputed as righteousness, because faith is in Christ Jesus, whom God presented as a reconciliation through the power of His blood, 3:25, who bore our curse, Galatians 3:13, who was made sin for us, 2 Corinthians 5:21, who died and rose again, who is at the right hand of God and prays for us, Romans 8:34, and who therefore became to us a righteousness from God, 1 Corinthians 1:30, in whom we are the righteousness of God, 2 Corinthians 5:21. In a word, faith justifies, because it partakes of a righteousness in Christ, which is as perfect and sufficient as that demanded by the law, but which is now given in the gospel by God through grace in Christ, Php 3:9; it justifies, not by its inner dignity, but by its substance, namely, the righteousness of Christ.

However much it is of the utmost importance to clearly understand and act upon the distinction between justification and sanctification, the two benefits are not separated from each other for a moment. They are not separated in God's decree, for justification is but one link in the chain of salvation; whom God has known beforehand, these He has also predestined to be like unto the

image of His Son; and whom He has predestined, these He has also called; and whom He has called, these He has also justified; and whom He has justified, these He has also glorified. Nor are they separated in the person and work of Christ; for righteousness is not a good that is outside of Christ and can be received without his person. Christ Himself is our righteousness, and at the same time He is our wisdom, holiness and redemption, 1 Corinthians 1:30; one cannot accept one of Christ's benefits without the other, because they are all contained in His person; whoever accepts Christ as his righteousness by faith, receives Him also as his holiness; Christ cannot be accepted in part, not half or for a part; whoever has Him, has Him completely with all His benefits, and whoever lacks His benefits, is not partakers of His person either. Finally, also in faith, justification and sanctification are inseparably bound up; faith comes into consideration in the first-mentioned act only and exclusively from its religious side, as trust in God's grace, as acceptance of Christ and of the righteousness bestowed by God in Him; but if faith indeed is and does this, then it is living, sanctifying faith, which is God's work par excellence, John 6:29, and in good works reveals His genuineness and power, Gal. Justifying is not the same as making alive; but as sin and death, so also righteousness and life are intimately united; the righteous by faith shall live, Romans 1:17; as it came to a judgment of condemnation of all men by one crime, so it comes to a justification of all men by one judgment of acquittal, which has the effect of life and leads to life, 5:18.

Therefore, justification includes two benefits: forgiveness of sins and granting the right to eternal life. They are connected and stand in the same relation to each other as the passive and active obedience in the work of Christ. Christ not only repaired what Adam had spoiled by his one transgression, but He also acquired what Adam should have acquired by his observance of God's commandment, namely eternal life. He who believes in Christ, receives thereby the forgiveness of all his sins, Matthew 9:2, Romans 4:7, Ephesians 4:32, and also in that same moment eternal life, John 3:16, John 3:36.

Now the forgiveness of sins is thought of very lightly by most people. They see it as something completely natural, that God forgives the sins and turns a blind eye to the shortcomings; it is as if God must forgive the sins and would otherwise not be a God of love. But the experience of human life can already inform them better. Forgiving, forgiving with all our hearts, forgiving in such a way that nothing of the experienced insult remains in the heart, takes a struggle against ourselves and means a victory over ourselves. It is true that the feeling of being insulted is often very misplaced in us; we take an interest in things that are of no value at all and let others pass that should offend us deeply; our sense of honor and justice is not eradicated, but it is nevertheless corrupted and led in the wrong direction. But it may happen that by some treatment or other we feel deeply insulted and our honor, our character, our name is hurt; and how much of a struggle it is then to banish all revenge and hatred from our hearts, and to forgive our enemy so completely and wholeheartedly that we forget the insult and never remember it. Forgiveness always presupposes the violation of a right and then consists in the remission of a penalty due for it.

All this already applies among men. But sin and forgiveness acquire a much more serious character when committed against God and given by God. God also has a right, the right to be recognized, served and worshipped as God by all people at all times, everywhere, in everything. This right is the principle and the basis of all law; whoever violates it, violates in principle the entire legal order, the entire moral world order, as it has its origin and solidity in God. Sin is an

overturning of God’s justice. Whoever gets to know sin in this way, whoever considers it in the light of Holy Scripture, whoever sees it somewhat as God sees it, will think differently about forgiveness. He cannot actually believe it, because it goes against the appearance of all things. There is, in the first place, his own heart, which condemns him and makes him feel guilty before God. Then there is the law, which pronounces the curse upon him and deems him worthy of death. Then there is Satan, who accuses him and in his accusation maintains justice against him. Then there are the people who leave him alone in his hour of need and magnify his sins. And in and behind all of them he hears the voice of God’s righteousness, which seeks him out and persecutes him and holds him and subjects him to judgment. Who dares, who can, considering and experiencing all this, believe in the complete forgiveness of all his sins? But the church of Christ dares to do so, can and may; it confesses in humility and gladness of heart: I believe in the forgiveness of sins; I believe it even though I do not see it; I believe it even though my conscience accuses me of having sinned gravely against all God’s commandments and of not having kept them, and even though I am still inclined to all evil. And for that faith she has ground under her feet. He who seeks the forgiveness of sins outside of Christ may desire it and hope for it, but he cannot believe it wholeheartedly and with conviction; he equates it with turning a blind eye and weakening the seriousness of sin. But the Gospel makes it known to us that God can and has forgiven sins, because His right has been fully upheld in Christ; satisfaction does not contradict forgiveness, but paves the way for it, guarantees it and makes us believe in it with unquestionable certainty. And so perfect is this forgiveness of all our sins, that in Scripture it is equated to not remembering, to throwing away, to forgetting, Isaiah 38:17, Isaiah 43:25, Hebrews 8:12. The Lord does not look upon the iniquity in Jacob, nor does He look upon the wickedness in Israel, Numbers 23:21. This forgiveness is already included in the intention of God, is openly pronounced on the whole congregation in the resurrection of Christ, Romans 4:25, is generally made known in the Gospel, Acts 5:31, and is especially distributed to everyone who believes. But though the believer has received the forgiveness of all his sins, he must nevertheless continually appropriate them in faith, from day to day, in order to enjoy the security and the comfort of them. It would be easy if we could walk according to the will of our heart with a: once converted, remain converted; and many indeed continue to live on a past experience and reassure themselves with it. But that is not the Christian life. Neither the righteousness that is in Christ Jesus, nor the faith that the Holy Spirit instills in our hearts, is a dead capital. We only partake of the forgiveness of our sins, its truth and its certainty, in the long term, through the fellowship with Christ Himself, in the activity of the sanctifying faith. That is why Jesus put the plea for the forgiveness of sins on the lips of his disciples, Matthew 6:12; the humble confession of our sins is the way in which God reveals his faithfulness and justice, in order to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, 1 John 1:9. And in order to make us constantly aware of the magnitude of the benefit that is given to us in the forgiveness of sins, Christ adds the words to the request for forgiveness of our debts: "As we forgive those who trespass against us". These words do not define the ground on which we dare or may ask God to forgive us of our sins; they do not indicate the standard by which we may invoke it for ourselves; but they describe the attitude which must be present in the person making the prayer in order to receive, enjoy and appreciate the benefits of forgiveness. Only then do we realize to some extent what it has cost God, in human terms, to grant us the forgiveness of sins in Christ, when we have rooted out all enmity from our hearts and forgiven our debtors wholeheartedly for all their sins. We can only pray for that forgiveness as a great and unworthy

benefit with all the earnestness of our souls, if we are wholeheartedly forgiving our neighbor. The forgiveness of our sins has therefore taken place with God once and for all, but it is appropriated to us throughout our lives in the way of faith and conversion. The Lord's Supper is also proof of this, for in it we repeatedly celebrate the fact that Christ has broken his body and shed his blood for the forgiveness of our sins (Matthew 26:28). The other side of this benefit of forgiveness is the right to eternal life. Whoever believes in Christ, is not only free from the wrath of God, but also immediately receives eternal life. Now Johannes thinks of this eternal life above all as the new life, which is born of God and planted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, John 1:13, John 3:5; the childhood he speaks of comes from the rebirth and consists above all in conformity to God, John 1:13, 1 John 1:1-3. But Paul usually speaks of 'childhood' in another sense; he understands it to mean that God accepts us as His children and heirs on the basis of righteousness in Christ. With the Romans, the families were strictly separated from each other; each family had its own rights and especially its own divine customs; a child could therefore only pass from one family to another by a formal, legal act, in which the natural father sold his child, as it were, to the other father, who wanted to accept it as his own child. When the natural father had died, the transition could only take place through a solemn declaration by the people in a public assembly. Only in this way could the child be released from his obligations in one family and be subjected to those in another family. The Apostle Paul probably derived the concept of adoption from this, in order to show the new relationship in which the believers stand to God. In the Old Testament this adoption was already the privilege of Israel, Romans 9:4, which is why it is often called the son of God, Exodus 4:22-23, Deuteronomy 8:5, Hosea 11:1, etc. But it is above all a blessing of the Lord. But above all it is a blessing of the new covenant; for the faithful of the Old Testament were still under the law, Galatians 3:23, Galatians 4:1-3. But now Christ came in the fullness of time, put Himself under the law and bore its curse, that He might redeem those who were under the law, and that we might obtain the adoption of children (Galatians 4:4-5). Christ redeemed us from the servitude of the law and of sin through His death, so that now we belong to another, namely to Him who was raised from the dead, Romans 7:1-4, and accepted by God as His children and inheritors, Galatians 4:7. As such they have also received the Spirit of the Son, the Spirit of adoption as children, the Spirit that fits this childhood; by that Spirit they are conscious of their childhood, they receive the boldness to address God as their Father, and they are continually guided, Romans 8:14-16, Galatians 4:6. Yes, as this adoption into children is rooted in the eternal intention of God, Ephesians 1:5, so it also extends far into the future; for although believers are now children already and have all the rights of heirs, Romans 8:17, Galatians 4:7; yet they expect with all creation the revelation of the children of God, the liberty of their glory, the adoption as children, namely the redemption of their bodies, Romans 8:18-23. Not until the resurrection of the dead, when the body will be completely redeemed, will the adoption of children be completed. The benefit of justification by faith alone contains for the Christian a rich consolation. The forgiveness of his sins, his hope for the future, his certainty of eternal salvation do not depend on the degree of holiness he has attained in life, but are fixed in the grace of God and in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. If they were to derive their certainty from the good works of the Christian, they would remain uncertain at all times, even unto death, for even the most holy have only a small portion of perfect obedience ; and the faithful would be continually moved to and fro by fear and anxiety, never able to stand in the freedom with which Christ has set them free, and, yet unable to live without all certainty, would have to resort to church and priest, to altar and sacrament, to religious

duties and penance. That is the situation of thousands of Christians, both outside and inside the Roman Church. They do not understand the glory and comfort of free justification. But the believer, whose eye is closed to the riches of this benefit, sees it differently. He has come to the humble recognition that good works, whether they consist of mental states, sensations of the soul, or outward actions, never are and never can be the grounds, but only the fruits of faith. His salvation and blessedness are fixed, outside of him, in Christ Jesus and his righteousness, and therefore can never waver. His house is built on the rock, and can withstand the violence of the torrential rain, the streams of water, and the winds. Of course, this confession, as well as every article of faith, can be abused. If faith, which accepts Christ and His righteousness, is taken as a rational assent to a historical truth, man remains cold, indifferent and dead; and he does not produce any good works out of that faith, nor does he accept the person of Christ with it. But true faith, which drives man, stricken and defeated by guilt, to Christ Himself, which clings to the grace of God and to that grace alone, which boasts of free forgiveness of guilt, and in that very moment produces good works.

Yes, this faith, which rests solely on God's grace in Christ ' and thereby is conscious of the forgiveness of sins, that faith alone is capable of doing truly good works. For as long as we allow the forgiveness of our sins to depend wholly or partly on the emotions we enjoy, and on the good deeds we accomplish, as long as we are still more or less in fear and anxiety ; We are not yet children who do good for love, but we are still servants who do it for pay; we do not yet do good purely for the sake of goodness itself, that is, for God's will, but more or less out of self-interest, to gain favour with it, and to make ourselves agreeable in the eyes of God. But all this changes if we understand by faith that our salvation rests exclusively in God's grace and in the righteousness of Christ. Then we abandon the idea of establishing our own righteousness and no longer tire ourselves with working on our own salvation, because this is an unshakeable reality in Christ Jesus. And of that salvation in Christ for sure, we can now devote all our attention to doing good works in order to glorify our Father. We then no longer accomplish them for our own sake, but for the Lord's sake. We belong to Christ, who was raised from the dead, that we may bear fruit for God, Romans 7:4. We have died by the law of the law, that we might live to the glory of God (Galatians 2:19).

Herein, then, lies the freedom of the Christian, which he partakes of through justification, that he is released from the demand and curse of the law. The believer is not freed from the law in the sense that he can live according to the will of his heart, that he can, as it is called today, live out himself according to the inclination and direction of his sinful nature. On the contrary, the believer is much more firmly bound to the law than was formerly the case; for faith does not nullify the law, but confirms it (Romans 3:31); its right is fulfilled in those who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit (8:4). Those who have died to sin, how can they still live in it? But the relationship in which the believer comes to stand to the law is quite different from the relationship he had to it before. He remains bound to it as the rule of gratitude; free, however, from its demand and its curse. In this respect the believers of the New Testament have much more than those of the Old Covenant. In the Old Testament religion is usually still described as the fear of the Lord, and the faithful are often called servants of the Lord. They were children, but infants, and therefore like servants, put under guardians and caretakers until the time determined by the Father, Galatians 4:1-2, Galatians 3:23-24. But when the fullness of time has come, God has sent his Son,

born of a woman, under the law, Galatians 4:4. By fulfilling all righteousness in our place, Matthew 4:15, by becoming a curse for us, Galatians 3:13, and by allowing himself to be made sin for us, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law and completely freed us from its demands. We are no longer married to her, we are no longer her servants, we have been destroyed by her very self, and we are now servants of Christ and live for God, Romans 7:1-4, Galatians 2:19; we are no longer under the law, but under grace, Romans 6:15, we are in the freedom with which Christ has set us free, Galatians 5:1. For us the rule is no longer: do this and you will live, but the order is completely reversed; we live by faith and do the law because we enjoy it according to the inner man. In this way the law has become powerless against believers: It can no longer accuse them, for its guilt has been borne by Christ and its demand fulfilled by Christ; it can no longer condemn them, for Christ has taken upon Himself its curse and suffered all its penalties; Satan can no longer even make use of it to accuse the brethren, for who can bring accusations against God's elect, when God Himself justifies them, and the Christ who died and was glorified in heaven prays for them? And with the change which justification has brought about in the relationship of the faithful to the law, to its demands and curses, their relationship to all things and to the whole world changes as well. When we are reconciled to God, we are reconciled to all things; when we stand in right relation to God, we also stand in right relation to the whole world; redemption in Christ is a redemption from the guilt and punishment of sin, but also from the world, which can so oppress and depress us. For the Father has loved the world, and Christ has conquered it, so that it can still oppress us, but cannot take away our good spirit, John 16:33. As children of their heavenly Father, the faithful are not concerned about what they eat or drink or how they clothe themselves, for He knows that they need all of these things, Matthew 6:25 ff. If strangers, they are known; if dying, they live; if disciplined, they are not killed; if sad, they are always rejoicing; if poor, they make many rich; if having nothing, they possess everything, 2 Corinthians 6:9-10. They do not torment themselves with: do not touch, do not taste, and do not stir, but esteem all God's creatures as good and take them with thanksgiving, Colossians 2:20, 1 Timothy 4:4. They remain and work in the calling, in which they have been called, and are not servants of men, but of Christ alone, 1 Corinthians 7:20-24. They see in the trials that befall them, not a punishment, but a chastisement, and a proof of God's love, Hebrews 12:5-8. They are free towards all creatures because nothing can separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, their Lord, Romans 8:35, Romans 8:39. Yes, everything is theirs, because they are Christ's, 1 Corinthians 3:21-23, and all things must work together for good to those who love God and have been called according to His purpose, Romans 8:28. The believer, who is justified in Christ, is the freest creature in the world. At least that is how it should be.

01.22. Sanctification.

22. Sanctification.

Since the image of God existed not only in knowledge and righteousness, but also in holiness, the re-creation must restore man to his right relationship to God, and at the same time renew his inner self according to the demands of His holy law. Sin is guilt, but also blemish. Justification frees him from the guilt, and sanctification frees him from the stain of sin. Through the latter his consciousness is changed, through this his being. Through the first mankind regains his good standing, through the second he regains his ability to be good and do good. The word holy appears on almost every page of the Holy Scriptures. What the original, natural meaning of the Hebrew word was, which has been transferred to our language as holy, cannot be determined with certainty, because the word is never found in Scripture in this sense, but is always used in a religious sense; however, it is probably derived from a root which means to cut off, to separate. Nor is it possible to say with certainty in what sense the word was first introduced in the religious sphere. According to some people and things were first called holy because they were separated from others and withdrawn from common use - the opposite of holy is unholy, unconsecrated, common, profane, Leviticus 10:10, 1 Samuel 21:5, Ezekiel 22:6. According to others the original meaning contained an indication, that persons and things had a certain relation to God, and therefore were separated from others. The latter opinion argues that people and things are never automatically, naturally holy, but can only become so through a certain action that happens to them. Neither can they sanctify themselves, because all sanctity and holiness come from God. Jehovah is holy, and therefore He wants a holy people, a holy priesthood, a holy dwelling, Exodus 19:6, Exodus 29:43, Leviticus 11:44-45, Leviticus 19:2, etc., to be holy. He designates who is His and who is holy, Numbers 16:5.

Countless times, therefore, God is called the Holy One in the Old Testament; only in Daniel 4:8-9, Daniel 4:18, Daniel 5:11, Daniel 5:11 also Nebuchadnezzar speaks of his holy gods. It does not refer to a special quality in the divine being next to others; but the name serves especially to express his divine greatness, elevation, majesty, inaccessibility. There is no one holy like the Lord, for there is no one but He, 1 Samuel 2:2. He is God and no man, the Holy One, Hosea 11:9; no one can exist before Him, 1 Samuel 6:20; He is exalted above the gods, glorified in holiness, fearful in songs of praise, doing wonders, Exodus 15:11; He is fearful out of His sanctuary, Psalms 68:35; His name is great and fearful, Psalms 99:2-3; to swear by His holiness is to swear by oneself, Amos 4:2, Amos 6:8. In a word, holiness indicates God in His distinction from and exaltation above all creatures; He is the Holy One, because He is God; and especially Isaiah prefers to use this name, Isaiah 5:16, Isaiah 6:3, Isaiah 6:11-12, etc. cf. Ezekiel 37:28-20, Ezekiel 39:7, Habakkuk 1:12, Habakkuk 3:3 etc. The holiness of God is manifested in all the relations in which He has placed Himself with His people; the whole legislation of Israel has its principle in the holiness of Jehovah and its goal in the sanctification of the people. Holy is He in all His manifestation, in all that emanates from Him; holy is His name, Leviticus 3:1, His arm, Psalms 98:1, His covenant, Daniel 11:28, His word, Psalms 105:42, His Spirit, Psalms 51:11, Isaiah 63:10,

Isaiah 63:17. And therefore He wants His people also to be holy, Exodus 19:6, Exodus 29:43-46, Leviticus 11:44, Leviticus 19:2, and in that people again especially the priests and the Levites, who serve the holy things and are consecrated to their office by special ceremonies, Exodus 29:1-46. Yes, everything connected with God's service, places, times, sacrifices, the priestly garments, the temple, etc. must be consecrated and holy to the Lord. The whole law means that Israel shall be to the Lord a priestly kingdom and a holy nation, Exodus 19:6. And a people is holy when it complies in all things with the law which the Lord has given.

Now that law under Israel contained not only moral, but also many civil and ceremonial commandments. Holiness, therefore, consisted in perfection, in total conformity with the law, but this perfection was not only of a moral, but also of a civil and ceremonial nature. The people, however, often fell into one-sidedness and sought the essence of religion in external, Levitical purity.

Then the prophets rose up against it, and proclaimed, that to obey is better than the victim, and to look up is better than the fat of the rams, 1 Samuel 15:22, that the Lord is pleased with charity and not with sacrifice, with the knowledge of God more than with burnt offerings, Hosea 6:6, that the Lord demands nothing else than to do right, to love charity, and to walk humbly with God, Mids. 6 : 8. They showed that the holiness of God consisted especially in his moral nakedness, in his elevation above and in contrast with all the sinfulness of the creature, Isaiah 6:3-7. When men profane His name and His covenant, He sanctifies Himself in the way of right and justice, Isaiah 5:16, Ezekiel 28:22; as the Holy One He punishes the enemies, so that they may know that He is the Lord, Jeremiah 50:29, Ezekiel 36:23, Ezekiel 39:7, but He will redeem His people, by cleansing them from all iniquity, establishing a new covenant with them, and causing them to walk in His ways with a new heart, Jeremiah 31:34-31, Ezekiel 36:25-29 etc. And He will do this, not for Israel's sake, but for His great name's sake, Isa. 43:35, Ezekiel 36:22, Ezekiel 36:32, etc. In the same way that God in the New Covenant has provided righteousness in Christ for His people, He has also provided holiness in the Son of His love. Christ is our holiness in the same way and in the same sense as He is our wisdom, our redemption. Now, first of all, He possessed a personal holiness, otherwise He could not have acquired holiness for us. What was received in Mary from the Holy Spirit and born of her, was Holy and received the name of the Son of God, Luke 1:35. Later, at baptism, He received the Holy Spirit without measure and was full of the Holy Spirit, Luke 3:22, Luke 4:1. Those who were possessed recognized Him as the Holy One of God, Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34, and the disciples confessed through Peter: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we have believed and known that thou art the Holy One of God, John 6:69 (according to another interpretation). In Acts 4:27, cf. Acts 3:14, the same apostle speaks of Him as God's holy child (or God's holy servant), and in Revelation 3:9 He calls Himself the Holy One and the One True. Just as Christ himself was aware of his sinlessness, Matthew 12:50, John 4:34, John 8:46, so also all his apostles say that he did no wrong and there was no deceit in his mouth, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15, Hebrews 7:26, 1 Peter 1:19, 1 Peter 2:22, 1 Peter 3:18, 1 John 2:1, 1 John 3:5. With Christ, however, a distinction must be made between the holiness He possessed by nature and that which He acquired through His perfect obedience. His holy conception and birth had first of all this usefulness, that He could be our Mediator, Heid. Catech. Exh. 16, but secondly also this power, that He, being our Mediator from the moment of conception, with His innocence and complete holiness covers the sin in which we are conceptualized and born

before God, Heid. Catech. The holiness into which He was born was immediately made by Him a part of that holiness which, all His life until His death, He had to acquire for His congregation. After all, the Father had already sanctified Him by His coming in the flesh, ordained Him for the ministry of mediator, and sent Him into the world for that very reason (John 10:36). And Christ Himself sanctified Himself and gave Himself over to the will of His Father before He was conceived and born in Mary; His incarnation was already an accomplishment of the Father's will, an act of sanctification. It was not enough that Christ was holy, He had to sanctify Himself from His conception to His death. As Mediator, He was subjected to the severest tests and trials, especially after He had received the baptism, had been anointed with the Holy Spirit and had begun to exercise His ministry in public. The temptation of which we read in the Gospels was the beginning of a life full of struggles; after it had ended, the devil only departed from Him for a time, Luke 4:13. We cannot conceive of these temptations, but it is expressly written that He became like our brothers in all things, and was tempted in all things, as we are, yet without sin, Hebrews 2:17, Hebrews 4:15; there is no weakness in us, or He knows it, and no temptation, or He can come to our aid. But while we succumb every moment, He remained faithful to the end; He was tempted in all things, yet without sin; He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, Php 2:8. He did not pray that death would spare him, but he made a strong appeal and supplication to the One who could deliver him from death, that he might endure suffering and gain life through death; and he was heard in this plea, Hebrews 5:7. But although He was the Son, He still had to learn obedience from what He suffered, Hebrews 5:8. He was obedient from the very beginning and He wanted to be obedient; to do the Father's will was His food, John 4:34. But in suffering He received the opportunity to show this obedience; through suffering He had to turn His mind and will to obey into action. Thus, through suffering, He was sanctified (Hebrews 2:11, Hebrews 5:9), that is, not sanctified in a moral sense, but completed, brought to the goal He had set out for, crowned with honor and glory because of the suffering of death (Hebrews 2:9, Hebrews 12:2), formed into the chief conductor of the salvation of God's children and into the finisher of their faith (Hebrews 2:10, Hebrews 12:2). By enduring the cross and despising the shame, in view of the joy that awaited Him after His humiliation, He became the leader, the forerunner, the architect of His own salvation, and also the one who begins and completes faith in them. By perfecting Himself in the way of obedience, by seeking the glory at the right hand of the Father only through the deepest humiliation, He has become a cause of eternal salvation for all those who obey Him, Hebrews 5:9. He sanctified Himself, gave Himself as a sacrifice in death, that His disciples might be sanctified in truth, John 17:19. And thus He was given to us by God for our holiness, 1 Corinthians 1:30. In order to properly understand the sanctification of believers, it must be clearly understood that Christ is our holiness in the same sense in which He is our righteousness. He is a complete and sufficient Saviour; He does not complete His work half-heartedly, but truly and completely saves us; and He does not rest until He has made us fully partakers of eternal life and heavenly glory. Through his righteousness, he does not only bring us back to the state of the righteous, who go free in the judgment of God, to leave it up to us to reform ourselves in God's image by doing good works and to earn eternal life. But Christ has accomplished everything for us; He bore for us the guilt and punishment of sin, and He also kept the law for us and acquired life. His obedience was ■lateral" and ■decent" at the same time. Of this his resurrection gave proof. God did not leave his soul in hell (that is not the place of the damned, because Christ's soul was in paradise after his death, Luke 23:43, but the grave, or the realm of the dead, to which Christ also belonged as long

as he was in the state of death) and did not surrender his Holy One to corruption according to the body, but made known to him the ways of life and filled him with joy through his face, Acts 2:27-28, Acts 13:35-37. In accordance with the Spirit of holiness which dwelt in Him, He was appointed by God from the resurrection of the dead, and appointed as His Son in power, Romans 1:5, as a Prince and Saviour, to give Israel repentance and the forgiveness of sins, Acts 5:31, as a Prince who has acquired eternal life and now distributes it to His own, Acts 3:15. But this holiness, which Christ has acquired for his congregation, does not remain outside us, but is truly communicated to us. In justification we are acquitted of guilt and punishment on the basis of a righteousness that is outside of us, in Christ Jesus, and that is imputed to us by God's grace and is accepted by us in faith. In sanctification, however, the holiness of Christ is properly poured out in us by the Holy Spirit. So when Rome speaks of an infused grace, we do not object to that in itself; we only object to this infused grace being considered a piece of righteousness on the basis of which we would be acquitted by God. For then justification and sanctification, liberation from guilt and the removal of stain, would be confused with one another; then Christ would be deprived of the fullness of his righteousness and the believing soul of its comfort and security. But there is indeed an infused grace, a Christ in us as well as a Christ for us, a renewal in the image of God as certain as a transition to the state of the righteous, a change in our moral condition no less than in our relationship to God.

Even this sanctification must be maintained with no less certainty and force than the justification. There have always been those who have held the forgiveness of sins to be the one great act of Christ, and who have denied or at least neglected and overshadowed the inner renewal of man in the image of God. They believe that if man is justified and conscious of this in faith, nothing else needs to happen to him; through the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins he has already become another man; justification and regeneration are two names for the same thing.

Now it is perfectly true that the Christian, who with a true faith trusts that all his sins, by pure grace, only through the merit of Christ, have been forgiven, becomes by this consciousness indeed another person; he feels freed from all guilt, he has, being justified by faith, peace with God, he stands in the freedom with which Christ has set him free, and he can jubilate with David : Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity! Such a change can even be called a rebirth in a certain sense, a renewal of consciousness. But if it is now deduced from this that justification and rebirth are completely the same, then there is no ground for this conclusion and one is also definitely in conflict with the testimony of the Holy Scriptures. True salvation faith, which accepts Christ's righteousness and becomes aware of the forgiveness of sins, does not come from a natural man, but is the fruit of the rebirth, and thus already presupposes a spiritual change that has taken place in man through the Holy Spirit ; And the heartfelt joy and peace, which the believer enjoys through the certainty of the forgiveness of his sins, are characteristics of the spiritual man, who in the fellowship with Christ has risen from the death of sin.

Furthermore, there is a difference between the state in which someone is, and the state in which he is. The two are so far apart that sometimes an innocent person is charged and convicted, and a guilty person is acquitted by the judge. Therefore, a person's state has not changed, nor has the other way around. This is true in the natural, but also in the spiritual realm. Sin is not only guilt, but also blemish; we are freed from the first in justification, and from the second in sanctification.

Perfect salvation consists not only of knowledge and righteousness, but also of holiness and redemption. And that is why Christ brought both, forgiveness of sins and eternal life. And whatever the case, Scripture distinguishes as clearly as possible between justification and regeneration. The promise in the Old Testament was that in the new covenant the Lord would forgive the iniquities of His people, but also give them a new heart and write His law in it (Jeremiah 31:33, Jeremiah 31:34, Ezekiel 36:25-26). He would give His Spirit within them, and make them walk in His statutes and keep and do His rights, Ezekiel 36:27. In order to fulfill this promise, Christ not only gave his soul as a ransom for many, but also, after his exaltation at the right hand of the Father, sent the Holy Spirit, that he might dwell and work in the congregation. And what He does, we have already seen (p. 437 ff.): in and through the Spirit, Chris distributes Himself and all His benefits to the congregation.

After Paul, therefore, had first dealt with justification in his letter to the Romans, he proceeded to sanctification in Romans 6:1-23. Just as in later times, there were already people in the apostle's day who expected moral damage from the doctrine of free justification. They feared that by confessing such a thing one would commit sin, so that good would come from it and grace would increase through it (Romans 3:8, Romans 6:1). Paul refutes this accusation and says that it is impossible for those who have died of sin to still be alive in it, Romans 6:2.

He proves here that the believers, who through their faith have received the forgiveness of sins and peace with God, are also, according to their baptism, buried in the death of Christ and have risen with Him to a new life, Romans 6:3-11. Paul always calls believers those people who not only accepted God's righteousness in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, but who also died and were raised personally in the fellowship of Christ, and are therefore dead to sin and alive to God, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 2:12. For Christ's death has not only the power to justify, but also to save and to make alive, 2 Corinthians 5:15; and faith, which is of the true stamp, accepts Christ not only as righteousness, but also as holiness; one is not possible even without the other. For Christ is not divisible, and his acts of goodness are inseparable from his person. He is at once our wisdom and our righteousness, our holiness and our salvation, 1 Corinthians 1:30. Thus He became to us from God, and thus He is given to us by God. The holiness, which we must partake of, is thus fully available to us in Christ. There are many Christians who, at least in the practice of life, think differently about this. They acknowledge that they are justified by the righteousness which Christ has wrought, but they pretend or act as if they were to be sanctified by a holiness which they themselves had to work out. If that were the case, contrary to the apostolic testimony, Romans 6:14, Galatians 4:31, Galatians 5:1, Galatians 5:13, we would not be living under grace and freedom, but still under the law. Gospel sanctification, however, is as distinct from legal sanctification as the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel differs from that required by the law, not in content, but in manner of communication. It consists in God granting us in Christ, with righteousness, also perfect holiness, and communicating it to us inwardly through the regenerating and renewing action of the Holy Spirit.

Sanctification is thus God's work, a work of His righteousness and of His grace as well. He first imputes Christ to us with all His benefits, and then He communicates Him to us with all the fullness that is in Him. It is He who circumcises the hearts, Deuteronomy 30:6, who takes away the heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh, Ezekiel 12:19, who pours out the Spirit on them, Joel 2:28, gives a new spirit in their hearts, Ezekiel 12:19, Ezekiel 36:26, who writes the law in their hearts, makes

them walk in His ways, and thus makes them His people, Jeremiah 31:33, Jeremiah 32:38, Ezekiel 36:27-28. Perhaps even more strongly, the New Testament says that believers are God's work, created in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 2:10, a new creature, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, God's work, Romans 14:20, God's work and building, 1 Corinthians 3:9, Ephesians 2:20, Colossians 2:7, 1 Peter 2:5; all is of God, 2 Corinthians 5:18. When they died and were raised with Christ, they were also washed and sanctified in Him, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Corinthians 6:2, Titus 3:5, and they are sanctified continually, John 17:17, 2 Corinthians 3:6, 1 Corinthians 3:6, and 2 Corinthians 3:6. 17: 17, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Ephesians 5:26, Titus 2:14, Hebrews 13:20-21, until they are fully conformed to the image of the Son, Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 15:49, Php 3:21. The chain of salvation is unbreakable, because it is God's work from beginning to end; whom He has known, called and justified, He also glorifies, Romans 8:30. On the basis of this work of sanctification, which God accomplishes in the congregation through the Spirit of Christ, the believers are always called saints in Scripture. Israel was already so called in the old days, Exodus 19:6; it was separated from the nations, in order to be the property of the Lord, Leviticus 20:26, and to walk in His ways, Exodus 19:5; and in the future, when God would establish His new covenant, it would be called with even more right and in a much deeper sense the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord, Isaiah 62:12, Joel 3:17, Obadiah 1:1-21. If in the days of the New Testament the High Priest sanctified himself for his people, that they also might be sanctified in truth, John 17:19, the believers therefore immediately receive the name of saints, Acts 9:13, Acts 9:32, Acts 9:41, Acts 26:10, Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:2, etc. It does not imply that in a moral sense they are free from all sins and above all sins, but it expresses that the New Testament congregation has now taken the place of the old Israel and has become the property of the Lord, 2 Corinthians 6:16, Galatians 6:16, 1 Peter 2:5, because she is sanctified in Christ and is a temple of the Holy Spirit, John 17:19, 1 Corinthians 1:30, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 1 Corinthians 6:19. But this holiness, which is given to the congregation in Christ and initially imparted to it by the Holy Spirit, imposes an expensive obligation on believers. Sanctification is a work of God, but it is therefore destined to become a work in which the believers themselves participate in the power of God. In the Old Testament it is sometimes said that the Lord Himself sanctifies His people, Exodus 31:13, Leviticus 20:8, Leviticus 21:8, etc., and then again that the people themselves must sanctify themselves, Leviticus 11:44, Leviticus 20:7, Numbers 11:18, etc. Sometimes it is called that the Lord circumcises the heart, Deuteronomy 30:6, and another time Israel herself is called to circumcise the foreskin of her heart, Deuteronomy 10:16, Jeremiah 4:4. Repentance is sometimes a work of God, Jeremiah 31:18, Lamentations 5:21, and then a duty of man, Jeremiah 3:12-13, etc. And so it is in the New Testament. And likewise in the New Testament sanctification occurs as a gift of God in Christ and as a work of the Holy Spirit, through whom believers are sanctified, John 17:17, John 17:19, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, etc., And yet they are repeatedly exhorted to be perfect, as their Father in heaven is perfect, Matthew 5:48, to do good works that glorify the Father, Matthew 5:16, John 15:8, to make their members holy, and to be faithful to the Father. John 15:8, to make their members obedient to righteousness for the purpose of sanctification, Romans 6:19, to become holy in all their conduct, 1 Peter 1:15, 2 Peter 3:11, to pursue and perfect their sanctification in the fear of God, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Thessalonians 3:13, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, for without it no one shall see the Lord, Hebrews 12:14. The one is by no means in conflict with the other. Rather, the believers' work on their own sanctification is only possible because of this, since it is God's work, which He

accomplishes in them. Grace does not destroy nature, but restores it. While man, through sin, lacked the desire and the power to walk in the ways of the Lord, in the re-creation he again receives the disposition and the ability, at least in principle, to live in sincerity, not according to some, but according to all of God's commandments. When God, with the powerful activity of His regenerating Spirit, penetrates the inner parts of man, He opens the heart that is closed, hardens the hard, and cuts off the uncircumcised. He pours new qualities into the will and makes the will that was dead become alive; the will that was evil become good; the will that was unwilling become willing; the will that was stubborn become obedient. He moves and strengthens the will in such a way that it, like a good tree, can produce fruits of good works. When the Reformed Church expresses itself in this way in its confession (Can. Dordr. Ill IV 11), it is standing on the basis of the Holy Scriptures, and finds specific support in the profound words of the Apostle Paul: Work with fear and trembling for your own salvation; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do, according to His good pleasure, Phil. Just as in justification the forgiveness of sins, which is fully available in Christ, can only be received and enjoyed by us through a living and active faith, so God only brings about sanctification in us through us; He does not destroy our personality, but raises it up; He does not kill our intellect, will or affections, but makes them alive, since they were dead, and puts them to work; He makes us His fellow workers and allies. But this sanctification of believers must be properly understood; it must not become a legal sanctification, but it is and must remain a Gospel sanctification. It does not, therefore, consist in believers sanctifying themselves by means of a holiness which they themselves bring about new and for the first time, or which does exist, but which they must acquire by their own efforts and good works. The holiness revealed by God in the Gospel is not only fully available in Christ, but is also applied and worked out in our hearts by His Spirit. Paul says it so beautifully in Ephesians 2:10; we are God's creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared so that we may walk in them. Just as the first creation was brought about by the Word, so the re-creation receives its existence in the fellowship with Christ: the believers are crucified, die, are buried, and they are also raised up and reborn to a new life in the fellowship with Christ. And this re-creation has a specific goal; it finds its purpose in the good works produced by believers; God is not concerned with the tree, but with the fruit, and in that fruit His own glorification. But these good works are not produced by the believers independently and from scratch. They are finished and acquired for them by Christ, who fulfilled all righteousness and the whole law in their place; and they are worked out in them by the Holy Spirit, who takes everything from Christ and distributes it to each according to his will. The entire holiness and all good works of the church, of all believers together and of each individual, they do not οπ/stand first through the believers, but they exist long before them in the good pleasure of the Father, in the work of the Son, and in the application of the Holy Spirit. Hence all glory is also excluded from sanctification. Thus God is never indebted to us, and never has to thank us if we do good works; but, on the contrary, we are kept in God, and have to thank Him for the good works we do (Gel. art. 24). This also shows the importance of faith in sanctification. Not only in justification, but also in sanctification, faith alone saves. For we cannot accept Christ and His benefits in any other way, and make them our property, than by faith. If righteousness and holiness were from the law, we would have to accomplish both by doing good works. But in the Evangeline they are a gift of God, given to us in the person of Christ; in Him is the fullness of grace and truth, John 1:17, of wisdom and knowledge, Colossians 2:3, of righteousness and holiness, 1 Corinthians 1:30; all spiritual blessings are contained in Him, Ephesians 1:3, the fullness of the

Godhead dwells in Him bodily, Colossians 2:9. This Christ communicates Himself to us by the Holy Spirit, and unites Himself as closely and intimately with us, as the vine with the vine, John 15:2 f., as the head with the body, Ephesians 1:22-23, as the husband with the wife, Ephesians 5:32, as He Himself as Mediator is united with the Father, John 14:20, John 17:21-23. The faithful are one spirit with Him, 1 Corinthians 6:17, and one flesh, Ephesians 5:30-31. Christ lives in them, and they live in Christ, Galatians 2:20. Christ is all in them, Colossians 3:11.

If the Christ in us is in this way the worker of our holiness, then on our part the work of sanctification can only be accomplished by faith. For holiness, like all other benefits, is so indissolubly connected with the person of Christ that we cannot receive it except in fellowship with Christ Himself, and this, on our part, can only be obtained and enjoyed by a true faith. It is by faith that Christ lives in our hearts, Ephesians 3:17, and that we live in Christ, Galatians 2:20, that we become children of God, Galatians 3:27, and receive the promise of the Spirit, Galatians 3:14, that we receive the forgiveness of sins, Romans 4:6, and eternal life, John 3:16. To live by faith is the other side of it, that Christ is in us, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Galatians 2:20. Just as the saints of the Bible in Hebrews 11 are presented before our eyes as heroes of faith, so we too are admonished to live by faith, Hebrews 10:38, to walk by faith, 2 Corinthians 5:7, to let faith work through love, Galatians 5:6, to quench all the fiery darts of evil with the shield of faith, Galatians 6:16, and to overcome the world, 1 John 5:4. And all these exhortations correspond with those which are given to the believers, not to walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, Romans 8:4 ff, to lay down the old man and put on the new man, Ephesians 4:22-24, Colossians 3:10, Romans 6:4 ff, to receive the Lord Christ and walk in Him, Colossians 2:6, 1 Peter 3:16, to put on the Lord Jesus and to perform all things in His name, Romans 13:14, Colossians 3:17, to become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, Ephesians 6:10, 2 Timothy 2:1, to grow up in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, 2 Peter 3:18. In a word, sanctification in the evangelical sense is a continuous activity and exercise of faith.

Many people object to this teaching of Scripture; they consider it one-sided and dangerous for the moral life. Sometimes they still admit that in justification the law is excluded and faith alone intervenes; but when they speak of sanctification they think that faith alone is insufficient, and that the law with its commandments and prohibitions, with its rewards and punishments, must be added in order to spur one on to a holy walk and to the doing of good works. Although it is now perfectly true that the law remains the rule of life for Christians, nevertheless the Gospel never derives its exhortations to a holy walk from the terrors of the law, but from the high calling to which believers in Christ are called. Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 4:4-8). Jesus is the vine, the disciples are His branches; those who remain in Him bear much fruit, for without Him they can do nothing, John 15:5. The faithful have died to sin with Christ, but have become alive to God in Him, Romans 6:11. They are not under the law, but under grace, and therefore sin does not have dominion over them, Romans 6:14. They have died under the law of the law and belong to Christ, that they may bear fruit for God, Romans 7:4, Galatians 2:19. The night has passed, the day has come; the works of darkness must therefore be laid aside, and the weapons of light put on, Romans 13:12. The bodies of the believers are members of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit; they must therefore flee the sin of fornication, 1 Corinthians 6:15 f. They have been bought with a price, so they must glorify God in their bodies and minds, which are God’s, 1 Corinthians 6:20. They stand in the freedom with which Christ has set them free, and in

Christ nothing has any power except faith working through love, Galatians 5:1, Galatians 5:6. Of this Christ they have heard, and through Him they have learned, that they must lay aside the old man and put on the new man, who was created after God in true righteousness and holiness, Ephesians 4:21 f. As beloved children, they have to be imitators of God, Ephesians 5:6. They must walk in love, as Christ loved them, Ephesians 5:2. They are light in the Lord, and therefore have to walk as children of light, Ephesians 5:8. In short, we would have to write off all the moral exhortations in the New Testament, if we wanted to enumerate fully the reasons why believers must walk in holiness. But the words quoted are sufficient to show that they are all derived from the Gospel, and not from the law. Whether the apostles are addressing men or women, parents or children, lords or servants, wives or maidservants, principalities or subjects, they exhort them all in the Lord, Ephesians 5:22, Ephesians 6:1, Colossians 3:18, 1 Peter 2:13, 1 Peter 3:1. The solid foundation of God stands and bears this seal: Everyone who calls on the name of Christ, desist from iniquity, 2 Timothy 2:19.

Thus faith is the one great work which the Christian has to accomplish in sanctification according to the principles of the Gospel, John 6:29. Although it occurs in a different way in sanctification and is viewed from a different angle than in justification, yet in both benefits it is the only and sufficient means by which we partake of them. The Gospel requires nothing else than faith, confidence in God’s grace in Christ; that faith not only justifies us, it also makes us holy and blissful. And the sanctifying power of faith is very clearly revealed by the following considerations. In the first place it should be taken into account that true, unfeigned faith breaks down the false self-confidence in us, tears down our pride from its pedestal and puts an end to all our own righteousness. If we leave out those who do not care about God or His commandments, and who drink sin like water, and also those who externally do good only out of fear of punishment, harm or disgrace, there remain those who earnestly strive to fulfil the commandments of the moral law in their own strength. But they can never find the right attitude to take toward the moral law, nor the right starting point from which to carry it out. They stand above it or below it; they make the law subservient to themselves, or they make themselves subservient to the law. In the first case they say that the good must be done for the sake of the benefit and happiness which it brings to individuals or the community. In the second case they place the moral law high above man, but make its fulfillment all the more impossible the more seriously it is taken.

Natural man oscillates between Sadduceism and Pharisaism, between freedom and authority; he cannot find the harmony between the commandment of man and his will. But faith puts an end to this oscillation. It makes us realize that the moral law stands high above us and demands unconditional obedience, and yet it cannot be fulfilled in truth and give eternal life. And in that seemingly irreconcilable contradiction, they surrender themselves to God’s grace, trust in His mercy and glory in the righteousness that He Himself has provided. The true believer renounces the demand of the moral law and adapts it to his own situation; he leaves the moral ideal in all its splendor, but at the same time he gives up the hope of ever being able to fulfill it through his own efforts. And thus he clings to God, who has revealed his righteousness in the Law, but also in the Gospel. This faith is therefore at once the mother of numerous virtues; it breeds in man humility, dependence, trust, all qualities and characteristics that are of the greatest importance for moral life. Doing good becomes in religion a firm basis and an unconquerable strength.

These virtues are immediately accompanied by others. According to the order that God Himself has established in the church, the promises of the Gospel precede the commandments of the law. First He assures us of His favor, the forgiveness of our sins and our inheritance among the saints, and then He leads us into the path of His testimonies and statutes. The good tree precedes the good fruit; we do not live by, but for good works; we do not fulfill the law in order to, but out of the eternal life that has been planted in our hearts through faith. Only in this order can we attain a truly moral life. Whoever wants to reverse the order and draw comfort, security and salvation from his works will never reach the goal, will be tossed to and fro by doubt, and will be in fear all the time. God follows a different path; in the Evangeline He gives us everything for free, the forgiveness of sins, the atonement of guilt, the remission of punishment, salvation and glory. He says that by faith we may completely rely on his grace and gives us the certainty of that through the witness of the Holy Spirit. By its very nature, faith brings comfort, peace, joy and happiness, and these are again of inestimable value for the moral life. They are all together principles and reasons for a holy walk. The cleansing of the conscience from dead works has its end and goal in serving the living God, Heb. 9: 14. Those who are comforted by God are afterwards strengthened by Him in all good words and works, 2 Thessalonians 2:17. Joy in the Lord is the strength of His people, Nehemiah 8:11.

It turns the prodigal son from his sinful life and returns to the father’s house; it brings us into the fellowship of Christ’s death and resurrection; it crucifies us and raises us up to a new life. He who truly believes in Christ dies to sin; he feels heartily sorry for it, because it has angered God, and begins to hate it and to flee from it; he brings about a separation between himself and sin, so that he can honestly say: I want what is good, though I do not do it; and I do not want what is evil, Romans 7:19. And on the other hand, faith appropriates Christ with His righteousness and holiness; it makes Christ Himself live in the heart and becomes more and more firmly established in His fellowship; it makes Christ take shape in us and reforms us more and more in His image. Romans 4:13.

Finally, to mention nothing more, faith is often and rightly compared to a hand. But a hand is not only the organ through which we accept something and make it our property; it is also the instrument through which we express our thoughts and our will. Thus faith is not only a receiving organ, but also an active force. Faith, which justifies and saves, is not a dead faith, but a living faith; it produces of its own nature fruits of good works; it is active in love, Galatians 5:6. Man is not justified by love, but the faith that justifies him shows its living, active power in love. Without love, faith is not true, saving faith, 1 Corinthians 13:1; and with true faith is always connected the work of love, 1 Thessalonians 1:3, because the end of the commandment (of the whole apostolic preaching) is love, from a pure heart, a good conscience and an unfeigned faith, 1 Timothy 1:5. And this love is, as the fruit of faith, a perfect love, which excludes all fear, 1 John 4:18, and it is also the perfect fulfillment of the law, Matthew 22:37-40, Romans 13:8-10, Galatians 5:14, James 2:8. The Gospel therefore does not nullify the Law, but restores and confirms it. But its demand and curse have come to an end, because Christ put Himself under the law, fulfilled its demand and bore its curse, Matthew 3:15, Galatians 3:13, Galatians 4:4; so we are no longer servants, but are set free and walk in the Spirit, Romans 7:1-6, Galatians 4:5, Galatians 4:26 ff. Galatians 5:1, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom, 2 Corinthians 3:17, Galatians 5:18. But this freedom of faith does not abolish the law, but on the contrary brings it to fulfilment; the law’s right,

that which the law demands in its commandments, is fulfilled in those who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, Romans 8:4. While the flesh renders the law powerless because it cannot and will not submit to it, Romans 8:3, Romans 8:7, it is the Spirit of Christ who quickens man, 2 Corinthians 3:6, and enlightens his mind to know what God's good, acceptable, and perfect will is, Romans 12:2, Ephesians 5:10, Php 1:10. And this will of God remains known to Jesus and the apostles from the Old Testament, even though the law in the above-mentioned sense has been abolished. Jesus did not come to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them, Matthew 5:17; He does not speak of the abolition of the law except in so far as He foretells the fall of the city and the temple, of all civil government and of worship, Matthew 24:1-51, John 4:21-24, but He purifies the law. He returns to the prophets in their understanding of the law, penetrates into its inner character, puts the inner above the outer, Mark 7:15, mercy above sacrifice, Matthew 9:13, Matthew 12:7, and sums up the law and the prophets in the commandment of love towards God and neighbour, Mark 12:28-34, compare. Matthew 7:12. The moral commandments retain their power. The same attitude was adopted by all the apostles towards the law and the prophets. For them the Old Testament retains divine authority; it is inspired by God, 2 Timothy 3:15, written by holy men under the guidance of God's Spirit, 2 Peter 1:21, for our instruction and comfort, Romans 15:4, 1 Corinthians 10:11, 2 Timothy 3:15, 1 Peter 1:12. The Old Testament is constantly quoted in order to make God's will known to the Christian congregation; Paul, for example, appeals in 1 Corinthians 14:34 to Genesis 3:16 for the subordination of the woman to the man; in 2 Corinthians 9:9 to Psalms 112:9 for the duty of generosity; in 1 Corinthians 1:31 to Jeremiah 9:23 for the exhortation to glory only in the Lord, etc. The moral law in particular is in the Old and New Testament, as far as its contents are concerned, completely the same; it is included in the one commandment of love, Romans 13:8-10, Galatians 5:14, James 2:8. Christ speaks of the love that the disciples should have among themselves as a new commandment, John 13:34, Acts 15:12, 1 Thessalonians 4:9, 1 Peter 4:8, 1 John 3:23, 1 John 4:21, 2 John 1:5; but he does not mean by this that the disciples should love one another. 2 John 1:5; but he does not mean by this that the commandment to love one another as believers was completely unknown in the past, for Leviticus 19:18 clearly teaches the contrary, and Psalms 133:1-3 sings of the sweetness that lies in the brethren living together. But that love, which should bind the believers together, got another character in the New Testament. Because in the days of the Old Testament church and nation were one, the brotherly love could not yet be clearly distinguished. But in the New Testament this became different; the church was separated from the national existence of Israel, it became an independent community and received its own principle of life in the Holy Spirit. Now a distinction was made between brotherly love and love for all, Galatians 6:10, 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 2 Peter 1:7. To that extent brotherly love can be called a new commandment; it binds the believers together against the world. But otherwise there is one religion and one moral law in the Old and New Testaments. There is clarification, there is clarification, there is also different effect and application, but there is no external addition, no mechanical supplement. Christ was not a new lawgiver besides and above Moses, but He Himself fulfilled the Law in His life and death, and through His Spirit He brings it to fulfillment in all who are His disciples.

Because Christ and his apostles always traced the moral law of the Old Testament back to love of God and neighbor, the practice of explaining man's virtues and duties on the basis of the Ten Commandments gradually developed in Christian morals. This practice was especially popular

among the Reformers because they considered that one of the characteristics of good works is that they are done according to God's will. With this they took a position against the Roman Church, which considered as good works also those actions that are based on human effort. (Rev. Cat. 91).

Rome distinguishes between commandments and counsels, and considers that the latter were added to the Law of Moses by Christ as a new and higher lawgiver; in the early days of the Christian Church this distinction was not yet known; but when the times of persecution passed for the Church and all kinds of people joined it, seeking fellowship only for honor and sight, the moral standard dropped and many serious families withdrew into solitude. The monasticism which this brought into being tried to hold on to the moral ideal, but did so in a way which the ordinary Christians, living in their families and professions, could not follow. Thus a distinction gradually emerged between monks (clergy) and laity, and in connection with this between a higher and a lower morality, between commandments and counsels. The commandments, contained in the ten words, are obligatory for all Christians, but the councils are set at everyone's discretion.

Among these counsels, the so-called chastity or the unmarried state, on the basis of Matthew 19:11-12, 1 Corinthians 7:7 f; poverty or the renunciation of all worldly possessions, with an appeal to Matthew 19:21, 1 Corinthians 9:14; and absolute obedience to the superior under whose guidance one is placed, in imitation of Matthew 16:24, Luke 14:26-27; but in the monastic orders they are often extended to all kinds of abstinence, chastisements and self-torture, in imitation of Matthew 5:29, Matthew 5:39, Matthew 5:42 etc. At the same time, Rome maintains that the ideal of moral perfection is the same for all believers and must be pursued by all in the way of obedience to the commandments. But he who follows the commandments takes a quicker and safer way to reach the goal, and receives a greater dignity and a richer reward. While the ordinary believer, who obeys the law, remains a useless servant who has only done what he was obliged to do (Luke 17:10), the Christian, who has also followed the commandments, hears Jesus address him as the good and faithful servant, who has been faithful in little and is appointed to do much (Matthew 25:21).

It goes without saying that the Reformation did not agree with this distinction. Deeply convinced of the corruption of human nature, it taught that the born-again people could not even keep the law completely, that their best works were still tainted with sin, and that the most holy could not make it any further than a small principle of perfect obedience. Catech. 62, 114. The believer can never get around to following advice, because he already has enough to do with fulfilling the commandments. But moreover, God demands in the moral law that we should love Him with all our intelligence and all our strength, and our neighbour as ourselves, Matthew 22:37, Luke 10:27; how can there be any more advice with such a commandment? If God claims us completely, at all times and everywhere for his service, then there is nothing left over which we have free disposal, and which we can give or withhold at our own discretion.

There is, therefore, no ground for the assertion that Christ added councils as the law of freedom to the necessary commandments of the Mosaic law. For although there are cases in which a person must abstain from marriage, divest himself of his goods, and withdraw from his usual environment and occupation, no special counsel comes to him, which he may freely choose to follow or not to follow. The rich young man did not receive advice from Christ, which he could just as well reject as

accept, but he received, as a test of the sincerity and firmness of his heart, a commandment to sell all his goods and give to the poor, so that it would become evident whether he was indeed willing to give everything for Christ and his kingdom. One must therefore distinguish between law and duty; the law is the same for everyone, but duty is that particular way of acting which each person must derive from the general moral law according to his nature and situation. The Reformers therefore rejected all works based on the will of man or the precepts of the Church, and returned to the will of God as the standard of good works. They found this will expressed briefly and objectively in the Ten Commandments. But the Law of the Ten Commandments does not stand alone; it is situated in the midst of a rich environment. It was originally written in the heart of man, made in the image of God, according to its pragmatic content; it is still partly preserved there, inasmuch as all men by nature do the things that are the law, and thereby show that the work of the law is written in their hearts (Romans 2:14-15); every man has the consciousness that he is bound by certain moral rules for his existence and actions, and when he transgresses these rules he feels accused by his conscience. Under Israel it was restored to its purity by a special revelation, made subservient to the covenant of grace which God, according to the introductory words, had established with his people, and incorporated into a body of rights and statutes which were to govern the entire life of the people. Moreover, in the history of Israel it was explained, elaborated and applied in all kinds of ways by the psalmists, proverbs and prophets, so that Jesus could say that the whole Law and the prophets depend on the two commandments of love of God and neighbour (Matthew 22:40). And when Christ brings about the fulfillment of all Old Testament salvation-promises, He does not abolish the Law, but fulfills all its righteousness; He paves the way by His perfect obedience, and gives in the Holy Spirit the power by which His disciples, in principle, can and will walk according to all the commandments of the Law. It may be said that the whole Gospel is directed to the fulfilment of the law in those who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. The spiritual life of regeneration is made available for the restoration of the moral life. The long series of exhortations with which the apostles generally conclude their epistles are an extension and application of the holy law of the Lord, and have the intention of causing the believers to live in accordance with God’s will and to glorify His name in all their relationships and situations. The Law of the Ten Commandments cannot be separated from this rich context; it must be considered and explained in the light of God’s entire revelation in nature and Scripture.

Thus understood, the Ten Commandments are a brief outline of the Christian moral teaching and an excellent rule for our lives. There are many other laws by which we are bound. God also gave laws for our thinking, for our enjoyment of the beautiful, for our dealings with others, for our use of the materials of nature; He laid down rules for all creatures, for heaven and earth, for the sun and moon and stars, for day and night, summer and winter, seed time and harvest, Genesis 8:22, Jeremiah 31:28. But the moral law goes far beyond all these orders, for, in distinction to all of them, it is directed to man’s will, or rather to man himself as a willing being, and thus to the innermost part of his existence, to the core of his personality. And it makes the demand that he shall conform completely to its rule, not only in his words and deeds, but also in his thoughts and desires, in his nature and his nature. The law is spiritual, Romans 7:14; we must be perfect, like our Father who is in heaven, Matthew 5:48; in the tenth commandment the law goes to the root of sin, to lust, and makes it guilty and unclean before God.

Furthermore, the Law deals with all the relationships in which man sees himself placed, with God, his fellow-beings, himself and all nature; with God in his essence, in his service, in his revelation, in his day; with his fellow-beings in their various ranks and positions, in their life, honour and property; To himself in the truth of his mind and in the purity of his heart; and in all this to all nature that surrounds him, to his office and call, to his work and leisure, to all living and lifeless creation. And in that inner being as well as in all those rich relations, the moral law demands that man shall do all that he does to the glory of God, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:17.

If we understand the law in this deep, spiritual sense, it seems at first to frighten us and to make us doubt its fulfillment. If we knew of no other righteousness than that which the law requires of us, we would not be able to fulfill it, nor would we feel any desire to do so. We would then always try to strip the law of its spiritual content, to externalize it, to make it fit our fallen situation, and to delude ourselves into thinking that we could meet its strict demands with a civil, honorable life. The natural man is annoyed by the spiritual sense, that is, by the perfection of the law; he is internally vexed at the absolute righteousness and holiness which it demands. But as soon as we have learned to know that other righteousness and holiness, which God has given in Christ and makes our property through faith, our relationship to and our thought about the Law changes. We may well complain with Paul that we are still blindly sold under sin, but we let the law stand in its glory and no longer attempt to take it down; we honor it as holy and righteous and good, because it is the law of God. We love it precisely because it is so spiritual; we delight in it according to the inner man; and we thank God not only for His Gospel, but also for His law, for His holy, righteous, perfect law. It too becomes a revelation and a gift of His grace to us. How I love Thy law, it is my practise all the day long!

Although believers receive an inner desire and love to live according to God’s will in all good works right from the moment of regeneration, they are not perfect at once and never attain perfection, even in this life. Sanctification is unseparated from justification. The latter consists of divine acquittal, which is completed at once; it is repeated and applied to the consciences, but it is not supplemented and increased. But the life of sanctification, like all life among creatures, is subject to the law of development; it has its beginning in the rebirth, it needs nourishment in order to be strengthened and to be washed up, and it does not reach its culmination until it is fully revealed with Christ. In the Old Testament it is already said of the Messiah that he will pasture his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his lap; he will lead the suckled ones to health, Isaiah 40:11. Elsewhere it is even more extensively said of Him that the Lord has anointed Him to bring glad tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken in heart, to seek out freedom for the imprisoned, and to open up the prison for the bound, to comfort all the sorrowful, To dispose of the sorrowful Zion, that they may be given ornaments for ashes, oil of joy for sorrow, the garment of praise for a troubled spirit, that they may be called oak trees of righteousness, a planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified, Isaiah 61:1-3, comp. Ezekiel 34:16.

Accordingly, during His circumambulation on earth Christ does not only address the adults among Israel, but also the children and proclaims to them the kingdom of heaven, Matthew 18:1-6, Matthew 19:13-14. He calls not only the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida, Capernaum and Jerusalem, but also the tax collectors and sinners to repentance, and invites all the weary and burdened to Himself to give them rest. He calls the heirs of the kingdom by various names, and speaks of them as poor and mourning, hungry and thirsty, meek and peaceful, Matthew 5:30, and

distinguishes between those who are less than and those who are more, the first and the last in the kingdom, Matthew 11:11, Matthew 20:16. He complains many times about the small faith, the fearfulness and the unreadiness of His disciples, Matthew 6:30, Matthew 8:26, Matthew 14:31, Luke 16:8, Luke 24:25, and He rejoices when He discovers a great faith in some, Matthew 8:10, Matthew 15:28. And towards all He proves Himself to be the good Shepherd, who gathers all His sheep into one flock, gives life and abundance to all, keeps them all and does not let any of them perish, John 10:1-30.

Similar distinctions are found among the believers in the apostolic churches. The believers under the Old Testament were still infants, who were placed under guardians and caregivers and in that respect were not yet different from a servant, Galatians 4:1-2. Compared to them, the New Testament believers are free sons and daughters, adopted by God as His children and heirs, and standing in the freedom with which Christ has made them free, Galatians 4:4-7. Nevertheless, there are still all kinds of differences among them. The faith that is given to the members of the congregation is the same in all of them, but it is given to each according to his nature in a certain measure, Romans 12:3; the gifts that the Holy Spirit distributes in the congregation are different, Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 15:1, 1 Corinthians 8:7 f., 1 Corinthians 9:22, 1 Corinthians 10:25, between those who are still fleshly and those who are spiritual, 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, Galatians 6:1, between children, those just beginning, who still need milk, 1 Corinthians 3:2, Hebrews 5:12, 1 Peter 2:7, and the perfected, adults, who can endure solid food and have acquired the ability to discern good and evil through practice, 1 Corinthians 2:6, 1 Corinthians 3:2, 1 Corinthians 14:20, Php 3:15, Hebrews 5:14, between young people who have overcome evil, but still have to take care not to lose this victory, and fathers who have long since left this battle behind and have gained a deeper insight into the knowledge of Christ, who was from the beginning, 1 John 2:12-14. And in addition to all this, there was, even in Apostolic times, the difference between congregations or believers who were firm in the faith, abounding in love, enduring in tribulation, and others who allowed themselves to be misled by all sorts of error and were guilty of all sorts of sins; the letters of the Apostles, and especially those of Christ to the seven congregations in Asia Minor, Revelation 1:1-20, Revelation 2:1-29, Revelation 3:1-22, make us acquainted with these different situations in detail.

All this teaches us that in the spiritual realm, as in the natural, man is born small and weak and in need of help, and that he must continually grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). If the spiritual life develops in a healthy and normal way, if it feeds itself with spiritual food and drinks with the spiritual drink, which is Christ, John 6:48, 1 Corinthians 10:3-4, then there is a continual strengthening and confirmation in grace, a continual renewal in the image of Christ, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 2 Corinthians 4:16, Ephesians 3:16, 1 Peter 5:10. But all kinds of obstacles stand in the way of this normal development; the life of the Christian is not a quiet growth, but a constant struggle, a struggle against enemies from outside, and no less against the enemy who dwells within. In order to understand this battle properly, we must first note that even the unregenerate are often engaged in a battle. But this is not a spiritual battle, but a rational one, a struggle between the man’s reason and conscience on the one hand, and his will and affections on the other. Through his reason and conscience man is still bound to the moral law, to the world of unseen and eternal things; in his heart the words: thou shalt, still echo; as soon as he wants to do evil, his better judgment resists, warns and tries to stop

him. There is no man so far astray and so deeply sunk, or he knows something of this discord in his being. In this struggle man can, under favorable circumstances, also gain the victory; he can use his reason to counteract his desires, suppress them, silence them; then he becomes a good, virtuous man and leads an honorable life. But that is not true morality, Christian sanctification. For the struggle in the natural man is only between reason and lust, duty and inclination, conscience and passion; it is not waged against all, but only against some, and usually only against some external, annoying sins; It is not against sin as sin, because it offends God, but against some sins, which are held in high esteem by the world and are charged with damage or disgrace; it suppresses and at best curbs the evil inclination, but it does not eradicate it, nor does it bring about any inner change in the heart of man. The spiritual battle that believers have to wage in their souls is of an entirely different nature. For this battle is not between reason and lust, but between flesh and spirit, between the old and the new man, between the sin that still lives in the believer and the spiritual principle of life that has been planted in his heart. These two forces are not locally separated in believers, as if one part of him, for example the intellect, had been born again, and another part of him, for example the heart, had not. But they both extend to mankind and to all his powers and faculties, so that each of them can be called a man, one the old man and the other the new man. As a rule, Paul expresses the contrast in this way, but in Romans 7:1-25 he uses other names: he refers to the spiritual, new man as the will, which loves and wants to do good, as the internal man, who has pleasure in God's law; and to the old man he calls the flesh, the sin that dwells in him, the law in his members, which fights against the law of his mind and imprisons him under the law of sin that is in his members. There is, however, a difference of expression here, but not in the matter itself. For Paul often uses the word flesh to describe all the sinful things that still remain in the believer, and which also dwell within his soul, heart and mind; the works of the flesh are not only uncleanness, fornication, etc., but also idolatry, enmity, strife, wrath, etc, And by the inner man the Apostle does not refer exclusively to something inside man that remains quietly hidden and does not come out in any respect, for he says explicitly that the believers walk according to the Spirit and make their members weapons of righteousness; but he calls the new man in this connection, because in the bitter struggle against the flesh he is so often undermined and comes so little to light. The struggle between the two forces consists in the fact that the Spirit of Christ, who dwells in the believers, tries to awaken in their minds, hearts and wills all kinds of good thoughts, deliberations, affections and movements (such as love, joy, peace, etc. Galatians 5:22), and that the flesh then immediately raises its voice against this and seeks to pollute mankind with its evil lusts and desires, Galatians 5:19-20. And this flesh always proves to be so powerful that the believers do not do, or do not do in such a way and to such an extent, what they want to do, Galatians 5:17; if they want to do good, evil comes along, Romans 7:21; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak, Matthew 26:41. The battle is therefore not between reason and will, duty and inclination, but quite differently between will and action, between the inner mind and the sinful power that puts itself in its way, between the inner man of the heart, who has been recreated after God in true righteousness and holiness, and the old man, who, driven out of the center, still wants to maintain himself in his existence, and fights more fiercely the more he loses ground. The battle is not waged between two faculties or parts of mankind, as would be the case if it were between head and heart, reason and lust, soul and body; but across the whole area of man's personality the two powers stand armed against each other. In the same mind of the same person there is a struggle between faith and unbelief, between truth and lies; in the same heart there is a

conflict between pure and impure motives and qualities; in the same will there is an evil desire opposed to a good and pure disposition. It is indeed a struggle between two people in the same man. From a spiritual point of view this can be explained by the fact that in the field of consciousness two groups of ideas and in the field of heart and affections two series of lusts have taken their place and are struggling with each other. We sometimes speak of the old and new man in the believer, and thereby express that the new life has changed the whole man in principle, and that the power of sin still dwells in all his faculties and members. But actually they are two groups of dispositions, ideas, inclinations, qualities, which are in conflict with each other, and neither of them, one the other, has yet been able to drive out of any capacity of mankind completely. If the truth of God had completely taken over the consciousness of the believer, there would of course be no room left for error and lies, and if the love of God filled the whole of mankind, there would be no room left for hatred, envy, wrath, etc. But that, as everyone knows from experience, is not the case. But that, as everyone knows by experience, is not the case; and the Scriptures testify that we cannot expect such a perfect state in this life. There is a struggle to the end, because faith, hope, love and all the Christian virtues are never perfected in this life, and therefore leave room in our souls for unbelief, doubt, despondency, fear, etc. The degree to which both are present in a thought or deed varies greatly, but in all conceptions and actions there is something of the old and of the new man. All thoughts, words and deeds are thus tainted with sin; they need reconciliation and purification, but they may still be called good works, insofar as they are mixed with faith. For all these reasons we must be on our guard against antinomianism, which separates the old and new in the believer and sets them in opposition to each other, just as spirit is opposed to matter and soul to body. For this leads to the pernicious doctrine that sinful thoughts and deeds are the responsibility of the old man and have nothing to do with the new man. On the other hand, Scripture and experience clearly teach that the believer is not an external union of two people, but that he remains one person, with one self, one consciousness, one heart, one will, and that not two independent beings, but two groups of qualities and characteristics battle with one another in him. The seriousness of this struggle already suggests that it will take a long time before victory is achieved by the new man. Nevertheless, many Christians believe that the faithful already attain perfection on earth and can overcome all sinful acts and tendencies. The Pelagians already taught this; Rome expressed itself in the same spirit at the Council of Trent, and many Protestant circles hold the same opinion. They refer mainly to the fact that the Holy Scriptures repeatedly speak in such splendid terms about the Christian position, e.g. 1 Peter 2:9-10, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 2:20. Paul, in particular, is fully assured of his salvation after his conversion and only remembers his sinful past; that the exhortations to a holy and irreproachable walk are as complete as possible, e.g. Matthew 5:48, and presuppose the attainment of perfection, Php 2:5, 1 Thessalonians 2:10, 1 Thessalonians 3:13; and that the grace of God, which can be obtained through prayer, can do all things, John 14:13-14, Ephesians 3:20, 2 Corinthians 12:10, Php 4:13. It would be an understatement to the omnipotence and riches of God’s love to consider moral perfection in this life unattainable for the faithful, and at the same time to deprive them of a powerful incentive to strive for it with all their might.

Indeed, there is no doubt that the Holy Scriptures speak of the privilege and status of God’s people in the most striking manner. In the Old Testament she calls Israel a priestly kingdom, which God has chosen as His own out of all the peoples of the earth, an object of His love, His share and honour, His son and servant, His bride, whom He has adorned and perfected with the glory which

He has laid upon her, Exodus 19:5-6, Exodus 29:43, Deuteronomy 7:6 ff, Deuteronomy 32:6 ff, Isaiah 41:8 ff, Ezekiel 16:14 etc. And the New Testament believers are called the salt of the earth, Matthew 5:13, the light of the world, Matthew 5:14, children of God, born of God and adopted by Him, John 1:13, Galatians 4:5, chosen, called, saints and sanctified, 1 Corinthians 1:2, chosen generation and royal priesthood, 1 Peter 2:9-10, partakers of the divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4, anointed with the Holy Spirit, 1 John 2:20, made kings and priests by Christ, Revelation 1:5, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, Romans 8:17. What the eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, nor ascended into the heart of man, God has now prepared in the days of the New Testament for those who love Him, 1 Corinthians 2:8.

Whoever rejects the teaching of Scripture about sin and grace can only see gross exaggeration in this; a radical change, as takes place in justification and rebirth, is then neither necessary nor possible. But for the Scriptures, the change which man undergoes in faith and conversion is a transition from darkness to light, from death to life, from servitude to freedom, from falsehood to truth, from sin to righteousness, from the expectation of God's wrath to the hope of His glory. And the believers who appear before us in the Old and New Testaments and who are aware of this change, glory in the God of their salvation and rejoice in His fellowship. How far behind them are we in this joy of faith!

Furthermore, Scripture always has the highest moral ideal in mind for believers. Nowadays we all aspire to it. The moral life which Christianity desires is one-sided, excessively religious, almost exclusively oriented toward heaven, averse to the pursuit of worldly interests, hostile to culture, comforting the poor and wretched with a glimpse of eternity, but indifferent to the improvement of their worldly lot, rich perhaps in passive virtues, in precepts of submission, patience, and patience; but poor in active virtues, capable of conquering and reforming the world. Many, therefore, strive for a different, better, higher morality, for a moral teaching that makes dedication to the service of mankind the highest goal and limits its vision to earthly life. The protection of earthly interests, however, is in itself so little in conflict with Christian morality that it is rather founded and guaranteed in the creation of man in God's image. Man was and still is in a certain sense an image bearer of God and therefore called to subdue the earth, and to have dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air and all the beasts that crawl upon the earth (Genesis 1:26, Genesis 1:28 and Psalms 8:1-9). There is no book that is more freely opposed to all of nature than the Holy Scriptures. Paganism is always swinging back and forth between overconfident abuse of the world, and slavish superstitious fear of its mysterious power. But Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles have complete freedom from the world, because they are elevated above it by their fellowship with God. It is true that the Christians of the early days, being a small flock, had to withdraw from many circles and abstain from many things, because in the world of that time almost everything was permeated by the spirit of the heathen; but Christianity, in principle, embraced all elements that gave it not only freedom, but also right and calling to conquer the world and subdue the earth.

Indeed, the Christian moral teaching is no other than that which is briefly and to the point contained in the Ten Commandments and further explained throughout Scripture. In these commandments, love of God is in the foreground, but love of neighbour is the second commandment, equal to it. In this love of neighbor, the duty of the mission, of the reformation and of culture lies embedded, provided it is properly understood and not interpreted in a Buddhist,

passive sense, but in its Christian, hands-on character. The mission brings the religious and moral goods, which Christianity possesses, to all people and nations who are still deprived of them ; Reformation, which is not confined to a single period in the Church of Christ or to a single moment in the life of a Christian, but must continue unceasingly, is the ongoing renewal of heart and life, of family and society according to the Lord's will; and culture is the subjugation of the earth to the hand of man, the dominion of spirit over matter, of reason over nature. The kingdom of heaven, which must first be sought, brings with it all other things, Matthew 6:33. Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the present and of the life to come, 1 Timothy 4:8. No thing is unclean in itself, for all God's creatures are good, and nothing is rejected, being taken with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and by prayer, Romans 14:14, 1 Timothy 4:4. Christianity, which finds its foundation in the creation of man in the image of God, and teaches the restoration of all culture in the resurrection of Christ, exhorts its faithful believers to consider whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is bright, and if there is any virtue and any praise, Php 4:8.

There is no higher morality, nor a higher religion, conceivable, than that which is preached to us in the Gospel. One may seek another, but then one goes astray immediately. The times in which we live offer us the strongest evidence of this. The morality of Scripture is rejected, but what stands in its place at any moment contradicts the simplest rules of moral life. At once they begin to remove from the moral teaching all those commandments which concern the love of God. Love of God, of his name, of his truth, of his service, is almost out of the question: how can one love God when one doubts and disputes his visibility, his revelation, even his existence? But this makes the ground for the commandments of the second table disappear, for if there is no God who obliges me to love my neighbour, what ground can there be for such love? The advocates of a moral doctrine independent of religion are hopelessly divided about the question from which principle the love for one's fellow man can and must derive. One tries to build it on self-interest, another on happiness, a third on pity, a fourth on conscience, but all give proof that without divine authority there can be no question of a duty which binds me to my conscience. As a result, every commandment in which love for one's neighbor is elaborated and described in more detail, is embarrassing. It is generally said that people, although they may differ in religion, remain close to each other in the area of morality. There may be some truth in this, because nature is fortunately stronger than doctrine and the work of the law is written in everyone's heart, but reality teaches something else. There is not one commandment in the second table of God's law that remains untouched today. The authority of father and mother and of all those who are appointed over us is openly contested and rejected. Manslaughter is taken less and less seriously, suicide is often condoned, and the deprivation of life is often defended. Marriage is considered to be a contract that is entered into arbitrarily, and adultery and fornication find protection and intercession among many. Ownership is on many lips another name for theft. Truth is made subservient to utility, thought dependent on development, and distinguished from falsehood only in time and place, in form and degree. And as for desire - it celebrates its triumph in the Mamonist spirit of this century.

Against all these bastard forms of morality, Scripture upholds the moral ideal in an unabridged and uncompromised sense. It never agrees with the holiness of God and the holiness of His law, but places them in all their majesty before the consciences of men. What Jesus called his disciples: be perfect like your Father in heaven, is repeated with different words by all the apostles in their

exhortations to the faithful. Sin never has a right to exist, not even in those who are called by the name of Christ. The demand of the moral law may never be abandoned, not even by those who have died with Christ from sin and have risen to a new life. If, then, according to God's order, the old man in the believers only gradually dies away, and the new man only gradually grows up and only attains perfection hereafter, this indicates a great forbearance and tolerance on the part of God, which He is able to exercise, since Christ covers the sin of the community with His righteousness and holiness and guarantees its perfection.

While the moral law, which is the rule for the life of the faithful, wants and can suffice with nothing else than a perfect love for God and neighbour, it is no less clear that, according to Scripture, no believer has ever met that perfection in this life, or can meet it. The saints of the Bible are all people who stumble in many things, and sometimes, like David and Peter, fall into serious sins, but who then confess them again in deep humility. Whoever of them you listen to, you will never hear from them the statement that is sometimes heard from the lips of Christians: I do and I have no more sin. On the contrary, Abraham, Genesis 12:12, Isaac Genesis 26:5, Jacob Genesis 26:35, Moses Genesis 20:7-12, Psalms 106:33, David 51, Solomon 1 Kings 8:46, Isaiah 6:5, Daniel 9:4, etc., all are guilty of transgressions and confess their sins and errors.

He has been crucified with Christ and now walks in newness of the Spirit; he stands righteous before God and is fully assured of his salvation; he bears the pride of his apostolic work and is conscious of his faithful fulfilment of his office, speaking humanly, Romans 15:17 ff. 1 Corinthians 4:3, 1 Corinthians 4:9, 1 Corinthians 4:15, 1 Corinthians 15:31, 2 Corinthians 1:12, 2 Corinthians 6:3, 2 Corinthians 11:5, Php 2:16, Php 3:4, 1 Thessalonians 2:10; but besides attributing all this to God's grace, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Php 4:3, he confesses that no good thing dwells in his flesh, Romans 7:18, that the flesh always desires to oppose the Spirit, Galatians 5:17, that his will and his actions are continually contrary, Romans 7:7-26, and that he is in pursuit of perfection, but has not yet attained it, Php 3:12.

Moses and the prophets testify to the people of Israel in the same way, Christ to his disciples and the apostles to the churches entrusted to their care. Jesus calls His disciples to perfection, Matthew 5:48, and yet puts the prayer on their lips for forgiveness of their debts, Matthew 6:12. The Christians in Rome have been raised up with Christ to walk in newness of life, Matthew 6:3 ff, and yet are exhorted to make their members servants of righteousness to sanctification, Matthew 6:19. The Corinthians were washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God, 1 Corinthians 6:11, and yet were still fleshly, 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. The Galatians had received the Spirit through the preaching of faith, Galatians 3:2, and yet were tempted to disobey the truth, Galatians 3:1. In the Philippians the good work had begun, but was not finished, Php 1:6. In all churches there are situations, errors and vices which are not in accordance with the Christian life. And the apostles themselves were all convinced that sin remains with the believers as long as they are in this life. We all stumble in many, James 3:2. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, 1 John 1:8.

However, even though perfection is not attainable in this life, the exhortations to a holy walk are not useless and devoid of seriousness. Those who advocate the perfectibility of the faithful in this life do raise this objection, and judge that exhortations which cannot be obeyed, or at least not fully, lose their power and cause the faithful to lose their zeal. But they are guilty of false

reasoning: the obligation does not follow the ability; he who has to pay a sum of money is not always able to do so and, if he is unable to do so, remains obliged to do so; and so the moral law can never give up its demand, even if man is incapable of fulfilling it because of sin. Conversely, it can be asserted with much more justification that whoever teaches the perfectibility of the faithful must always come to a lowering of the moral ideal and to a less serious conception of sin.

Who, after all, who thinks of sin not only in terms of external sinful acts but also in terms of all sinful thoughts and inclinations, would dare to claim that the faithful can be fully freed from it in this life? Perfection can only be learned by disregarding the sinful nature of human nature, by not considering sinful thoughts and inclinations as sin, and thus by disregarding the absolute holiness of the law. In the sacrament meeting form of the Reformed churches it is said that we shall be sure that no sin or weakness which is left in us against our will, can hinder us from accepting God in grace; and there has been much debate whether sins can still fall into the hands of the born-again, which do not merely occur out of weakness, but have an intentional character and must therefore be called sins of wickedness. Two things, however, are certain: first, that in those who have truly been born again, not only the conscience but also the new life, the disposition and the will resist these sins to a greater or lesser degree; and second, that sins committed against our will, even actual sins of weakness, are sins and are contrary to the holiness of the law.

But, furthermore, the exhortations to a holy walk are so little in vain that they are precisely the means by which God applies and works out in believers the righteousness and holiness bestowed in Christ. Jesus himself prays in the high priestly prayer that the Father may sanctify his disciples in the truth, that is, through his word, which is the truth, John 17:17, cf. John 15:3. The Word that God gave us is indeed the primary means of our sanctification; the blessing that has flowed not only from public preaching, but also from reading, examining and contemplating that Word in solitude or in the domestic circle for the cultivation of a Christian life, is simply incalculable. To this word as a means of sanctification should be added the prayer in Jesus' name, John 14:13-14, John 16:23-24, which opens the door to the divine majesty and fills us with confidence, because there is no one, either in heaven or on earth, who prefers us to Jesus Christ (Col. 14: 26); furthermore the singing of prayers in the name of Jesus, which opens the door to the divine majesty and fills us with confidence, because there is no one, either in heaven or on earth, who prefers us to Jesus Christ (Col. 14: 26). 26); also the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, which has a profound effect on the mood of the heart and the readiness of the will; and then also vigils and fasts, Matthew 27:21, Matthew 26:41, Ephesians 6:18, Ephesians 4:3, which have fallen almost entirely into disuse. All these means of sanctification prove that also in this His work God does not neglect the way of means. Of course God, who is the Almighty, could have made all His children completely holy at the same time during the rebirth. But apparently that has not been His will; in the re-creation He does not deny Himself as Creator. All creature life is born, grows up, and gradually reaches its peak. Because spiritual life is real life, it arises and develops in the same way. God does not pour Christ's righteousness and holiness into us mechanically, like water into a vessel, but He works them out organically in us and through us. Thus the one does not conflict with the other if Scripture always presents it in such a way that believers must become what they are. The kingdom of heaven is a gift of God, Luke 12:32, and yet a treasure of great value which must be sought after, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 13:46. The believers are vines on the vine, who can do nothing without Christ, and

yet are admonished to remain in Him, in His word, in His love, John 15:1-27. They are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and yet must hasten to make their calling and election sure, Ephesians 1:4, 2 Peter 1:19. They are sanctified by the one sacrifice of Christ, and yet must pursue sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord, Hebrews 10:10, Hebrews 12:14.

They have put on the new man, and still have to put him on, Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10 They have crucified the flesh with the lusts, and still have to kill their members who are on the earth, Galatians 5:24, Colossians 3:5. It is God who works in them, both to will and to do, according to His good pleasure, and yet they have to work their own salvation with joy and life, Php 2:12-13.

All this is not in conflict with one another; the one is the basis and guarantee of the other. Because sanctification, as well as all salvation, is God's work, we are admonished, obliged and also enabled to new obedience. He gives us abundant grace, not so that we can suddenly and at once be holy and rest in this holiness, but so that we can persevere in the struggle and remain standing. He hears and answers prayer, but in accordance with the order and law He has set for spiritual life. Therefore we always have good courage, because He, who started a good work in us, will also finish it until the day of Jesus Christ. The faithful can and will become holy because they are holy in Christ. But is that not too boyishly spoken? May the believers indeed confess that they are not only living members of the church of Christ, but that they will also remain so forever? It is disputed by many; as a rule, those who advocate the perfectibility of the saints are at the same time defenders of the possibility of their apostasy. The one is closely related to the other and arises from the same root; both views are based on the idea that man's sanctification is his own work and must come about by his own will. If the believer, with the help of grace, makes a good use of his will and exerts all his powers, he can already in this life bring it to perfection; on the other hand, if he slackens in zeal, backslides and falls into sin, then he can throw himself out again from the state of grace in which he was first admitted; he can again become an ungodly man and be lost forever. And as both views arise from the same error concerning the will and work of mankind in sanctification, so they are also supported by the same fear; if the perseverance of the saints is taught, the moral life will suffer damage, diligence and effort will be deprived of incentive, and wickedness will be given a licence under the slogan: once elected, always remains elected.

If we were to look for our strength in man's will and strength in this doctrine of the endurance of the saints, we should lose all ground under our feet and doubt the endurance of any believer. For all the saints have but a small principle of perfect obedience; they are still, according to the testimony of their consciences, inclined to all wickedness, and daily stumble in many; every moment they forfeit and lose the grace that has been given them. If it depended only on themselves, no believer would persevere to the end. Those who contend with the confession of perseverance can only escape this conclusion by distinguishing between sins and perseverance. Since all believers are still guilty of all kinds of violations of God's law, they should actually learn that the apostasy of the saints is not only possible, but that it really occurs to all of them. If, nevertheless, they assume that some, many, or even most of them retain the grace they have received, they can only maintain this by distinguishing in some way between mortal and venial sins, and by allowing grace to be lost not through the latter, but only through the former.

This, however, introduces a highly questionable division into the doctrine of sin, for the various sins are not separate, independent of each other, but all flow from one unclean fountain, therefore all lead to death, and yet all, with the exception of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, are forgivable through the grace of God which is in Christ Jesus. But moreover, who can decide for himself, or which priest can decide for another, whether in a certain case he is guilty of a so-called mortal sin, or of a forgivable sin, and thus has lost or still retains grace? Offences that are considered small and insignificant by men, are often big in the eyes of God, who searches the hearts and tests the kidneys; and sins that the unmerciful world speaks of as shameful, are judged quite differently by Him, who knows all situations and circumstances. The consequence can only be that the believer is continually in doubt as to whether he has committed a mortal sin and lost grace, or whether he relies in false comfort on the statement of a priest.

All these doubts and uncertainties come to an end, if the endurance of the saints is not an act of man's will, but a work of God, which is accomplished by Him from beginning to end; if, in other words, it is a preservation of God, before it becomes the endurance of man. Scripture leaves no doubt about this, but gives us an abundance of proof in the work of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, in the covenant of grace with all its good deeds. The Father chose the believers in Christ before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 1:4, predestined them to eternal life, Acts 13:48, to be conformed to the image of His Son, Romans 8:29; and this election is unchangeable, Romans 9:11, Hebrews 6:17, and in due time brings about calling, justification and glorification, Romans 8:30. Christ, in whom all God's promises are yes and amen, 2 Corinthians 1:20, died for those given to Him by the Father, John 17:6, John 17:12, that He might give them eternal life and not lose any of them, John 6:39-40, John 10:28, John 17:2. The Holy Spirit, who regenerates them, abides with them forever, John 14:16, and seals them until the day of redemption, Ephesians 2:13, Ephesians 4:30. The covenant of grace is fixed and confirmed with an oath, Hebrews 6:16-18, Hebrews 13:20, unbreakable like a marriage, Ephesians 5:31-32, or a will, Hebrews 9:17 ; and by virtue of that covenant God calls his chosen ones, writes the law in their hearts, puts his fear in their hearts, Hebrews 8:10, Hebrews 10:14, does not let them be tempted beyond their ability, 1 Corinthians 10:13, confirms and completes the good work which He has begun in them, 1 Corinthians 1:9, Php 1:6, and preserves them for the future of Christ, to make them partakers of the heavenly inheritance, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 3:13, 1 Peter 1:4-5. Through His intercession with the Father Christ is always working on their behalf, so that their faith may not cease, Luke 22:32, they may be preserved from evil in the world, John 17:11, John 17:20, may be completely saved, Hebrews 7:25, may receive the forgiveness of sins, John 2:1, and may all be with Him one day and behold His glory, John 17:24. The benefits of Christ at last, which the Holy Spirit makes part of them, are all unrepentant, Romans 11:29, and mutually indissolubly bound up; he that is called is justified and glorified, Romans 8:30; he that is adopted as a child of God is an heir of eternal life, Romans 8:17, Galatians 4:17; he that believeth hath eternal life herewith, John 3:16. And that life itself, being eternal, is also undefeatable; it cannot sin 1 John 3:9, nor die, John 11:25-26. But just like the sanctification, the preservation of the believers is applied and worked out in them by the Holy Spirit in such a way, that they themselves also persevere in the grace given to them by God. God never forces, but acts with man in a reasonable manner. In the rebirth He pours out new qualities and makes the will, which did not want to, so that it actually wants to. And in the same spiritual way He continues to work in the hearts of believers; He does not make them weak in a false sense, but raises them up and makes them walk in the good works prepared

for them. To this end He uses His Word as a means in His hands.

He does not cease to exhort them to persevere to the end, Matthew 10:22, Matthew 24:13, Romans 2:7-8; that they remain in Christ, in his word and in his love, John 15:1-10, 1 John 2:6, 1 John 2:24, 1 John 2:27, 1 John 3:6, 1 John 3:24, 1 John 4:12, that they watch and be sober, Matthew 24:42, Matthew 25:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 1 Peter 5:8, that they keep the faith and are faithful to the Lord and be faithful unto death, Colossians 1:23, Hebrews 2:1, Hebrews 3:14, Hebrews 6:11, Revelation 2:10,Revelation 2:26, etc. He warns against high-mindedness and threatens in case of unfaithfulness with heavy punishment, John 15:2, Romans 11:20-22, 2 Timothy 2:12, Hebrews 4:1, Hebrews 6:4-8, Hebrews 10:26-31, 2 Peter 2:18-22, but also connects to sanctification and perseverance rich promises of reward, Matthew 5:12, Matthew 6:4, Matthew 10:22, Matthew 16:27, Matthew 24:13, Matthew 25:21, Matthew 25:31, Romans 2:7, Revelation 2:7, Revelation 2:10, Revelation 22:12 etc. Even in the persons of David and Peter examples of a deep fall are set before us, and in people like Hymenaeus, Alexander, 1 Timothy 1:19-20, 2 Timothy 2:17-18, Demas, 2 Timothy 4:10, and others, Hebrews 6:4-8, 1 Timothy 4:1, 2 Peter 2:1, examples of general apostasy are set before us in warning. But all these exhortations and warnings do not prove the apostasy of the truly sanctified. For of the latter examples the word of John applies, that they went out of the church, but did not belong to it with their hearts, 1 John 2:19. And the examples of David and Peter show us clearly that God’s grace did not leave them completely in their fall, but on the contrary preserved them and led them again to confession and repentance. They are a warning to us, but also a comfort, so that, if we sometimes fall into sin out of weakness, we may not despair of God’s grace nor remain in sin, but strengthen ourselves with the thought that we have an everlasting covenant of grace with God. And in the way of that covenant, He causes His people to walk by His word and Spirit. Whoever teaches the apostasy of the saints, does not do justice to God’s faithfulness, makes man’s perseverance and salvation dependent and therefore changeable and uncertain, and also misjudges the unity and progress of the spiritual life; he must come to say that this life can always be broken off and can always be started anew. But he who believes in the preservation of the saints finds his standpoint and resting place in God’s grace, boasts in His faithfulness, and at the same time maintains the coherence of spiritual and eternal life. For although this life in the believer, as long as the old man still lives in him, is subject to all kinds of changes, it is in its nature indestructible; the seed that God has planted remains in him, 1 John 3:9. That is how far it is from this that faith in the preservation of God should make true believers haughty and careless, but on the contrary, it is a true root of humility, filial fear, true godliness, endurance in all battles, fervent prayers, steadfastness in the cross and in the confession of the truth, as well as firm joy in God ; and that the contemplation of that goodness is a stimulus to them to the earnest and continual practice of gratitude and good works, as appears from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints. (Can. Dordr. V 12). In order to produce this precious fruit, the deposit of the saints must be believed as God wishes us to believe them. Has God revealed it in His Word for that purpose, that we may accept it only as a doctrine and say to others: this is sound doctrine and pure truth? Certainly, this is also what God intended with his revelation, for truth has great value in itself. But that is not the only and the main intention. Because if we embrace the preservation of the saints with true faith, then that includes the confession that He still works this way with His children. The preservation of the saints is not an historical truth, not a fact that took place somewhere in the past; it is also not a scientific truth, like the result of an addition or multiplication; but it is an eternal truth, a truth which

God upholds from century to century and from generation to generation; an activity in the midst of which we live, and which God establishes and upholds in the lives of all His children. To believe in the preservation of the saints in this sense is only possible if one knows oneself to be the object of it and has experience of its reality. And then it goes without saying that anyone who believes in the preservation of the saints in this way cannot misuse their confession as a cause for the flesh, just as it is not possible that anyone who has been implanted with Christ by a true faith will not produce fruits of gratitude. But then something else follows. If the deposit of saints is a work of God, which He always performs in the hearts and lives of all believers, it follows that they must also in due time receive the assurance of this in their consciousness. If there is no preservation of the saints, no believer can ever have complete assurance of his salvation for a single moment, because he lives in constant fear whether tomorrow or the day after he will lose God's grace through a serious sin. But if God preserves his own, then the believer not only can, but he may and will also obtain a firm assurance of this in his heart; for without such a certainty of salvation, the preservation of the saints would be of no value to the believer in the practice of life. What would the doctrine of the deposit of the saints profit the children of God, if they could never know with certainty that they are His children! Preservation of the saints and security of salvation are thus inseparable; without the latter, the former would not be possible, and the latter makes the former a support for the believers and a comfort for their hearts.

All the saints who appear before us in the Old and New Testaments therefore share this assurance of salvation. Not only an Abraham, Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:18 ff, a Jacob, Genesis 49:18, a David, 2 Samuel 22:2 ff, Habakkuk 3:17-19, but also all the faithful, whose situations are described by psalmists, proverbs and prophets. They are often in deep misery, oppressed by their enemies, persecuted, scorned: where is your God now? You have turned to the Lord, that He may now help you out! Psalms 22:9, Psalms 42:4, Psalms 71:11. Sometimes the doubt takes hold of their soul, whether God has forgotten them and has closed up His mercies through wrath, Psalms 10:1, Psalms 10:11 ff, Psalms 13:2, Psalms 28:1, Psalms 44:10 ff, Psalms 77:8 ff etc. They also acknowledge the right of God's judgments, confessing their sins, Psalms 51:6, Nehemiah 9:33, Daniel 9:14 etc. But nevertheless, God is their Father, and they are His people, the sheep of His pasture, Psalms 95:7, Psalms 100:3, Isaiah 63:16, Isaiah 64:8; He cannot leave them for His name's sake, for His covenant's sake, Psalms 79:8-9. There may be a moment in His wrath, but there is life in His mercy, Psalms 30:6. He does not do according to their sins, nor reimburse according to their iniquities, Psalms 103:10. He forgives their transgressions and covers their sins, Psalms 32:1. The Lord is their rock and their fortress, their tower and their high place, their shield and the horn of their salvation, their light and their joy, their one and their all, Psalms 18:3, Psalms 73:25 etc.

Equally certain is the tone in which the apostles and the faithful of the New Testament speak of their salvation. They know that God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for them all and with him will now give them all things, Romans 8:32, that they are justified by faith, have peace with God and can no longer be accused by anyone, Romans 5:1, Romans 8:33, that they have been born again to a living hope and have passed from death to life, 1 Peter 1:3, James 1:18, 1 John 3:14, that they have received the Spirit of adoption, and that this Spirit bears witness with their spirit that they are the children of God, Romans 8:15-16. And this knowledge does not only apply to the present, to what they are, but it also extends to the future, to what they will be. For

whom God has known, called, and justified, he also glorifies, Romans 8:30. If they are children, then they are also heirs, Romans 8:17. They have already received eternal life by faith and cannot lose it anymore, 1 John 3:9, 1 John 5:1. They are born again to a living hope, and are kept for salvation in the power of God, as it was for them, 1 Peter 1:3-5. The good work begun in them is also completed by God to the day of Jesus Christ, Php 1:6. In a word, they are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a pledge and guarantee until the day of promise, Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 1:22, 2 Corinthians 5:5, Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 4:30.

There would be more power and influence emanating from the believers, if they always stood in this firm assurance of faith. But often they are not sure of their own case; how then can they speak with enthusiasm, and by their joyful testimony arouse the envy of the world? In the Roman Church, even faith is denied certainty; the believer can only be absolutely sure of his salvation by a special revelation, which is given to only a few; all other believers can only come to a suspicion, a hope, a probability. And Rome thinks that this is not a harm, but an advantage, because it preserves in the believers a salutary fear and awakens an aspiration to sanctification. The Roman Christian therefore does not rely on the testimony of the Holy Spirit in his own heart, but on the judgment of the priest, on the guarantee that the church gives him for his salvation; and with that he generally feels very secure. The Reformation understood justification and faith, and thus the security of salvation, quite differently. With Rome, faith is only permission to the doctrine of the Church; justification consists in the influx of supernatural grace and serves to enable mankind to do good works and thereby earn eternal life. So, of course, faith cannot provide a certainty of salvation; insofar as it is possible, it can only be derived from love and good works, but that is why it never becomes absolute and why it always remains a weaker or stronger presumption and hope. But the Reformation attributed an independent significance to justification, saw in it the restoration of man’s relationship to God, and thus had to see in faith something more and something else than a mere assent to the truth, namely, a personal trust of the heart in God’s grace in Christ Jesus. This faith now included security. But the Lutherans and the Remonstrants made this certainty refer only to the present; a believer may be absolutely certain that he believes now, but not that he will continue to believe to the end and thus be saved in reality. The Reformed, however, included in the certainty of faith also that concerning the future; and that is why the search for certainty of salvation occupies such an important place in the life of the devout of the Reformed confession. In the early days, when a revived, powerful faith was flourishing, such a deliberate search for certainty was not yet necessary; people lived and spoke from the abundance of their hearts, as is so clearly heard in our confessions, forms and prayers. But when faith faded, reflection and searching for signs of faith began. Instead of finding certainty, we became more and more entangled in the snares of doubt. For the certainty of faith cannot be obtained by reasoning and deduction; it results only from the faith itself. If this faith is strong enough, it brings the certainty of its own accord; if, on the other hand, it withers and hides away, the certainty also disappears from the heart and cannot be restored by any artificial means. The Dordrecht Confession says it so beautifully: the elect are assured of their eternal and unchangeable election to salvation in due time, although in different stages and to an unequal degree; not when they curiously investigate the mysteries and depths of God, but when they recognise the infallible fruits of their election, indicated in the word of God (such as true faith in Christ, filial fear of God, sorrow toward God for sin, hunger and thirst for righteousness, etc.).) in themselves with spiritual joy and holy delight, I 12. In the fifth chapter, § 9 and 10, this is still more fully unfolded: The believers themselves may

be assured of the preservation of the elect in salvation and of the perseverance of true believers in faith, and they are, according to the degree of faith with which they certainly believe that they are and always will be true and living members of the church, that they have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. And consequently, this assurance does not spring from some special revelation, without or outside of the word, but from faith in the promises of God, which He has revealed in His word in abundance for our comfort; from the witness of the Holy Spirit, who bears witness with our spirit that we are children and heirs of God; finally, from the earnest and holy practice of a good conscience and of good works. The security of salvation thus does not come to the life of faith from outside, but it blossoms from this life of faith itself, is connected to it, and goes up and down with it. The degree of security thus varies; in this life believers have to contend with various doubts of the flesh, they are sometimes subjected to severe temptations, and hence they do not always feel the full confidence of faith and the security of perseverance, T.a.p. V 11. But all this does not alter the fact that the beatific faith, as the Scriptures describe it and as the Reformation restored it, is, according to its inner nature, certainty, and increases in certainty as it grows stronger. It does not stand against knowing and being known, but it is opposed to all doubt; doubt does not arise from the new man, doubt does not arise from the new man, but from the old man, not from the Spirit, but from the flesh. Faith says yes and amen to all of God's promises, embraces them and rests on them. And when it does this, and as it does this, it gives the believer the boldness to apply all God's promises to himself and to appropriate them for himself; it becomes a firm trust that not only others, but also I, have been granted forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness and salvation by God, through pure grace, solely because of the merit of Christ. And this confidence extends automatically, not through artificial reasoning, but according to its nature and essence also to the future. That would be a strange kind of faith to say: η■ I am a child of God, but I do not know whether I will still be one tomorrow. If faith is real and powerful, then it will jubilate: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for Thou art with me. And so faith testifies and rejoices, not because it trusts in itself, but because it trusts in God's vows. Those vows also include: I will be your God now and forever; I have loved you with an everlasting love, and will never leave you or forsake you. Faith, which is not a certainty for the present and the future, does not do justice to the truth of God's promises and the faithfulness of His love.

Now, in the second place, there is the testimony of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the great and almighty Witness to Christ, who takes up the cause of Christ in our hearts, leads us to faith in His name, and makes us know the things that are given to us by God in His Christ, John 15:26, John 16:13-15, 1 Corinthians 12:3, 2 Corinthians 4:3-6, etc. But this Spirit of Christ then makes us know the truth of God's promises and His faithfulness to us. But this Spirit of Christ also makes us know ourselves, not only in our guilt and impurity, but also in our fellowship with and participation in Christ. He also reveals us in our faith to ourselves. Having first convinced us of sin, righteousness and judgment, and having worked faith in us as the Spirit of faith, 2 Corinthians 4:13, He then comes to assure us of our faith. He becomes a Spirit of adoption, Galatians 4:6, a Spirit as befits children and dwells in them, Romans 8:15, and makes us aware of our childhood.

He does this in various ways and by various means. Romans 5:1, Romans 5:5; by awakening a new life in us, by guiding us continually, and by filling our souls with a joy previously unknown, Romans 8:10-11, Romans 14:17, Romans 15:13; He does it, to mention no more, by sealing us up

to the day of redemption.

Sometimes sealing is done, to put persons or things (letters for example) out of other people's reach, to keep them from being violated, etc., Deuteronomy 32:34, Highl. 4: 12,Isaiah 8:16, Isaiah 29:11, Daniel 6:18, Daniel 12:4, Ezekiel 9:1-6, Matthew 27:66, Revelation 5:5-6, Revelation 7:1-4, Revelation 20:3, Revelation 22:10; sometimes, to authenticate persons or testimonies as genuine, to confirm, Esther 3:12-13, Esther 8:8, Esther 8:10, 1 Kings 21:8, Nehemiah 9:38, Jeremiah 32:10, John 3:13, John 6:27 Romans 4:11, 1 Corinthians 9:2. In this last sense believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a pledge until the day of redemption, Romans 8:33, 2 Corinthians 1:22, 1 Corinthians 5:5, Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 4:30. The Holy Spirit, who is given to the believers, who has planted the faith in them and constantly sustains it, who testifies in them, who leads them, etc., is the Holy Spirit. In and through all this He also serves as a pledge and guarantee for believers that they will be preserved until the day of redemption and will inherit heavenly salvation. For that Spirit will never depart from them, but remains with them forever, John 14:16, and he who has that Spirit belongs to Christ, is his property, Romans 8:19, and is preserved by him for eternity, John 17:24. Christ in heaven and the Holy Spirit on earth guarantee the salvation of the elect, and assure them of it in their hearts.

These two ways by which the assurance of salvation arises in believers are not actually two and do not run parallel to each other, but are one way seen from different points of view. The Holy Spirit does not work and testify and seal apart from or through faith, but always in and through faith. That faith, however, is not a dead faith, but a living faith; it reveals its essence and demonstrates its power in good works.

Therefore, together with faith in the promises of God and the testimony of the Holy Spirit, these may be considered in the third place as a means by which God assures believers of their childhood, Heid. Catech. vr. 86. Can. Dordr. V 10 - But then it should be noted that one cannot begin the search for security with these good works, that faith can never firmly rest on them, and that they can even less be done by us with this intention, in order that we may come to security by them. For all good works are imperfect, and become less or more perfect as they result from a weaker or stronger faith. But in so far as they result from faith, they can serve as means of assurance. As faith shows and proves itself in them, so it is also confirmed and strengthened by them. And when men see our good works, they glorify the Father who is in Heaven.

01.23. The church of Christ.

23. The church of Christ.

All those rich benefits which Christ bestows on His believers on earth receive their consummation and crown in the glorification that awaits them partly after death, but fully after Judgment Day. But we cannot yet discuss this benefit, because we first have to pay attention to the way in which, or the path along which, Christ establishes, maintains and strengthens His benefits of calling and rebirth, faith and conversion, justification and childhood, renewal and sanctification in the believers on earth. We have already seen that He bestows all these benefits through His Word and Spirit, but now we have to draw our attention to the fact that He bestows them only in the fellowship that binds all believers together. He does not distribute them to a single person, nor to a small number of persons, but He distributes them to a great multitude, to the whole new humanity, which was chosen by the Father in Him before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

Thus the believer is never separate from himself and is never alone. In the natural, every human being is born of the community of his parents, and is therefore, without his doing, a member of a family, of a nation, and so on, of all mankind. It is the same in the spiritual realm. The believer is born from above, of God, but he receives the new life only in the fellowship of the covenant of grace, of which Christ is the head and at the same time the content. If by virtue of that rebirth God is his Father, the Church may properly be called his Mother. In the heathen world, too, no believer and no assembly of believers comes into being except by means of the mission that the church of Christ sends out there. From the first moment of his regeneration, therefore, the believer, without will or action on his part, is incorporated into a great whole, included in a rich community; he is a member of a new people and a citizen of a spiritual kingdom, whose king is glorious in the number of his subjects. This community is a strong support for each believer in particular. We had to be so strong that we did not doubt and did not fear, even though we were completely alone and even though around us, as Luther says, there were as many devils as tiles on the roof. For if God be before us, who shall be against us; if the Lord be with us, what shall any man do unto us? Psalms 56:12, Psalms 118:6, Romans 8:31. But as a rule we are not suited for such independence, for such isolation and solitude. There are special cases, in which someone is called to follow the voice of the Lord, to break with his whole environment, and to fight against his whole family; and then God grants special grace and extraordinary strength, as He did for instance to an Abraham, a Moses, an Elijah. But even then the loneliness is hard; Elijah complained that he was left alone, 1 Kings 18. Elijah complained that he was left alone, 1 Kings 18:22, 1 Kings 19:10,

1 Kings 19:14, and Paul was saddened to find himself abandoned by everyone at the end of his life, 2 Timothy 4:1. A human being is a sociable being and does not like to be alone.

Election therefore encompasses an immense multitude from all races, languages, peoples and nations. It is personal and has as its object certain people whom God knows by name, but it chooses them in such a way and unites them in such a way that together they can form the temple of God, the body and the bride of Christ. The purpose of election is the creation of an organism,

that is, the redemption, renewal and glorification of a reborn humanity that proclaims the virtues of God and bears His name on its forehead. When God executes this election in time, He does so in the way of the covenant of grace; and in that covenant He never includes a single person in isolation from all the others, but in that one person He simultaneously calls his family and his lineage; so He did with Adam, with Noah, with Abraham; so He still does with each one whom He brings into His community from the service of the world; He establishes His covenant with him and his seed, and then confirms it from child to child. To this organic activity of God corresponds in the hearts of all believers a social pull, a longing for fellowship, not only with God Himself, but also with all His people. Generally speaking, there is no power in the world which so hopelessly divides mankind, and on the other hand so intimately unites them, as religion. But outside Christianity the religious community almost always coincides with that of a tribe or a people; the religion is not strong enough, as it were, to stand on its own feet without these supports; there is no church anywhere in the true sense of the word. But in Christianity it is different.

Generally speaking, under Israel the people and the church still stretched out equally, but from the beginning the community of the people rested much more in the religious unity than the other way around. The miraculous birth of Isaac serves as proof of this; the covenant of grace God, as the Almighty, makes nature subservient to grace in this patriarch. Hence, in the Old Testament, the God of the covenant, the people of Israel and the land of Canaan belong together so intimately; Israel owes its nationality and its unity to the fact that it was chosen by God to be his property, Exodus 19:5-6, Deuteronomy 4:20, Deuteronomy 7:6, and Canaan is the Lord's land, Leviticus 25:23, 1 Samuel 26:19, freely given by Him to Abraham and his seed for inheritance, Genesis 12:7, Leviticus 20:24, etc. Ruth expressed this, when she returned with her mother-in-law to the land of Judah, saying: Where you will go, I will go; and where you will stay, I will stay; your people are my people and your God is my God. But hence also, when the people of Israel fell away more and more, and at last were carried off into exile and scattered, there still remained a remnant who were faithful to God and His service, and who, amid the multitude of the people, formed the true Israel, the true seed of Abraham, Amman, and the people of Israel. Amos 5:15, Isaiah 1:9, Isaiah 4:3, Isaiah 8:18, etc. As these pious ones separate themselves from the wicked, they join together and strengthen themselves in one another's fellowship, Psalms 1:1, Psalms 16:3, Psalms 22:23, Psalms 22:26, Psalms 26:4-12, Psalms 35:18, Psalms 40:10, Psalms 66:16, Psalms 122:1, Psalms 133:1, etc. This separation was consummated in the days of the New Testament. After John the Baptist had prepared the way with his preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins, Jesus himself appeared and initially addressed all the people of Israel. He taught in Galilee and Judea, in the cities and villages, and travelled through the land ■giving good and healing to all who were overwhelmed by the devil, Acts 10:38. But He soon learned that the people, under the leadership of the Scribes and Pharisees, did not want to know about His Messiahship and His spiritual kingdom; they became more and more hostile toward Him and finally submitted Him to be crucified. Therefore, as this end came near, Jesus pronounced His terrible judgment on the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, Matthew 11:20 ff, on the Pharisees and Scribes, Matthew 23:13 ff, on Jerusalem and her children, Matthew 23:37, on the people of Israel, Matthew 21:19 ff, Matthew 23:38, Luke 23:28 ff, on the city and on the temple, Matthew 24:1-51. Israel rejected his Messiah; so others would come in his place. At first it was only the small group of disciples who confessed Jesus as the Christ; but this confession bound them together so tightly that even after the Master had left them, they remained united and persisted in praying and supplicating with one

another (Acts 1:14). On the day of Pentecost they were harnessed with power from on high and received an independent principle of life in the Holy Spirit, which freed them from a national bond and organized them into their own community in the midst of the world, independent of nation and country. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit gave the church of Christ its independent existence. From the beginning, the assembly of the faithful who confessed Jesus Christ as their Lord was called the congregation or church. The Hebrew Old Testament already contained two words for the assemblies of the people of Israel, but there is no difference in meaning between the two.

Later Judaism, however, seems to have distinguished the two words in such a way that the first referred more to the congregation in its actual situation, the second to its ideal character as an assembly of people called by God to His salvation. The first word was translated into Greek as synagogue, the second as ekklesia. This distinction, which was already made by the Jews, naturally caused the Christians to prefer the second word. The Christian congregation, after all, was that assembly of believers which took the place of the old Israel and brought the idea of God's electing love to fruition. When Jews and Christians had parted for good, the custom gradually developed of calling the assembly of the Jews the synagogue and the assembly of the Christians the ekklesia (church), and this custom has continued to the present day. Originally, this distinction was not made at all in the two words; in James 2:2 (Hebrews 10:25) the word synagogue is used for the assembly of the Christian congregation, and in Acts 7:38 (Hebrews 2:12) the word ekklesia is used for the assembly of the people of Israel, and in Acts 19:32, Acts 19:39-40 even for a general assembly. But the separation of Jews and Christians promoted the distinction in the use of words. The disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem still met frequently in the Temple or one of its outbuildings after Pentecost (Acts 2:2, Acts 2:46, Acts 3:1, Acts 3:11, Acts 5:12), to observe the prayer times sanctified by Jewish custom and at the same time to preach to the people the Gospel of Christ. This preaching of the apostles, on and also long after Pentecost, was richly blessed; thousands were brought to the church, who were saved, Acts 2:41, Acts 2:47, Acts 4:4, Acts 5:14. But then a persecution broke out, which made Stephen the first martyr, Acts 6:8-15, Acts 7:1-60, and scattered the disciples from Jerusalem through the countries of Judea and Samaria to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, Acts 8:1, Acts 11:9. Through the preaching of the disciples believers were then won and congregations established in many places among the Jews, and these congregations enjoyed peace for a time and were greatly multiplied, Acts 8:4, Acts 8:14, Acts 8:25, Acts 9:31, Acts 9:35, Acts 9:38. It goes without saying that for a long time these Christians from the Jews cherished the hope that the entire nation of Israel would be converted to the Lord, Acts 3:17-26. But 'that hope disappeared more and more; gradually the centre of gravity shifted from the Jewish-Christian congregation to the converts from the Gentiles.

Already during Jesus' life there were some proselytes from the Greeks, who had come to worship at the feast and who expressed a desire to see Jesus, John 12:20 ff. Among the members of the congregation in Jerusalem were also Hellenists, Acts 6:1, who probably, like Stephen, held a freer view of the relationship of Christians to the Temple and the Law, Acts 6:13-14, To the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:26 ff, to the Roman chieftain Cornelius, Acts 10:1-48, to the Greeks in Antioch, Acts 11:20.

All these events were preparations for the great missionary work which Paul undertook among the Gentiles together with Barnabas, by order of the Holy Spirit and after the laying on of hands by the church in Antioch, Acts 13:2 ff. Romans 1:16, Romans 2:9, Romans 3:1, Romans 9:3, Romans

11:13, 1 Corinthians 1:22, 1 Corinthians 9:20; but when these, as was usually the case, despised his preaching, he turned to the Gentiles, Acts 13:46, Acts 27:17, Acts 18:4, Acts 18:6, Acts 28:25-28. It was a great sorrow and constant anguish to him that his fleshly brethren were vexed at the cross of Christ and sought to establish their own righteousness (Romans 9:2); he never refrained from attempting to arouse their envy and to preserve some of them (Romans 11:14). But the fact was not to be denied, that the hardening had come in part upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles should have come in, Romans 11:25. The branches of the tame olive tree were broken off through unbelief, and in their place were grafted branches of the wild olive tree, Romans 11:17-24. There is a distinction between Israel of the flesh and Israel of the spirit, Romans 2:28-29, Romans 9:8, 1 Corinthians 10:18; The church of Christ is now the true seed of Abraham, the people and Israel of God, Acts 15:14, Romans 9:25-26, 2 Corinthians 6:16-18, Galatians 3:29, Galatians 6:16, Hebrews 8:8-10, James 1:1, James 1:18, 1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 21:3, Revelation 21:12. Those of the Jews who rejected Christ are not the. true Jews; they are not the circumcision, but the cutting, Php 3:2; they are unruly; vanity speakers, seducers and persecutors of the faithful, 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, Titus 1:10-11; the Jews, who blaspheme the church of. The Jews who slander the congregation of Smyrna say that they are Jews, but they are not, they are rather a synagogue of Satan, Revelation 2:9, Revelation 3:9. Thus the Jews and the Christians separated; while at first the professors of Christ were still considered a sect among the Jews, Acts 24:5, Acts 24:14, Acts 28:22, in Antioch they received their own name, the name of Christians, Acts 11:26; there was a separation between the assembly of the Jews and the assembly of the Christians; and this separation was manifested linguistically in the fact that the former regularly received the name of synagogue, the latter that of ekklesia (church). The word ekklesia was translated into our Bible as congregation; the word church, probably derived from a Greek word meaning ■des Heeren' (house), occurs only in the combination of churchwarden and church robber, Acts 19:35, Acts 19:37. The translators undoubtedly preferred the word congregation, because this indicates the assembly of the faithful in their mutual community, while the word church makes it known as organized in an institution. But both words are nevertheless used interchangeably; in the confessional writings the word church is constantly used, Ned. Gel. art. 27-32, Heid. Cat. Zond. 7. 21. The church of Christ cannot exist here on earth without a certain organization, which it received from its Lord; and the church of Christ, although organized in a certain way, is and always will be an assembly of believers according to its nature. Both words therefore do not form a contradiction, but look at the same assembly of believers from a different point of view, and complement each other in a beautiful way. The word congregation is first used by Christ Himself for the multitude of His confessors, Matthew 16:18, Matthew 18:17. There is nothing strange in this, when we consider that the Hebrew word used by Jesus occurs repeatedly in the Old Testament and was generally known. The novelty lies only in the fact that Christ applies this word to the circle of his disciples and thus already indicates that his congregation will replace that of the people of Israel. Furthermore, Jesus did not use the word to refer to a local assembly of believers, but to all those who would once believe in Him through the word of the Apostles; He used it as generally as possible. Later, in accordance with the development of the church, the word took on more special meanings. In Acts 2:47, Acts 5:11, Acts 8:1, Acts 11:22, the name congregation is applied to the local meeting of believers, which was in Jerusalem, and which then still existed almost alone. There were certainly disciples of Jesus living here and there, in Judea, Samaria and Galilee, who had been personally won by his preaching, and who later, after the

persecution in Jerusalem had broken out and the disciples had been scattered, formed a connection point for missionary work among the Jews. But at first, an assembly of believers, a congregation, existed only in the city of Jerusalem. When, however, through the preaching of the disciples, meetings of believers also arose elsewhere, the name congregation was applied to each of these local meetings. The congregation in Jerusalem was not a society that founded divisions elsewhere, but it had congregations of believers alongside it, who were just as much a congregation as it was.

Thus there is mention of the church at Antioch, Acts 11:26, Acts 13:1, of churches in Lystre, Derbe and the surrounding country, Acts 14:23, in Syria and Cilicia, Acts 15:41, etc.; Paul continually gives each place to the other. Paul continually gives every local assembly of believers, in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, etc. the name of congregation, and consequently also speaks in the plural of the congregations which are in the area of Galatia, Galatians 1:2, or Judea, Galatians 1:22. It did not even stop there. The believers, who lived in a certain place, came together from time to time, sometimes even daily, Acts 2:36, and soon regularly on a Sunday, 1 Corinthians 16:2, Acts 20:7, Revelation 1:10. But they did not have their own church building - the word ’meeting’ (synagogue) in James 2:2 is probably the first reference in the New Testament to a specific place of assembly - so they had to meet in the house of some brother or sister that was suitable for this purpose. In Jerusalem they first met in the temple, Acts 2:1,Acts 2:46, Acts 3:11, Acts 5:12, Acts 5:20, Acts 5:42, but besides that they also had special meetings, Acts 1:14, Acts 2:42, in the houses of some brothers, Acts 2:46, Acts 5:42. First the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, Acts 12:12, and later that of James, Acts 21:18, was the center of church life in Jerusalem. Because the congregation was much too large, it divided itself, and came together in the same house at different times, or at the same times, in different houses. This arrangement was then imitated in other places, in Thessalonica, Acts 17:7, Troas, Acts 20:8, Ephesus, Acts 20:20, Corinth, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians, Philemon 1:2, Laodicea, Colossians 4:15, Rome, Romans 16:5, Romans 16:14-15. And now it is remarkable, that also all these different house-churches, each for itself, received the name of church, Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 3:15, Philemon 1:1-25. They were not, one to another, subordinate, but stood independently, with equal rights next to each other.

Nevertheless, they were all also one. Jesus spoke of all his disciples together as his congregation, Matthew 16:18, Matthew 18:17, and the same is true of the Apostles, especially of Paul. The church, taken as a whole, is the body of Christ, and He is its head, Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 4:15-16, Colossians 1:18, Colossians 1:24; the bride of the Lamb, who is adorned for her husband, Ephesians 5:32, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Revelation 21:2; the house and temple of God, built by the apostles on the foundation of Christ, 1 Corinthians 3:10-16, or according to another application of the same image, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ as the cornerstone, and the believers as the living stones, Ephesians 2:20-22, 1 Timothy 3:15, 1 Peter 2:5, Revelation 21:3, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, an inherited nation, to proclaim the virtues of him who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light, 1 Peter 2:9. In view of the glorious virtues which the apostles ascribed to the church, a distinction was sometimes made between the ideal and the empirical church. But such Western distinctions are alien to the New Testament. When the Apostles, referring to the example of Christ, especially in John 14:1-31, John 15:1-27, John 16:1-33, John 17:1-26, speak so gloriously of the congregation,

they are not thinking of something that exists only in the idea (in the mind), nor of an ideal that we have to pursue and that may never be realized. But they always have in view the whole real congregation, of which the meetings of the faithful in the various towns and villages, in the various countries and times, are the local revelations. These revelations are all still very imperfect - as the apostles repeatedly testify in all their letters; but they are nevertheless revelations of a reality that lies behind them, realizations of a decision of God, which carries itself out from generation to generation. In that decree God sees the whole congregation of Christ already standing perfect before Him; in Christ, who bought it with His blood, it is enclosed, like the fruit in the wheat grain; in the Holy Spirit, who takes all things from Christ, is the root of its existence and the guarantee of its completion. It is therefore not an idea or an ideal, but a reality, which is becoming and can become and will become, because it is already there. Thus the church is in constant change; it was already assembled from the beginning of the world and will be assembled until its end. There are daily departures from it who have fought the battle, kept the faith, won the crown of righteousness, and now together constitute the triumphant church, the congregation of the firstborn and of the spirits of the perfected righteous. And every day new members are added to the church on earth, to the struggling church here below, who are born in the church itself or have been brought to it through the work of the mission from the nations.

These two parts of the congregation belong together; they are the front and rear guard of the one great army of Christ. Those who have gone before us now form a cloud of witnesses around us who have given testimony of their faith during their lives and thereby exhort us to patience and loyalty. Without us they could not, and without them we cannot be perfected, Hebrews 11:40. Only all the saints together can fully understand the extent of Christ’s love and be filled to the fullness of God, Ephesians 3:18-19. Thus, history continues, until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a complete man, to the measure of the fullness of Christ, Ephesians 4:13. That the apostles, attributing such glorious characteristics to the church as a whole, did not have an idea or an ideal in mind, but a reality, is most evident from the fact that they speak of each local church and even of each believer in the same way. The local church in Corinth, for example, is called by Paul, in spite of its many errors and defects, the temple of God, the dwelling place of His Spirit, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 12:27), and likewise every believer is called a temple of the Holy Spirit, and belongs to God with body and soul (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The church as a whole, each local church and also each believer individually, they are all partakers of the same benefits, have fellowship with the same Chris¬tus, are in the possession of the same Spirit, and are led by that Spirit to one and the same Father, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Ephesians 2:18, Ephesians 4:3-6. There is a difference in the measure of grace which Christ gives to each of His believers, Romans 12:6, Ephesians 4:7; there is a diversity of gifts, ministries and operations, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6. But this diversity does not stand in the way of the unity of believers, but rather promotes and strengthens it.

If the church is indeed an organism, a living body, that implies that it has many, distinct members, each of whom is given a name and place, task and calling. If they were all but one member, where would the body be? Just as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the one body, being many, are but one body, so it is with the church of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:12. Each member of the congregation therefore receives from Christ his own gift, however modest and small it may be, and with that gift he is not to serve himself, but the congregation. Each one,

according to the nature of the gift that he has received, must serve the brethren, as befits good stewards of the manifold grace of God, 1 Peter 4:10. He received this gift not for himself, but for what is expedient, 1 Corinthians 12:7, for the edification of the church, 1 Corinthians 14:12; to take care of others with it, as they do for him, 1 Corinthians 14:25. In this rich diversity, the church of Christ is and remains a unity. This does not only mean that there has always been and is and will be only one church, but it also implies that this one church is always and everywhere the same, with the same benefits, privileges and goods. It is not a unity that comes from outside, that is imposed by force, brought about by a contract, temporarily entered into against a common enemy. It does not even arise from the social instincts of religious life; but it is of a spiritual nature; it rests, it has its basis and its example in the unity between the Father and Christ as the Mediator (John 17:21-23); it arises from the unity of the Church and of the world. John 17:21-23; it arises from Christ as the vine, which of itself brings forth and nourishes all the branches, John 15:5, as the head from whom the whole body obtains its maturity, Ephesians 4:16; and it is brought about by the one Spirit, with whom we are all led to one Father, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 2:18, Ephesians 4:4. The love of the Father, the grace of the Son and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit are the part of every believer, of every local congregation and of the congregation as a whole; and therein lies its deep, unbreakable, imperishable unity. This unity is still very much lacking and imperfect in the congregation on earth. Like the church itself, its unity is also in the making; it is there, but it is gradually being worked out and applied. Jesus prayed for it, John 17:21, and the apostle Paul presented it as only being fully realized in the future, Ephesians 4:13. On the contrary, it exists and manifests itself more or less purely in the life of the church; it is not only present in the invisible, but also penetrates into the visible. In the congregation in Jerusalem it was manifested in the fact that all the brothers and sisters, after being accepted into the congregation through baptism, persevered in the apostles' doctrine, in the fellowship, in the breaking of bread, in the prayers, Acts 2:42, were one heart and one soul, and distributed to each according to his need, Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32-35. When churches were later established in other places, this unity of the believers was preserved.

Nevertheless, in the different origin and habit of the Christians of the Jews and the Christians of the Gentiles, it met with a formidable objection; often both were sharply opposed to each other in the usually mixed congregations, and not infrequently there was a serious clash. Even Peter showed himself to be weak for a moment in this conflict in Antioch, and made himself worthy of a rebuke from Paul (Galatians 2:11-14). But the apostle of the Gentiles, who also became a Jew and all, kept the great goal of unity in mind and urged love and peace in all churches. They were all one body, had one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, who was above and in all. Through the death of Christ the middle wall of separation was broken down, and both, Jews and Gentiles, were reconciled to each other and made one new man, Ephesians 2:14 f. They did not all have to be exactly alike, for a body presupposes a diversity of members, who with their different gifts have to serve the whole, 1 Corinthians 12:4 f., and had to respect each other's freedom, Romans 14:1-23. In confessing Christ as Lord they were one, 1 Corinthians 12:3, and all were under one duty, to do all things for the glorification of God, Romans 14:6-8, 1 Corinthians 10:31,Colossians 3:17. Paul's work was blessed by this; the contrast gradually disappeared, and the unity of the church was preserved. But later, from century to century, heresies and schisms of all kinds divided the church of Christ. Today, with its countless denominations and sects, it presents a most distressing sight. Yet something of that unity can still be seen, inasmuch as all

Christian churches are still separated from the world by one and the same baptism, are fully confirmed in the apostles' doctrine with the confession of the twelve articles and maintain the breaking of bread and the prayers in very different forms. The church with its unity is an object of faith; although we do not see it, not as clearly as we would like, it nevertheless exists and will one day be fully established. This is also true of another characteristic of the church, namely its holiness. From the beginning access to the church was only by faith and conversion; and whoever converted was baptized and received the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:38. Although Jesus himself did not baptize, John 4:2, and also the apostles did not usually do this, Acts 10:48, 1 Corinthians 1:14-17, nevertheless baptism was conferred on all who wanted to join the church. But this baptism was always conceived in its unity of visible sign and invisible signified matter, as at the same time a renunciation of the filthiness of the body and the calling of a good conscience to God, 1 Peter 3:21, and as opposed to circumcision as a vain ceremony. Seen in this way, Baptism was indeed a salvation, like the ark that Noah saved, 1 Peter 3:20-21, a death and resurrection with Christ, Romans 6:3-4, a washing away of sins, Acts 22:16, a break with the world and entry into a new community.

Baptism thus implied a completely different relationship to the world; and it required great courage to submit to it and join the congregation of Christ. For not only did that congregation consist largely of simple and humble people (1 Corinthians 1:25-29), but they also had to endure much reproach and oppression. First the enmity and persecution came from the Jews, either from the government, Acts 4:1, Acts 5:17, Acts 6:12, Acts 9:1, etc., or from the people, who then more than once incited the Gentiles to rebellion. Acts 9:23, Acts 13:50, Acts 14:2, Acts 14:19, kActs 17:5 etc. Sometimes the Gentiles also took a hostile attitude of their own against the Christians, Acts 16:16 ff, Acts 19:23 ff, 1 Thessalonians 2:14, but this was the exception, and the government was generally not displeased, Acts 17:9, Acts 18:17, Acts 19:35 ff, Acts 21:32, Acts 23:17 ff. The persecution of the church from the side of Rome only began under Nero in the year 64. Hence the Christians expected protection rather than persecution from the Roman government, Acts 16:37, Acts 22:25, Acts 25:10, 2 Thessalonians 2:7, saw in it a power ordained by God, and urged submission to its law and prayer for its welfare, Romans 13:1-7, 1 Timothy 2:2, Titus 3:1, 1 Peter 2:13-17. And concerning the social life, the apostles gave the advice that the believer should not leave his or her unbelieving spouse, 1 Corinthians 12:1, 1 Peter 3:1, but should marry in the Lord when entering into a marriage, 1 Corinthians 7:39, 2 Corinthians 6:14; that everyone, including the slave and the slave woman, should remain in the calling to which he was called, 1 Corinthians 7:20; that one should not shun all association with unbelievers, 1 Corinthians 5:10; that one should not shun all intercourse with unbelievers, 1 Corinthians 5:10; that one should accept the invitation to a meal, but that one should refrain from eating an idolatrous sacrifice for the sake of one's conscience and for the sake of one's example, 1 Corinthians 10:27-28, 1 Corinthians 8:12, 1 Corinthians 10:20; that one should practice love towards all, even one's enemies, Romans 12:14, Romans 12:17, Romans 13:10, Galatians 6:10, Colossians 4:5. 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 2 Peter 1:7, and that no thing in itself should be considered impure, because all God's creatures are good, Romans 14:14, 1 Timothy 4:4, Hebrews 13:4. This relationship of the church to the world is thus a relationship of freedom, devoid of all false, unnatural abstinence; but it can only be so when the church is aware of her calling and walks in holiness before God. The congregation is holy, a holy people, and the believers are saints, Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:2, etc., because they are together and each for himself, for they are together and each one for himself the temple of the

Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 1 Corinthians 6:19; they have been washed and sanctified by that Spirit in Christ Jesus, John 17:17, John 17:19, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Ephesians 5:26-27, and therefore have to avoid and to fight to the death all sins, all works of the flesh, all worldly lusts, Galatians 5:19, Colossians 3:5, Hebrews 12:1, Hebrews 12:4, and in return practice all virtues and advocate all good works, Galatians 5:22, Php 3:8, Colossians 3:12, Titus 2:14 etc. It is a life of love, which Christians must lead, Ephesians 5:2, for it is the most of all virtues, 1 Corinthians 13:13, the bond of perfection, Colossians 3:14, and the fulfillment of the law, Romans 13:10.

Discipline is a means given by Christ to the church to preserve its holy character; it must not only be exercised secretly, by one brother over another, Matthew 18:15-16, 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Hebrews 10:24, but in the case of public sins it must also be applied by the church to its members, Matthew 18:17, 1 Cor. 5: 16, and 1 Corinthians 6:16. How much this holiness left much to be desired in the apostolic age is shown by the letters, and later centuries have often witnessed a deep religious and moral decline of the church. But after each relapse, revival and renewal came about through the Spirit of Christ; the holiness of the congregation is also a characteristic that Christ acquired for it and worked out in it.

Finally, the church has the characteristic of catholicity or generality. The name first appeared in a post-apostolic document, which, in the face of all kinds of heresies and schisms, indicated that the true church is the one that adheres to the bishop and stays with the whole, because the whole, general, Catholic church is the one where Christ is. Later on, various other explanations of the name were given; it was understood that the Church is spread throughout the world, that it includes all the faithful from the beginning until the present day, that it shares all truth and grace and is therefore a sufficient means of salvation for all. These statements are not incorrect, provided that one does not think of the church exclusively in terms of one denomination, e.g. the Roman Church, but of the Christian congregation that is manifested in all churches together, in very different degrees of purity. For that congregation is indeed Catholic. Already in the Old Testament, the promise of the mother was made known to Adam and Eve, and in them to the whole human race. Even though a special people was later chosen in Abraham to be the bearer of revelation, that revelation was and remained intended for mankind. In Abraham’s seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, Genesis 12:2. And the prophecy always kept this general destination of salvation in mind, Joel 2:32, Micah 4:1-2, Zephaniah 2:11, Isaiah 25:6-10. When Christ acted, He turned only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matthew 15:24, but the kingdom which He preached was nevertheless absolutely universal; it was freed from all national limitations and was open to all who believed and were converted, Mark 1:15. If the Jews reject his gospel, he says, the children of the kingdom shall be cast out, and many shall come from east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Matthew 8:11-12. He himself, like the wheat-wheat, must fall into the earth and die, but shall afterwards bear much fruit, John 12:24. He has other sheep than in Israel, and must bring them also, that they may become one flock under one shepherd, John 10:16, John 11:52. After His resurrection He therefore instructs His disciples to preach the gospel to all creatures and to make all peoples His disciples, Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15; and the apostles fulfilled this command, and acted as his witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth, Acts 1:8.

It is remarkable that while Jesus constantly spoke of the kingdom of heaven and only a few times of the church, the Apostles rarely mentioned the kingdom of God but repeatedly and broadly spoke of the church of Christ. There is, however, some explanation for this. The kingdom of heaven, of which Jesus speaks, is in the first place not a collection of people, a realm of citizens, but a collection of spiritual goods and blessings, a treasure, Matthew 13:44, a pearl, Matthew 13:45, righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, Matthew 6:33, Romans 14:17. That kingdom is from heaven, and now descends to earth with and in Christ, for in Him the Father distributes all these blessings and goods, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Ephesians 1:3, The Father has ordained Him the kingdom, and He in turn ordains it to His disciples, Luke 22:29. He is already doing this on earth; when He casts out the devils by the Spirit of God, it is proof that the kingdom of God has come (Matthew 12:28). Luke 17:21; it proceeds like a tree that rises, and like a leaven that leavens all the dough, Matthew 13:31-33, and will be communicated in its entirety in the future, at the reappearance of Christ, Matthew 5:3, Matthew 6:10, Luke 12:32, Acts 14:22, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, 2 Thessalonians 1:5 etc. That kingdom, however, from the first coming of Christ until his second coming, is given to people, to those who are born again of water and the Spirit, and who believe in the name of Christ, John 1:12-13, John 3:3, John 3:5. The apostles are the fishermen who go out with the net and gather people together to share in the present and future blessings of the kingdom (Matthew 4:19).

Thus, while Jesus proclaims the Gospel of the kingdom and explains its nature, development and future, the Apostles are called and empowered by Him to gather through that Gospel of the kingdom the congregation that will share in the treasures of that kingdom and one day fully receive and enjoy them. The word kingdom directs our attention above all to the treasures, goods and blessings that are handed out by the Father in Christ; in distinction to these, the congregation reminds us of the assembly of people who have received these goods and are about to enjoy them fully; in Christ, the congregation is the owner, possessor, keeper, distributor and heir of the kingdom of God. This is her treasure and her honor; she has no other goods. What Peter once said, the congregation can repeat in her own way: I have neither silver nor gold, but what I have, I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, arise and walk, Acts 3:6.

Since the treasures of the kingdom, which the church possesses, are all of a spiritual nature, not consisting of gold or silver, of power or violence, but of righteousness, peace and joy through the Holy Spirit, the church has the quality of universality. It is not bound by country and people, by time and place, by sex and age, by money and property; it is independent of all earthly distinctions and oppositions; it brings the Gospel to all creatures, and that Gospel is always and only Evangeline, a glad tidings that is suitable and necessary for all people, in all times, under all circumstances, for all conditions. The kingdom of God is never hostile to anything but sin. This congregation as an assembly of believers had a certain organization from the beginning. Every society, in order to avoid confusion and disintegration and to serve the purpose for which it was established, needs a set of rules for its meetings and activities; and the church of Christ, too, is subject to this general law of human society. God is not a God of confusion, but of peace; He has laid down rules for all His creatures, and He wants everything in the congregations to be done properly and in order, 1 Corinthians 14:33, 1 Corinthians 14:40. The church, as long as it is on earth, is still imperfect; each of its members and all of them together have a constant battle to wage against sin and to pursue sanctification; they need instruction, guidance, direction, encouragement, consolation, exhortation,

and chastisement at all times. And not only that, but the church has to reproduce itself from generation to generation; it does not always have the same members, but loses them daily, who go over into the triumphant church, and is regularly supplemented with new members, who have to be educated and introduced into the life of the church; moreover, it has received from Christ the charge to preach the Gospel to all mankind throughout the world.

Both inwardly and outwardly it has a holy and important calling to fulfill.

If God imposes this calling on her, then at the same time He has given her the suitability and the ability to fulfill this calling. He furnishes her in such a way and equips her with gifts, powers and ministries that she can perform the task that has been laid upon her shoulders. He gave it, as Paul expresses it, Apostles, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers, so that these may carry out the work of the ministry (their different ministries) in the congregation, thereby building up the body of Christ and bringing about the perfection of the saints; and this whole organization must therefore continue until the goal is reached and everyone has come together to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the fullness of Christ. In other words, the church as an assembly of believers has received from Christ, in view of the calling she has to fulfill on earth, a certain institution, a peculiar arrangement of gifts and powers, offices and ministries, through which she can answer that calling. And this institution was not added to the congregation at a later date, but has been present in and with the congregation from the very beginning. Since we cannot deal with everything at the same time, we must first speak about the congregation as an assembly of believers and then about the regulation of its life and work; but we must not conclude from this that the former arose long before the latter and existed without the latter. God immediately organized the church on earth in the manner required by its place and task in the world. But although there is no temporal separation between the two, there is a difference. This is evident from the fact that the arrangement given to the church has changed considerably in the course of time. From the beginning of paradise there have been believers on earth, and they undoubtedly came together and met with one another. We read in Genesis 4:26 that in the days of Enos people began to call on the name of the Lord, and this probably indicates that in those days the Sethites separated from the Cainites and gathered around the confession of the Lord’s name; thus from that time there was a public worship service, consisting mainly of preaching, offering and prayer. In the patriarchal era the father was the king, but also the priest in his family; he performed the circumcision, Genesis 17:23, and fulfilled the sacrifices, Genesis 22:2, Genesis 26:1, etc. At the legislation on Sinai, when God established his covenant with a people, a great change occurred; a special priesthood and position of Levites was instituted; a specific place and time was designated for the sacrifices; the sacrifices themselves were separated and arranged; and everything relating to the holy persons, times, places and actions was carefully regulated and prescribed in detail. The Law was a yoke that was difficult to bear, Acts 15:10, but at that time it was necessary in order to sharpen the awareness of sin, to awaken the need for forgiveness, to shed light on the significance and necessity of the sacrifices, and thus to lead to Christ.

Nevertheless, under and in addition to this official, legal regulation, there was another organization of religious life in Israel. The people lived throughout Canaan and also to some extent on the other side of the Jordan. It goes without saying that only a relatively small portion could go to Jerusalem on the great feasts; moreover, all were obliged to observe the Sabbath diligently, and they all celebrated it in their own place of residence. It is obvious, and highly probable, that the believers

held religious meetings on such days and gathered in the contemplation of the law, in song and prayer. In Acts 15:21 it says that Moses of old had people in every city who preached to him and that he was read in the synagogues on oak sabbath. The origin of these synagogues is unknown to us, but it certainly goes back to ancient times; and during and after the exile, when the Jews were scattered through all the countries and often lived far away from their homeland and Temple, these synagogues took on a new, rich significance. In every place where the Jews lived, a synagogue was built, where they came together regularly on the Sabbath, on feast days and also during the week, where they made a joint confession, joined in prayer, listened to the reading of a part of the law and the prophets, and to a free reading (Luke 4:21), and received the priestly blessing. The government of the congregation was entrusted to a college of elders, who had the right to discipline and exclude by ban, and who employed various officials (a synagogue leader, Mark 5:22, Matthew 5:35, Luke 8:49, Luke 13:14, who had to regulate the religious meetings; a chaplain, who had to receive the gifts of mercy; and a servant, Luke 4:20, who had to hand over the Holy Scriptures and put them away again). The entire organization of the synagogues was of the utmost importance for the religious life of the Jews, and in various respects it also served as an example for the organization of the Christian congregation.

Jesus was in the habit of attending these meetings in the synagogues, Luke 4:16, and also submitted Himself to the observance of the entire Mosaic law and fulfilled all righteousness, Matthew 3:15. Yet He came in order to bring the law to its fulfilment through this keeping and thus to put another yoke and another burden on the shoulders of His disciples in place of the hard yoke of the law, which were soft and light and gave rest to their souls (Matthew 11:29-30). He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and gathered disciples around Him, who recognized Him as their Master and gradually became more deeply acquainted with His person and work. From this circle of disciples He chose, in view of the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 28:1), twelve to whom He also gave the name of Apostles (Luke 13:1). The gravity and weight of this choice appear from the fact that He made it after a night spent alone on the mountain praying to God (Luke 6:12). The name Apostle, which He gave to these twelve disciples, generally means envoy, messenger, missionary, and was not uncommon in those days; among the Jews, men who were sent from Jerusalem to collect money for the Temple were probably called that. In the New Testament Jesus himself, Hebrews 3:1, and also Barnabas, Acts 14:4, Acts 14:14, and perhaps here or there another servant of the Gospel are so called; but soon the name apostle is limited to the twelve, who were chosen by Jesus, and to Paul, who later in a special way was called and appointed apostle of the Gentiles, Acts 1:2, Acts 2:37, Galatians 1:17, 1 Corinthians 9:5, 1 Corinthians 15:7, Revelation 2:2, Revelation 18:20-21, Revelation 21:14 etc. The nearest intention in choosing these apostles was, that they should be with Jesus and be sent out by Him, to preach and to heal diseases, Mark 3:14-15. According to Matthew 10:1 (Mark 6:9, Luke 9:1) Jesus therefore sent them out to the various villages and towns of Galilee. By this mission Jesus undoubtedly meant to bring the Gospel to those Jews whom He could not reach Himself, but at the same time He was preparing His Apostles for their future calling. And that vocation was none other than to act as His witnesses in the midst of the world after Jesus' ascension and to build His church on that witness. He prepared them for this in a special way, by his interaction and teaching, by letting them be witnesses to his words and works, his life and sufferings, his death and especially his resurrection, Acts 1:8, Acts 1:22, Acts 2:32, Acts 3:15 etc., and by promising and sending them that Spirit of truth, who would lead them in all truth, comfort them and remain with them forever, John 14:17,

John 15:26, John 16:7, John 20:22. And with this empowerment He gave them a special power, namely the power to preach and teach, to miraculously heal all kinds of sick people, to administer baptism and the Lord's Supper, to exercise discipline and to open and close the kingdom of heaven by forgiving or not forgiving sins, Matthew 16:19, Matthew 18:18, Matthew 28:19, John 20:23; the apostles were servants of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God, 1 Corinthians 4:1.

Among the apostles, Peter occupied the first place. He was the son of Jonas, a fisherman in Bethsaida, John 1:43-44, and already married at Capernaum, when he came to know Jesus, Mark. His name was originally Simon, but was immediately supplemented by Jesus at the first meeting with that of Cephas or Peter, the rock man, John 1:43. The name was an expression of his being, of his perseverance, boldness, openness and steadfastness. This is how we got to know him during Jesus' life; he was the first chosen one among the apostles, Mark 3:13, and acted as their forerunner, representative and spokesman. His steadfastness was put to a severe test in the suffering of Christ and succumbed to his terrible denial. But out of that deep fall Jesus raised him up and restored him, Luke 22:32, John 21:15 ff, and he was better able to strengthen his brethren, Luke 22:32. Thus he came to the fore again immediately after Jesus' ascension, at the election of Matthias, Acts 1:15 f., at the preaching on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:14 f., at doing miracles, Acts 3:6, At the judgement of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:4, at the visitation to Samaria, Acts 8:14, at the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, Acts 10:1, at the meeting in Jerusalem, Acts 15:7. The Roman Catholics infer from all this that Peter stood in rank above all the other apostles and that he was later the first pope in Rome. But there is no basis for this. He was the first among his peers, but had no rank and no power above them; the other eleven were apostles just as he was; the power of preaching and teaching, of administering baptism and the Lord's Supper, of opening and closing the kingdom of heaven, was given to him not only in Matthew 16:19, but also in all the other apostles. Matthew 16:19, but also to all the other apostles, Matthew 18:18, Matthew 28:19, John 20:23; after Acts 15:1-41 Peter even withdraws, so that we only know that he was in Antioch, Galatians 2:11, and Babylon, 1 Peter 5:13, and later died a martyr in Rome, John 21:18-19. 1 Corinthians 9:1, but otherwise in rank, office, power and work he is inferior to none of them, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Corinthians 11:23, 2 Corinthians 12:11, and in Antioch he even punished Peter, Galatians 2:11.

If Jesus then also in Matt. 16 : 18 after Peter's courageous and clear confession of his Messianity, Jesus addresses him: You are Peter, and on this Peter I will build my church, then He does not refer to the person of Peter, nor to the confession he had made, apart from his person, but He has in mind the confessing Peter (Peter as a confessor, and even more Peter as a confessor of Christ in the name of all his Apostles); And that was not Peter alone, but all the apostles, so that the church is not built on Peter alone, but on all of them together. The apostleship is and remains the foundation of the church; there is no fellowship with Christ except through fellowship with them and with their word, John 17:20, 1 John 1:3.

Immediately after Jesus' ascension, these apostles stood at the head of the congregation in Jerusalem and constituted, as it were, its church council. All power rested with them; they had not received it from the congregation, but from Christ; but it was a power, as Peter himself later describes it, to pasture God's flock and to exercise control over it, not by compulsion, but willingly; not for shameful gain, but from the fullness of heart; not as lording it over the Lord's inheritance,

but so as to be an example to the congregation in all Christian virtues, 1 Peter 5:2-3. The apostolate is above, but at the same time is for the service and benefit of the congregation; it was instituted by Christ for her sake, Ephesians 4:11-12, Ephesians 1:15, preaching and baptizing, 2:38, teaching the truth, breaking bread, fellowship and prayers, 2:42, performing miracles and signs, 2:43, distributing the gifts among the poor brothers and sisters, 4:37, 5:2. At first there was no other office than that of the apostles; they did everything that is done today by teachers and pastors, elders and deacons. - But this state of affairs could not last long. As the congregation expanded, and especially as congregations came into being outside of Jerusalem in Judea, Samaria, Galilee and later also in the Gentile world, counsel and help had to be provided. This was done in two ways: for all the churches together and for each church in particular. The congregations that gradually arose outside Jerusalem in other cities and towns were not and did not become subordinate to the congregation in Jerusalem, but stood independently beside it. The congregation in Jerusalem may be called the mother congregation insofar as this is meant to imply that she was the first and that the other congregations arose through her missionary work; but the name is incorrect if one wants to indicate by it that the other congregations were in a relationship of dependence on the one in Jerusalem. In this sense there is not and cannot be a mother church, for every church, even the smallest and smallest, owes its origin and existence solely and directly to Christ and his Spirit, even if the latter uses the mission as a means to that end. Every congregation, therefore, is a congregation of Christ and not an offshoot or a colony of a congregation elsewhere, be it in Jerusalem, Rome, or anywhere else. But even though the congregations that were gradually being established in Palestine and elsewhere were sisters and not daughters of the congregation in Jerusalem, it is remarkable that they all continued to depend on and be subject to the college of the apostles without distinction and in the same sense. The apostles were much more than a local church council; they were and remained the church council of the entire Christian congregation, wherever it was established. Therefore, as soon as Samaria had accepted the word of God, the apostles sent Peter and John there to pray for the believers, to lay hands on them to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and furthermore to preach the word among them (Acts 8:13-25); and later Peter travelled through all the new churches in Judea, Samaria and Galilee, to strengthen them and to promote the mutual fellowship (Acts 9:31-32).

Thus the churches did not stand apart from one another, and were not left to their own devices, but retained their foundation and center in the apostolate. But this considerably increased the apostles' activity, and made it necessary both to divide their work and to increase their manpower. The first came about because at the convention in Jerusalem it was agreed in brotherly consultation that the Apostles should go to the Jews in Jerusalem and Paul to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:6-9). Of course this division was not meant in such a strict sense that Paul was never again to associate with the Jews, and the apostles in Jerusalem never again to associate with the Gentiles; for Paul continued to turn first to his fellow countrymen, whom he loved so dearly, and Peter, John and James, according to their letters, also worked among the Christians from the Gentiles. But it was still a division that generally drew boundaries and gave both parties relief and freedom of work. In the second place, the apostles added co-workers to assist them in their many labors (as did Barnabas, Acts 13:2, Mark and Luke, Acts 12:25, Acts 13:5, Philemon 1:1-25, Timothy, and others). Philemon 1:1, Philemon 1:24, Timothy, Romans 16:21, 1 Thessalonians 3:2, Titus, 2 Corinthians 8:23, Silas, Acts 15:40 etc., ver. Romans 16:9, Php 2:25, Php 4:3, Colossians 4:1-11), and also, like Philippus, Acts 8:5, Acts 21:8, bore the name of evangelists, Ephesians

4:11, 2 Timothy 4:5; and that they further received help from the prophets, who held no particular office, but received a special gift from God (like Agabus, Acts 11:28, Acts 21:10, the daughters of Philip, Acts 21:9), to instruct the church, and to build it up in the truth, 1 Corinthians 12:28, 1 Corinthians 14:4, 1 Corinthians 14:22, Ephesians 4:11.

All these offices, of apostles, prophets and evangelists, have passed away in as far as their bearers have died and from the nature of the case have not been replaced by any other. They were needed in the time outside when the church had to be established on earth. But their labor has not been in vain in the Lord. For in the first place they have indeed founded the church on the foundation of Jesus Christ 1 Corinthians 3:11, and in the second place their testimony in the books of the New Testament, in the Gospels and the Epistles, in the Acts and in Revelation, lives on in the church to this very day. Through that testimony the church is enabled to persevere throughout all time in the apostles' doctrine, in the fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers (Acts 2:42). The word of the apostles, spoken and then written, maintains and safeguards the unity of the church, not only throughout the world, but also throughout the ages.

Just as the apostles received help in governing the church as a whole through the special offices of prophets and evangelists, so they were supported in the care of each local church through the ministry of elders and deacons. At first the apostles themselves were also distributors of the gifts of mercy, Acts 4:37, Acts 5:2, but as the congregation grew larger they could no longer perform this work themselves. In response to a dispute that arose in the congregation about the daily ministry, they proposed that seven men, full of faith and the Holy Spirit, be chosen for the ministry of the tablets, Acts 6:1-6. There has always been much difference as to whether we are describing the institution of the deacon ministry here; and it is not impossible that the ministry of seven men, which was instituted by the apostles in Acts 6:1-15, originally included more service and labor than the later deacon ministry. But it is clearly stated that the apostles retained for themselves the ministry of the word and the service of prayer, Acts 6:4, and that the seven new men were charged with the service of the tablets, that is, with the regulation of everything that related to the common meals (usually concluded with the celebration of Holy Communion), and the distribution to the poor of the gifts of food, drink and money that were brought along for these meals by the faithful and were left over afterwards. This deacon ministry was later adopted in other churches; there is mention of deacons in Philippi, Php 1:1, and in Ephesus, 1 Timothy 3:8, compare. Romans 12:8, 1 Corinthians 12:28 (helpers). In 1 Timothy 3:8 f. Paul lists the requirements which the deacons must meet. The apostles in Jerusalem had already done this; they proposed to the congregation that seven men be chosen, and designated their required qualities, their office and service; then the congregation chose them; but finally it is the apostles again who appoint them with the laying on of hands and entrust them with the office.

Next to the deacons are the elders. We are not told anything about their origins; but if we consider that the Jews were accustomed to being ruled by elders, both civilly and in the synagogues, there is nothing strange in the fact that some of the other members of the congregation were entrusted with the care of supervision and discipline. They are first mentioned in Acts 11:30, where they receive the gifts that Barnabas and Saul brought for the benefit of the brethren living in Judea, and in Acts 15:2 f they participate with the Apostles in the meeting called in Jerusalem for the regulation of the missionary work among Jews and Gentiles. This office of the elder was also soon introduced in other churches. Paul and Barnabas had elders elected in every congregation they

founded on their missionary journeys. Acts 21:18; we find them also in Ephesus, Acts 20:28, and in Philippi, Php 1:1, under the name of overseers, in 1 Corinthians 12:28 perhaps under that of governors, in Ephesians 4:11 under that of pastors and teachers; cf. also 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 1 Corinthians 16:15-16, Romans 12:8, Hebrews 13:7, Hebrews 13:17, Hebrews 13:24, 1 Peter 5:1-2, James 5:14-16, 1 Timothy 4:14, 1 Timothy 5:17-22, Titus 1:5-9. In 1 Timothy 3:1 and Titus 1:6-9 Paul indicates their requirements, and in Titus 1:5 he instructs Titus to appoint elders in every congregation. These elders were charged with the oversight of the congregation, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 4:11 (shepherds), 1 Peter 5:2, and still within the apostolic era they were distinguished into those who ruled, and others who worked in the ministry of the word and the teaching of the truth, 1 Timothy 5:17, Hebrews 13:7, 1 Peter 4:11, 1 Timothy 3:2 fable to teach). Perhaps also in Diotrephes, who according to 3 John 1:9 had the first place in the congregation, but abused his power, and in the angels or ambassadors of the seven churches, Revelation 2:1, Revelation 2:8 etc., one can think of such a teacher, who worked in the word in distinction to his fellow elders and thereby occupied a distinctive, significant place. This was the simple arrangement that the apostles made for the government of the congregation. The offices established by them are not numerous; there are in fact only two, that of elder and deacon, although the former is divided into that of the teaching elder and that of the governing elder. These offices were also ordained by the apostles; they established the service and the requirements for it, but in selecting the persons they took into account the congregation and then led them into their offices by the laying on of hands. There was no question of a governing power. Since Christ alone is the head of the congregation, Ephesians 1:22, the only Master, Matthew 23:8, Matthew 23:10, and Lord, John 13:13, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Php 2:11, there can never be a power in the church that stands beside or opposed to His, but only such a power that is given by Him and remains bound to Him. This was true of the extraordinary offices of apostle, prophet and evangelist, which were instituted by Christ in the first period before the foundation of the church in the world; they received their office and their power from Christ and not from the church, but had to use that power in the service of the church, Matthew 20:25-27, 1 Peter 5:3. In a stronger sense, this applies to the ordinary offices that still exist in the church today. The pastors and teachers, the elders and deacons also owe their office and their power to Christ, who instituted these offices and maintains them continually, who gives the persons with their gifts and allows the congregation to appoint them, 1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11. The office was instituted so that the congregation would persevere through it in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers, Acts 2:42. But this whole, simple and yet so beautiful arrangement degenerated and degenerated very soon after the time of the apostles. First the so-called episcopate (the bishop's office) emerged. In the New Testament and also in some writings from the post-apostolic era, the names of elder (presbyter) and bishop (episcopus-bishop) still designate the same persons; the bishopric (supervising and disciplining) was the description of the task assigned to the elected elders (Acts 20:17ff. Acts 20:28, Titus 1:5 ff. Titus 1:7, 1 Peter 5:1-2. But in the beginning of the second century some churches already made a distinction between both; the bishop (episcopus) was elevated above the elders (presbyters) and deacons, and was considered the bearer of a special ministry, the successor of the apostles, the guardian of pure doctrine and the cornerstone of the church. The hierarchical path was thus taken, and this led, on the one hand, to the stripping of the elders and deacons of all their autonomy and to the lowering of the faithful to feeble laymen, and, on the other hand, to the bishops as priests and priests of the Church, to place the bishops as

priests high above the congregation and to raise from among them the Bishop of Rome once again to be the sovereign of the whole church, who, as the successor of Peter, holds the keys of the kingdom of heaven, is the substitute for Christ on earth, and as Pope is vested with divine, infallible power in matters of faith and life. This development of priestly government in the church of Christ met with resistance and opposition at every step it took. But it was not until the Reformation that it came to such a serious conflict that Christianity was from then on torn into two large parts. Some, like the Anabaptists, went to another extreme and considered all office, authority, and power to be in conflict with the church of Christ; others, like the Anglican church in England, broke the tie. Others, like the Anglican Church in England, broke the ties with the Pope in Rome, but maintained episcopal government; the Lutherans restored the preaching ministry, but gradually left the government of the church and the care of the poor entirely to the civil authorities; all kinds of systems of church government co-existed, and to this day there is no less difference between the many Christian denominations as to the organization and government of the church than as to its confession.

Calvin is to be honored that he, fighting the Roman Catholic priesthood, restored the office of elder and deacon along with that of preacher. Through him the church again received its own territory and an independent task. For its independence, for the free exercise of its discipline, for the pure maintenance of the ministry of Word and Sacrament, he has fought a hard battle for years. But with that church he did not think first of all of the offices and their bearers, of the church as an institution, but he saw it as, above all things, an assembly of Christ-followers, who by their confession and their offense had to prove that they were God’s people, and who were all personally anointed with Christ as prophets and priests and kings. The Church is at the same time and in one mother and community of the faithful. It is something else and more than a crowd that gathers on Sundays to listen to the preaching; it is a community that exerts its influence inside and out during the week as well. The preaching ministry is only one of the ministries; next to it there is the elderhood, which has to exercise supervision and discipline, also by personal visits to the homes; the deaconhood, which has to show mercy to all the poor and sick; the doctorhood, which has to develop, teach and defend the truth. And while each church is independent, and owes its origin and existence, its gifts and power, its offices and ministries, to Christ alone, it is nevertheless intimately connected with all the churches that stand with it on the same foundation. That is how it was in the apostolic age. Every congregation, however small and feeble, was a congregation of Christ, His body and temple.

Christ, His body and temple; but every congregation was also included in the spiritual context of all the congregations, without having first to judge or decide. All the churches together form one church, Matthew 16:18; they are all subject to the authority of the apostles, who by their word lay the foundation of the whole church, Ephesians 2:20; they are one in life and confession, have one baptism, one faith, one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father, who is above them all and in them all, Ephesians 4:3-6; they maintain fellowship with one another by traveling brethren, e.g. Aquila and Priscilla, Acts 18:2, Acts 18:18, Romans 16:3, 2 Timothy 4:19, by reciprocal greetings, Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, by serving one another with gifts of love, Acts 11:29, 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2 Corinthians 8:1, 2 Corinthians 8:4, 2 Corinthians 9:1, Galatians 2:10, by sending to each other the letters which the apostles had written to them, Colossians 4:16; and they also begin, when occasion arises, to consult one another and to take decisions together,

Acts 15:1-41. Of all the systems of church government, the Presbyterian, which was restored by Calvin, is the most similar to that of the apostolic age.

All the services and offices which Christ instituted in His congregation find their center in the Word. He gave His disciples no temporal power, Matthew 20:25-27, nor priestly dominion, 1 Peter 5:3, for they are all spiritual men, 1 Corinthians 2:10-16, anointed with the Holy Spirit, 1 John 2:20, and forming together a royal priesthood, 1 Peter 2:9. The gifts and offices serve only that one another through love, Romans 13:8, Galatians 5:13. And the weapons of their war are all spiritual in nature, 2 Corinthians 10:4; they are the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, Ephesians 6:14-17. For this reason the Word is also the only sign by which the truth and purity of Christ's church can be recognized. By the Word all true members of the congregation were reborn and brought to faith and conversion, were cleansed and sanctified, gathered and confirmed; and from their side they are called to keep that Word, John 8:31, John 14:23, to examine it, John 5:39, to test their spirits according to it, 1 John 4:1, and to avoid all those who do not teach it, Galatians 1:8, Titus 3:10, 2 John 1:9. The word of God is indeed, according to Calvin's expression, the soul of the church. This word is not given exclusively to the church as an institution, to the office bearers, but to all believers, John 5:39, Acts 17:11, so that they may have hope through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, Romans 15:4, and may also teach and admonish one another, Romans 12:7-8, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 10:24-25. Rome has misunderstood this, but the Reformation has put the Bible back into the hands of all, and thus opened for family and school, for science and art, for society and state, and for every believer a source of teaching and instruction. But in addition, God has also provided a ministerial ministry for that word; He has given and continues to give pastors and teachers (1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11, 1 Timothy 5:17, 2 Timothy 2:2), who must minister that word in public and in the homes (Acts 20:20), as milk to the young, as solid food to the mature members of the congregation (1 Corinthians 3:2, Hebrews 5:2). 1 Corinthians 3:2, Hebrews 5:12, 1 Peter 2:2, in accordance with the needs of each people and of each age, of each congregation and of each believer in particular, Acts 20:20, Acts 20:27, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 4:2. Yes, the ministry of the word means that the word is preserved, translated, explained, spread, defended and preached to all mankind; thus the church continues to be built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Ephesians 2:20, and is what it ought to be, a pillar and a firm ground of the truth, 1 Timothy 3:15. This word receives its confirmation in the sacraments, which are signs and seals of the covenant of grace and thus serve to strengthen faith. In the Old Testament God instituted circumcision (Genesis 17:7) and the passover (Exodus 12:7 ff) for this purpose. 2:28, 29; and the passover pointed to Christ as sacrifice and sacrificial meal, John 1:29, John 1:36, John 19:33, John 19:36; both were therefore also fulfilled by Christ in his suffering and death, Colossians 2:11, 1 Corinthians 5:7, and thus in the New Testament by baptism, Matthew 28:19, and supper, Matthew 26:17, replaced. These two signs, which are generally referred to as sacraments (mysteries, cf. 1 Corinthians 4:1), and which Rome, without scriptural foundation, has increased by five (confession, penance, marriage, ordination and last rites) and by countless ceremonies, do not contain the grace of God locally and materially, but are reminders of and confirmations of the grace which God bestows through the Holy Spirit in the hearts of His believers. They have as their content the whole covenant of grace with all its benefits, or in other words, Christ Himself, and accordingly do not distribute these benefits except in the way of faith. They are thus instituted for the believers and assure them of their part in Christ; they do not precede the word, but follow it;

they do not bestow any special grace, which cannot be communicated by the word and accepted by faith; but they are built on the institution of the covenant of grace from God's side and on the consent to that covenant from man's side.

Baptism is specifically a sign and seal of the benefits of forgiveness, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, and of regeneration, Titus 3:5, an incorporation into the fellowship with Christ and his church, Romans 6:4. Therefore this baptism is not only administered to the adults, who are won to Christ through the work of the mission, but also to the children of the believers, for they are included in the covenant of grace with their parents, Genesis 17:7, Genesis 17:10, Matthew 18:2-3, Matthew 19:14, Acts 21:16, Acts 2:39, belong to the church, 1 Corinthians 7:14, and are included in the fellowship with the Lord, Ephesians 6:1, Colossians 3:20. And when these children grow up, and through public confession personally assent to the covenant of grace, when they have come to years of discernment, test themselves, and are able to discern the body and blood of the Lord, 1 Corinthians 11:28, then they are called to proclaim the Lord's death with the whole congregation every time, until He comes, and thereby strengthen themselves in the fellowship with Christ. For while baptism and supper have the same covenant of grace as their contents, and both also give assurance of the blessing of the forgiveness of sins, supper is different from baptism in that it is a sign and seal, not of the incorporation, but of the warming up and strengthening in the fellowship of Christ and of all His members, 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

Finally, to this ministry of word and sacrament comes the exercise of discipline and the service of mercy. Discipline, which also bears the name of key power, is administered first to Peter, Matthew 18:18, John 20:20, and then to the whole congregation in its official organization, Matthew 18:7, 1 Corinthians 5:4, 2 Thessalonians 3:14, consists of the congregation, through its ministers, in the name of the Lord, telling the righteous that it will be good for them, and the wicked that it will be bad for them, Isaiah 3:10-11. She does it especially and personally in the ministerial home visit, which in the Reformed churches has replaced the Roman confession and is based on the apostolic example, Matthew 10:12, John 21:15-17, Acts 20:20, Hebrews 13:17. And finally she does it also in special admonitions, which in case of persistence in sin, can lead to expulsion from the community, Matthew 18:15-17, Romans 16:17, 1 Corinthians 5:2, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, 2 Corinthians 2:5-10, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 2 Thessalonians 3:14, Titus 3:10, 2 John 1:10, Revelation 2:2. But while the congregation in Christ's name takes care of the Lord's holiness and removes sinners from its midst, it has compassion on all the poor and sick, and provides for their spiritual and physical needs. Thus did Christ Himself, Matthew 11:5, and His disciples consent to do, Matthew 5:42-45, Matthew 6:1-4, Matthew 25:34 ff, Mark 14:7 etc. They must contribute to the needs of the saints, Romans 12:13, distribute in simplicity, show mercy in cheerfulness, Romans 12:8, visit widows and orphans in their tribulation. James 1:27, pray for the sick in the name of the Lord, James 5:14, and in general bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ, Romans 12:15, Galatians 6:2.

Faith and love are the strength of the Lord's church; and to these two it binds its hope. In the midst of a world that does not know where it is going and often falls into despondency and doubt, the church expresses its joyful expectation: I believe in the forgiveness of sins, in the resurrection of the flesh and in eternal life.

01.24. The Eternal Life.

24. The Eternal Life. The end and destination of things, as well as their origin and being, are veiled in an impenetrable darkness to the inquiring mind of man. Whoever expects science to shed light on these mysteries must sooner or later come to the realization, together with a scholar of the new age: what the end and purpose of history is, I do not know and no one knows.

Nevertheless, there are always new attempts to answer these vexing questions or to cut them off and eradicate them from the human heart. Not so long ago, many scholars took this position; materialism was in vogue and proclaimed loudly that all was finished with death and that belief in immortality was foolishness. One of their spokespersons openly declared that the belief in a survival beyond the grave was the last enemy, which science had to fight and, if possible, overcome. This visible and tangible world was the only one that existed; and with it there could be no beginning and no end, because it revolved in an eternal cycle. The practical consequence of this superficial and comfortless doctrine was that people declared every argument against eternity to be of no value and wanted to enjoy this sensual life as much as possible. Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

There are still many who think and act in this way, but a turn has come in the direction of the spirits. On closer examination, the questions of eternity turned out not to be so foolish and worthless, nor so easy to answer, as had at first been thought. The study of the religions of the peoples revealed that the belief in immortality is peculiar to all mankind and is found even among the most savage and uncivilized tribes. A national scientist, who has made a great name for himself in this field of science, testified a few years ago that we find the belief in immortality everywhere, among all peoples, at every stage of development, where no philosophical reflections have undermined it or other causes have pushed it into the background, and that the belief in immortality is not only a part of life, but also a part of the life of mankind, and that it is everywhere connected with religion. Yes, all peoples start from the conviction that man is immortal by nature, and that not immortality but death must be explained. Death is felt everywhere to be something unnatural; according to the beliefs of many peoples, it is the work of hostile spirits; there was a time when it did not exist and undisturbed life was the lot of mankind. In the Pagan world, however, very different notions of the state of souls after death were formed. Some people think that the souls remain with the bodies in the tombs, maintain intercourse with the living, influence their fate and can still appear to them. Others believe that after death the souls all gather in a large realm of the dead, where they lead a shadowy life and a faded existence, or even sink completely into unconsciousness and sleep. Very widespread is also the opinion that the souls, after having left the human body, immediately change into another body, and, depending on how they have lived and behaved on earth, receive the body of a tree, of some animal, of a human being or of a higher being. And finally, the idea of immortality has often been elaborated in the sense that the good and the bad receive different fates after death and continue their existence in different places. The different ways in which the state of souls after death is viewed, the different ceremonies for the burial or cremation of bodies and for the service rendered to the dead;

sometimes the whole religion of the heathen peoples is practically absorbed in veneration of the ancestors. Often the view is limited to the state of the souls after death; but it also happens that one looks beyond and includes the end of the world. And then the expectation is always that one day good will triumph over evil, light over darkness, heavenly power over that which rules the earth and under the earth.

All these heathen ideas, which were overcome or purified by Christianity, have returned in the new era and find followers by the thousands. Materialism was so unsatisfactory after a short time that many went to the other extreme; man always remains the same; his heart does not change and cannot live without hope. The fact that souls continue to exist after death, that they appear to those left behind and can make revelations, that they take on another body immediately upon death, depending on their behavior on earth, and continue to develop in it, is again being hailed as new and highest wisdom in many circles. Even the phenomena of the invocation, veneration and fear of the dead are not absent; for many, spirit service has replaced the service of the one and true God.

It is a remarkable sign of the times that this spirit service is closely associated with the doctrine of evolution. At first this connection seems strange; how can someone who assumes the development of man from the animal believe in the "survival of souls after death"? But on closer consideration this connection appears to be very simple and natural. For if, in the past, the living was able to develop from the dead, the soul from the metabolism, man from the animal, why should it be impossible for man to develop much further and higher in the future, not only here on earth, but also beyond the grave? If life can come from death, death can also lead to a higher life. If the animal could become a human being, the human being could also ascend to become an angel. With the one term of evolution, everything is made possible and everything is explained. But at the same time that this house of cards has been built for hope, the foundation itself begins to totter. The proponents of the immortality and development theories mentioned above want little or nothing to do with the Scriptural teaching on death and the grave, judgment and punishment. In their view, death is no reward for sin, but only a moment of passage to a different and higher life; there is no judgment except in the sense that everyone has to bear the consequences of his or her own will and actions; there is no room for hell, because everyone is included in the process of development and sooner or later, after a shorter or longer period of wandering, ends up there. But the question whether an eternal life is still possible, a life of uninterrupted bliss and glory, is suddenly doomed to silence. People have fought so long against the Christian doctrines of death and the grave, of judgment and punishment, and have rejoiced so much in their disappearance, that they have forgotten to ask whether the hope of an eternal life, of an endless salvation, is not also thereby lost. As soon as that question is asked, it is revealed that in the heat of the battle the expectation of an eternal life has also been destroyed. With the same knife with which all fear was tried to be cut out of a man’s heart, all hope in his soul was also killed.

It is clear that if development is the one, all-embracing law of the world and humanity, here and hereafter, the expectation of eternal life is robbed of all solid ground. The idea that in the end everything will be right is in itself a conjecture which finds no support in Scripture, conscience, nature or history. But even if this were the case for a moment, the situation could never be permanent. For the same law of development that governed all previous situations and caused this one would at the same time cause it to change into another. In the theory of development there is no point of rest, no end and no goal; the salvation which many expect it to bring is

cancelled out in the same instant; an eternal, blissful life is not possible with it. Hence some, convinced of the impossibility of a resting point, have again seized upon the old pagan doctrine of the eternal return of all things, and present it as the solution to the world problem. When the present world has reached the climax of its development, it collapses and everything begins anew from the beginning. After the flood, the ebb comes in, to cause another flood; after the ozz/winding comes the z'zzwelling, which causes another development; and so it goes on endlessly; there is only time, no eternity; only movement, no rest; only becoming, no being; only creature, no Creator, who is and who was and who will be. The word of Scripture is confirmed by it, that those without Christ are alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, that these also have no hope and are without they may well guess and wish, and even never give up, but they have no solid ground for their expectations and lack the certainty of Christian hope. As soon as we turn to Israel, however, we are led into another circle of thought. The Old Testament never mentions the so-called immortality of the soul, nor does it provide any evidence for it; but it has ideas about life and death which are not found elsewhere and which cast the whole future in a different light. In Scripture, death never equals destruction and non-existence, but dying and being dead form the antithesis of the whole rich and full life which was originally destined for man in the fellowship with God here on earth. When man dies, not only his body but also his soul is affected. He no longer belongs to the earth, but is an inhabitant of the realm of the dead, which is thought to be in the depths of the earth, to belong to the lowest places and to lie beneath the waters and the foundations of the mountains, Numbers 16:30, Deuteronomy 32:22, Job 26:5, Psalms 63:10 etc. The dead still exist there, but their existence is no longer worth the name of life, and is like a non-being, Job 7:21, Job 14:10, Ps. 39:14. They are weakened and powerless, Psalms 88:5, Isaiah 14:10, living in silence, Job 3:13, Job 3:18, Psalms 94:17, Psalms 115:17, in a land of darkness, Job 10:21-22, and destruction, Job 26:6, Job 28:22. Everything that bears the name of life ceases there; God and man are no longer seen, Isaiah 38:11; the Lord is no longer believed and thanked, Psalms 6:6, Psalms 115:17, His virtues are no longer proclaimed and His miracles no longer seen, Psalms 88:11-13. The dead know no more, they have no wisdom or knowledge; they do no work and have no part in anything that happens under the sun, Job 14:21, Ecclesiastes 9:5-6, Ecclesiastes 9:10.

Thus death was felt by the pious in Israel, as a general banishment from the realm of life and light. And on the other hand, life was life as a fullness of salvation and blessing. Life was not thought of in a deductive, philosophical way as a bare existence. But life, according to its essence, included a fullness of blessings; the fellowship with God in the first place, but then also the fellowship with his people, and the fellowship with the land that the Lord had given to his people. Life is the full and rich existence of man in the unity of his soul and body, in the oneness with God and in the harmony of his environment; it includes bliss and glory, virtue and happiness, peace and joy. If man had remained obedient to God's command, he would have tasted this rich life and not seen death, Genesis 2:17. No separation would then have taken place between his soul and his body, and no bond would have been broken that bound him to God, to mankind, and to the earth. Man would have lived on forever in the rich community in which he had been placed from the beginning; he would have been immortal as man in the unity and fullness of his being.

However, even though death has entered into the world for sin's sake, God nevertheless re-establishes fellowship with mankind out of grace, and establishes His covenant with Israel. In

this covenant, in principle, that full fellowship which man originally enjoyed is now restored. The covenant, as it existed in the Old Testament, included again fellowship with God, but consequently also fellowship with his people and with his land. Fellowship with God is the first and most important thing in the covenant; without it there can be no talk of life. God covenanted with Abraham and his seed, saying: I will be your God and the God of your seed, Genesis 17:7; He led Israel out of Egypt and entered into covenant with them at Sinai, Exodus 19:5, Exodus 20:2, Ezekiel 16:8.

Therefore, for the people of Israel and for every member of that people, there is no life and no joy except in the fellowship with the Lord. The wicked did not understand this, and broke the covenant, and sought life and peace in their own ways; they left the sprinkling of the living water and hewed out trays for themselves, broken trays that hold no water, Jeremiah 2:13. The Lord was the portion of their inheritance, their rock and stronghold, their shield and high place, Psalms 16:5, Psalms 18:3; His mercy was better to them than life, Psalms 63:4; He was their chief blessing, besides whom nothing pleased them in heaven or earth, Psalms 73:25; though they were forsaken by all and pursued and oppressed by their enemies, yet in Him they rejoiced, and they rejoiced in the God of their salvation, Habakkuk 3:18. In this fellowship with God they overcame all the miseries of this earthly life, but also the fear of the grave, the terror of death, and the darkness of the realm of the dead. The godless may enjoy temporary prosperity, but they ultimately perish and come to an end, Psalms 73:18-20; their path leads to death, Proverbs 8:36, Proverbs 11:19. But for the pious the fear of the Lord is the sprinkling frame of life, Proverbs 8:35, Proverbs 14:27. He saves them many times in this life, but He also has power over the realm of the dead; with His Spirit He is also present there, Psalms 139:7-8, and nothing is hidden from

Him there, any more than in the hearts of the children of men, Job 26:6, Job 38:17, Proverbs 15:11. The Lord kills and makes alive; He can bring down into the abyss, but also raise up again, Deuteronomy 32:39, 1 Samuel 2:6, 2 Kings 5:7; He can take Enoch and Elijah to Himself without death, Genesis 5:24, 2 Kings 2:11, and bring back to life those who have died, 1 Kings 17:22, 2 Kings 4:34, 2 Kings 13:21. He can even nullify death, and by raising it from the dead completely triumph over it, Job 14:13-15, Job 19:25-27, Hosea 6:2, Hosea 13:14, Isaiah 25:8, Isaiah 26:19, Ezekiel 37:11-12, Daniel 12:2. But even though the believers of the Old Testament realized to a greater or lesser degree that their fellowship with the Lord could not be destroyed or even broken off by their death, their descent into the pit, and their return to the state of death, they generally lived in a different circle of thought. Their feelings were so completely different from ours. When we think of the future, we almost only envision our own death and the acceptance of our souls into heaven. But the Israelites - had a conception of life far richer than ours. In their consciousness, fellowship with God was inseparable from fellowship with his people and his land. The true, full life was the victory of all separation, the restoration and confirmation of that rich community in which man was originally created. The covenant was established by God not with a single person, but with His people, and furthermore with the land, which He had given to that people as an inheritance. Therefore, death had only been completely conquered and life brought to light when the Lord Himself came to live among His people in the future, cleansed them of all unrighteousness, gave them victory over all their enemies, and made them live safely in a land of prosperity and peace. That is why the faithful Israelite’s eye rarely focused on the end of his own personal life, but usually stretched farther out into the future of his country and his people. He

always felt himself to be part of the whole, as a member of his family, his family, his tribe, his people, of that people with whom God had established His covenant and whom He could never abandon or destroy by virtue of that covenant. And in the future of that people, the believer among Israel found his own future assured; his immortality and eternal life found their guarantee in his participation in the theocracy. There might be a day in the Lord's wrath, there would be a life in His mercy; the present might seem as if God had forgotten His people and their right before Him, but after the chastisement God would return and establish a new covenant that could never be broken. The longing of the souls of Israel's pious people for that future stretched out; they were a people of hope, and the promise of the Messiah was the core of their expectations.

All those hopes had their foundation in the covenant that God had established with His people. Already the law of that covenant implied that Israel, if they disobeyed the voice of the Lord and walked in their own ways, would be punished severely by the Lord and visited with all kinds of plagues; precisely because they were known by Him from all the nations of the earth, He would visit all unrighteousness upon them. Isaiah 3:2. But this chastisement will be temporary; after it is finished the Lord will have mercy on His people again and let them share in His salvation, Leviticus 26:42 ff, Deuteronomy 4:29 ff, Deuteronomy 30:1-10, Deuteronomy 32:15-43. For God cannot forget his covenant, Leviticus 26:42; He chastises his people with moderation and leaves them only for a little time, Isaiah 27:7, Jeremiah 30:11; He loves his people with an everlasting love, Mich. He owes it to his own name, to his fame among the Gentiles, to redeem his people at the end of the time of punishment and to make them triumph over all his enemies, Deuteronomy 32:27, Isaiah 43:25, Isaiah 48:9, Ezekiel 36:22.

There will therefore be a ■day of the Lord", a great and fearful day, Joel 2:11, Joel 2:31, Malachi 4:5, when the Lord will have mercy on His people and take revenge on His enemies. The kingdom that He will then establish does not come about in the gradual development of the people's moral strength, but it comes from above, from the heavens, and will be brought to earth by the Lord's anointed. The promise of such an Anointed One goes back in the history of Israel and mankind to ancient times. Already in Paradise the battle of the seed of women and the seed of snakes is announced, and victory is promised to the former (Genesis 3:15). Abraham is told that all the generations of the earth will be blessed in him and in his seed, Genesis 12:3, Genesis 26:4. Judah is praised above his brethren, because from him shall come forth the Shiloh, whom all the nations shall obey, Genesis 49:10. But this promise takes on a particularly solid form when David is appointed king over all Israel and receives the promise that his house will endure for ever, 2 Samuel 7:6, 2 Samuel 23:5. The prophecy elaborates on this promise; the Ruler, through whom God will establish His kingdom, will be born of the Davidic royal house in Bethlehem, Micah 5:1-2; He shall come forth from it as a rijsje out of his hewn tree, Isaiah 11:1-2, as a sprout from his tribe, Isaiah 4:2, Jeremiah 34:5-6, Jeremiah 33:14-17, Zechariah 3:8, Zechariah 6:12; He shall grow up in poverty, Isaiah 7:14-17, be meek and humble, riding on the foal of a donkey, Zechariah 9:9, and as the suffering servant of the Lord bear the iniquities of His people, Isaiah 53:1-12. And yet this humble son of David is at the same time David's Lord, Psalms 110:1, Matthew 22:43, the Anointed One (Messiah) par excellence, the true King of Israel, who connects with the royal dignity the prophetic and the priestly, Deuteronomy 18:15, Psalms 110:1-7, Isaiah 11:2, Isaiah 53:1, Zechariah 5:1, Zechariah 6:13, Malachi 4:5 etc., the Ruler, to whom all nations will be subject, Genesis 49:10, Psalms 2:1-12, Psalms 72:1-20, and who will bear the name of Immanuel, the Lord

our Righteousness, Wonder, Council, Strength God, Father of eternity, Prince of Peace, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:5, Jeremiah 23:6. The kingdom that this Messiah has come to establish will be a kingdom of righteousness and peace and will bring a wealth of spiritual and temporal blessings. Psalms and prophets are full of the glory of that Messiah Kingdom. Through His Anointed One, the Lord will bring His people back from exile and at the same time give them a sincere conversion of heart. Many will perish in the judgment that He will hold over His people, Amos 9:8-10, Hosea 2:13, Ezekiel 20:33 f. But there will be a remnant according to the election of grace, Isaiah 4:3, Isaiah 6:13, Jeremiah 3:14, Zeph. 3:21, Zechariah 13:8-9. And these remnant shall be unto the Lord an holy people, whom He shall betroth unto Himself for ever, Hosea 1:10, Hosea 2:15, Hosea 2:18, Hosea 2:22, Isaiah 4:3, Isaiah 11:9. He will establish a new covenant with them, forgive their sins, cleanse them from all impurity, give them a new heart, write His law in that heart, pour out His Spirit on them, and come and dwell among them Himself, Micah 5:11 f., Joel 2:28, Isaiah 44:21 f., Isaiah 43:25, Jeremiah 31:31, Ezekiel 11:19, Ezekiel 36:25 f., etc., etc. And with these spiritual benefits will come all kinds of temporal blessings. There will be no more war, swords will be turned into spades and spears into sickles, and all will sit down in peace under their vine and fig tree. The land shall be exceedingly fruitful, the animals shall have a different nature, heaven and earth shall be renewed; there shall be no more sickness, nor sorrow and lamentation, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. In these victories the dead Israelites will also share, because they will be brought back from the dead, Isaiah 26:19. Daniel 12:2, and the Gentiles will at the end acknowledge that the Lord is God and in Him they will bless and boast, Jeremiah 3:17, Jeremiah 4:2, Jeremiah 16:19, Ezekiel 17:24, etc. The people of the saints will receive the dominion over all the nations of the earth, Daniel 7:14, Daniel 7:27, and the anointed King of David’s house will rule from sea to sea and from the rivers to the ends of the earth, Psalms 2:8, Psalms 22:28, Psalms 72:8.

All these Old Testament promises were fulfilled when Christ appeared in the flesh; for in His person and through His work that kingdom of heaven was founded on earth, which had been expected by the pious people of Israel for centuries; He confirmed in His blood that new and better covenant, which the Lord would establish with His people in the last days; and on the day of Pentecost He sent forth into the congregation that Spirit of grace and of prayer, who would guide it into all the truth and perfect it to the end. But what the prophecy of the old covenant summarized in one grand vision, fell apart at its fulfillment, came to stand one after the other, and was not accomplished in a single moment or day, but through a long lapse of time and piece by piece. In particular, the New Testament teaches us that the one coming of the Messiah, which the prophets expected, is divided into a first and a second coming. According to the prophecy, the Messiah was to come for redemption and for judgment, for the redemption of his people and for judgment on his enemies. But as this prophecy is fulfilled, it comes to light that each of these two purposes is accomplished by a special coming of the Christ.

Jesus said repeatedly during his stay on earth that he had come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10), to serve and to give his soul as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28), to save the world (Matthew 17:17), and to save the world (Matthew 17:17). Matthew 20:28, not to condemn the world, but to save it, John 3:17, John 12:47, 1 John 4:14. But at the same time He says just as clearly and powerfully that He, by the light that He lets shine, brings about a judgment, a separation in the world, John 3:19, John 9:39, John 4:28, and John 5:39, John 3:19, John 9:39,

and will one day return to judge all the living and the dead, John 5:22, John 5:27-29. He must now be crucified and killed, but after that He will rise again and ascend to the place where He was before, Matthew 16:21, John 6:62, in order to come again at the end, to gather all nations to Himself, and to judge each one according to his actions, Matthew 16:27, Matthew 24:30, Matthew 25:32, etc.

Between these two comings there is a great difference. In the first, Christ appeared in the weakness of the flesh, in the form of a servant, to suffer and die for the sins of His people, Phil. At the second He will be revealed in great power and glory, as a King who goes forth conquering and that He may conquer, Matthew 24:30, Revelation 6:2, Matthew 19:11. But both comings belong closely together; the first paves the way to the second, because according to the idea of the Scriptures and the constitution of the kingdom of heaven, only suffering leads to glory, the cross to the crown, humiliation to exaltation, Luke 24:26. At His first coming Christ laid the foundation, at His second He brought about the completion of the building of God; this is the beginning, this the end of His Mediatorial Work. Because Christ is a perfect Saviour, who brings not only the possibility but the reality of salvation, He cannot, must not and will not rest until He brings His own, whom He bought with His blood and renewed with His Spirit, to where He is, and makes them beholders and sharers of His glory (John 14:3, John 17:24). The Father has not given Him a half, but a complete work to do; He must give eternal life to those whom the Father has given Him, John 6:39, John 10:28; present His church to the Father without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, Ephesians 5:27, and hand over the kingdom to Him after it is completely finished and completed, 1 Corinthians 15:23-28.

Because the first and second coming of Christ belong so intimately to each other, and the one without the other is not even conceivable or manageable, Scripture lays so little stress on the length or brevity of the time that must elapse between the two; the temporal connection recedes far behind the objective one. The time between the two is often represented as very short; the believers of the New Testament live towards the end of the ages, 1 Corinthians 10:11, in the last times, 1 Peter 1:20, in the last hour, 1 John 2:18; they have only a little time left to suffer, 1 Peter 1:6, 1 Peter 5:10, for the day is approaching, Hebrews 10:25, Hebrews 10:38, the future is near. Paul did not consider it impossible that he and his fellow believers might yet experience Christ's Second Coming, 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 1 Corinthians 15:51.

However, Scripture does not offer a definite doctrine on that future, because elsewhere it testifies explicitly that the day and hour of that future is hidden from men and angels and has been determined by the Father by His own power, Matthew 24:36, Acts 1:7. Any attempt to calculate the time of this future is unauthorized and unfruitful, Acts 1:7, for the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night, at an hour which men do not know, Matthew 24:42-44, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:4, 2 Peter 3:10, Revelation 3:3, Revelation 16:15. The Lord has a different measure of time than we have; with Him one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day; His seeming slowness is longsuffering, not wanting some to perish but all to come to repentance, 2 Peter 3:8-9. But what Scripture does want to teach us with these various statements about the interval, is this, that the first and second coming of Christ are closely related to each other. It is one work that the Father has entrusted to Christ, and that work extends to all ages and encompasses the entire history of mankind. It began in eternity; it was continued in time; and it ends again in eternity. The short time that Christ lived on earth in the flesh is but a small part of the

centuries over which He was appointed Lord and King. What He acquired then by His suffering and death, He applies to the church through His Word and Spirit from the moment of His ascension, and He completes it at His return. Yes, He has gone to heaven in order to be closer to His own, to become more and more closely associated with them, and to draw ever closer to them. The time that elapses between His first and second coming is one continuous coming of Christ to the world.

Just as in the days of the Old Testament He preceded His coming in the flesh by all kinds of appearances and activities, so now He is preparing His Second Coming by the judgment and separation which He is bringing about in the world of men through His Word and Spirit. It is one continual coming of Christ, of which the believers in the New Testament are witnesses; they see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the power of God and coming on the clouds of heaven, Matthew 26:64, they see His coming in the preaching of His word and in the working of His Spirit, John 14:18-20, John 16:16, John 16:19 f. Christ did not come to earth only once, but He is always coming; He is the coming one and the one who is to come, Hebrews 10:37, Revelation 1:4, Revelation 1:8. For these reasons, the New Testament believers looked forward to that return with great longing. Like the devotees of the Old Covenant, they seldom thought or spoke about their personal end at death; all their expectations were focused on the reappearance of Christ and the completion of the Kingdom of God. They were aware that they were living in the day of fulfilment, the day that the prophecy of the Old Testament had described as the great and august day of the Lord, and which stretches from the ascension to the return of Christ. The nearness with which they pictured this Second Coming is but another expression of the absolute certainty with which they awaited it. Their strong faith is the root of their unshakeable hope.

Jesus spoke a great deal about faith and love and little about hope when He was with His disciples, because it was then important to focus all their attention on His person and work. But he gave numerous promises about his resurrection and ascension, his sending of the Spirit and his return in glory. Because of Christ's suffering and death, the disciples were for a time dejected and disappointed in their expectations, Luke 24:41, but through His resurrection they were reborn to a living hope, 1 Peter 1:3, 1 Peter 1:21. Christ Himself was now their hope, the object and including, of all their expectations, 1 Timothy 1:1; for when He returns, He fulfills all His promises and grants perfect salvation and eternal life to His confessors. Therefore they live in hope, and constantly await the blessed hope and appearance of glory of their great God and Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13); and in that expectation the whole suffering creature, which is subject to vanity, shares with them the hope that it too will be set free from the servitude of destruction to the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Romans 8:21).

Even though the New Testament believers have focused almost all their attention on the return of Christ, there are still some data in the New Testament that shed light on the situation that will arise when they die. According to the Roman Church, only a few saints and martyrs can make it on earth by their good works to the point that they will be received into heaven immediately upon death. The great majority of believers, when they die, go for a shorter or longer time to purgatory (vague from wipe, clean; so purification or purification fire), to pay there the temporary punishments they have earned by their sins and could not satisfy in their earthly life.

Purgatory is not a place of conversion, where the unbelievers and the ungodly still have the opportunity to be saved, because they go to hell at once; nor is it really a place of purification and sanctification, because the believers who come there cannot acquire new virtues and merits; But it is only a place of punishment, where the faithful, who are ■being saved' on the one hand and ■poor' on the other, are tormented by material fire until the degree of their temporary punishment is completed. Thus, according to Rome, besides a fighting church on earth and a triumphant one in heaven, there is also a suffering church in purgatory, whose members can be helped in their suffering by intercessions, good works, indulgences and especially by sacrifices, and also, because they are ahead of the faithful and closer to salvation, can call upon the angels and the saints in heaven for assistance.

Because many did not understand this Roman confession properly, they often glorified it to a greater degree and made use of the doctrine of the vague fire to advocate a continuing purification of the faithful after death; they could not understand how believers, who remained imperfect and prone to all evil until their dying years, could be freed from all sin at death and made ready for heaven. And others have gone much further, applying the idea of evolution to the life hereafter as well, and thus imagine that all people without distinction on the other side of the grave continue in a straight line the life they led here on earth and perhaps also in their earlier existence. Death is not an abrogation of this life or a punishment for sin, but merely the transition to another form of existence, just as the caterpillar changes into the butterfly. And this development (evolution) continues until everything is right again or until it does not return. But the Holy Scriptures know nothing of all this dreary teaching. Everywhere she presents it as if this earth were the only place of conversion and purification; she never mentions a preaching of the Gospel on the other side of the grave, not even in Matthew 12:32, 1 Pet. Death, as the punishment for sin, is a total break from life here on earth, and at the last judgment the intermediate state is never taken into account; the judgment is exclusively over what has been done by the body, whether good or bad, 2 Corinthians 5:10. For in the fellowship with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, dying is no longer dying. The covenant that God has made with His own by grace, guarantees complete salvation and eternal life; God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. He that believeth in Christ, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die for ever, John 11:25-26, neither shall he come into judgment: for he is passed from death unto life, John 5:24.

Hence at death believers are immediately taken up with Christ into heaven. If justification and sanctification were man's own work, which he had to accomplish by his own power or by the power of the supernatural gift he had received, it would be incomprehensible that he would complete this work in the short time of this life, and then a purgatory and a continuing purification after this life must be accepted. But Christ has accomplished everything for his own; not only has he borne the punishment for them and obtained the complete forgiveness of all their sins, but he has also fulfilled the law in their place and brought eternal life to light in immortality. He who believes is immediately freed from God's wrath and partakers of eternal life; at the same time he is ■ready for heaven'. If he must remain on earth, it is not in order to complete himself and earn eternal life through good works; but it is necessary for the sake of his brothers, so that he may walk in the good works which God has prepared and for which he was created in Christ, Php 1:24, Ephesians 2:10. Even the suffering that he still has to bear many times on earth is no longer a punishment or penance, but a fatherly chastisement that serves for his education, Hebrews

12:5-11, a completion of the remnants of the tribulations that Christ is constantly suffering in the body of his church, in order to build it up and confirm it in the truth, Colossians 1:24.

Because of Christ's perfect work, heaven is open to believers immediately upon their death. They no longer have to bear the punishment for their sins in purgatory, because Christ has accomplished and gained everything. According to the parable in Luke 16, the poor Lazarus is taken by the angels into Abraham's womb immediately after his death, in order to enjoy eternal salvation there, in fellowship with Abraham. When Jesus died on the cross, He commanded His own spirit into the hands of His Father, and promised the murderer beforehand that he would be with Him this very day in paradise, Luke 23:43, Luke 23:46. The first Christian martyr, Stephen, cried out to the Lord Jesus while he was being stoned and prayed that He would receive his spirit, Acts 7:59. Paul is assured that when he is dissolved, he will be with Christ and dwell in the Lord, 2 Corinthians 5:8, Php 1:23. According to Revelation 6:8, Revelation 7:9, etc., the souls of the martyrs and of all the saved are in heaven, before the throne of God and before the Lamb, clothed with long white garments and palm branches in their hands. For blessed are the dead, "who die in the Lord, from henceforth; they rest from their labors which they did on earth, and which follow with them, Revelation 14:13, Hebrews 4:9; and they live and reign with Christ all the days until His return, Revelation 20:4, Revelation 20:6.

Although the believers receive heavenly bliss at their death, in a certain sense this situation can still be called preliminary and incomplete. After all, their bodies are still in the grave and subject to destruction; soul and body are still separated and do not yet share together, in harmony with one another, in eternal glory; taken as a whole, as persons, believers in the interim state are still in the state of death, just as Jesus was after his death and before his resurrection, even though his soul had been taken up into paradise. That is why they are also called asleep or dead in Christ 1 Thessalonians 4:14, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 1 Corinthians 15:18; their being dead is called sleeping, John 11:11, 1 Corinthians 11:30; seeing the loss, Acts 13:36. All this proves that the intermediate state is not yet the final state. Since Christ is a perfect Saviour, He is not satisfied with the salvation of the soul, but He also brings about the redemption of the body. Only then will God's kingdom be complete, when Christ has nullified all dominion and all power and strength, put all enemies under His feet, and has completely conquered the last enemy, death. In heaven and on earth there is therefore a longing for the future, in which the last battle will be fought and the complete victory achieved. The souls of the martyrs in heaven cry out in a loud voice: How long, O holy and true Lord, will you not judge and avenge our blood on those who live on the earth? Revelation 6:10, and the Spirit and the bride on earth say, Come, Lord Jesus, yes come quickly! Revelation 22:17. And not only that, but Christ himself, both in heaven and on earth, is preparing his own coming. In the house of His Father He prepares a place for His own; and when He has prepared their place, He comes again and takes them to Himself, that they also may be where He is (John 14:2-3). And on earth He reigns as King, in the church by His grace, in the world by His power, until He has gathered all His elect and subdued all His enemies, 1 Corinthians 15:25. He does not rest, but never stops working, and in His work He says: Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to repay every man according to his works, Revelation 22:12, Revelation 22:20. The history of the world, which lies between Jesus' ascension and return, is one continuous coming of Christ, one continuous gathering of his congregation, one continuous subduing of his enemies. We often fail to see it and we do not understand it, but Christ is indeed the Lord of time,

the King of the ages; He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, Revelation 22:13. Because the Father loved the Son, He created the world in Him, chose the congregation and destined all those who were given to Him to experience His glory, John 17:24. The completion of the Kingdom of God is therefore not the result of the guided development of nature, nor is it the product of human labor. For although the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, a leaven and a seed, it grows without the knowledge or consent of mankind. John 4:27. Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but it is God alone who gives the growth, 1 Corinthians 3:6. Scripture knows no independent nature and no independent man; it is always God who sustains the world and makes history. And especially as the end approaches, He will intervene in an extraordinary manner and, through the appearance of Christ, bring history to a standstill and cause time to pass into eternity. That will be a tremendous event, when Christ, sent by the Father (Acts 3:20, 1 Timothy 6:15), will appear on the clouds of heaven, just as He was taken up into heaven when He left the earth, so He will return from heaven to earth at His return (Php 3:20). At his ascension a cloud took him up and concealed him from the disciples; on clouds of heaven, which extend beneath him like a chariot, he returns to earth, Matthew 24:30, Revelation 1:7. He appeared the first time on earth in the form of a servant, but He comes back the second time with great power and glory, Matthew 24:30, as a King of kings and as a Lord of hosts, seated on a white horse, with a sharp sword coming out of His mouth, surrounded by His angels and saints, Matthew 25:31, 1 Thessalonians 3:13, Revelation 19:14, and announced by the voice of an archangel and the trumpet of angels, Matthew 24:31, 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16. To give us an impression of the majesty and glory in which Christ will appear, Scripture uses, and must use, words and images that are beyond our comprehension. And it is often difficult for us to distinguish between the matter itself and the representation given of it. But this is certain: Christ comes again, the same Christ who was born of Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, died, was buried, rose again and ascended into heaven; but He returns in glory to judge the living and the dead. He that descended is the same also that ascended above all heavens, that he might accomplish all things, Ephesians 4:10. He who destroyed and humbled himself is the same, who was exalted by God, and received a name above all names, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, Php 2:6-11. He, who was once sacrificed to take away the sins of many, will at the next time be seen without sin by those who expect Him for salvation, Hebrews 9:28. This Maran-atha is the consolation of the congregation; He, who loved her from eternity and gave Himself up for her in death, will come again to take her to Himself and share her eternally in His glory. Her Saviour and her Judge are one and the same person. This comfort of the believers, however, is considerably weakened by the so-called Chiliases, the advocates of the doctrine of a millenarian kingdom. They distinguish between a first and a second coming of Christ. At his first reappearance, Christ will conquer the anti-Christian power, conquer Satan, awaken the dead believers, gather the congregation around him, especially the congregation of Israel, converted as people, and rule with and through her over the nations. After this kingdom has existed for a shorter or longer period of time and Satan has been released, He comes again for the second time, to raise all people from the dead, to pronounce judgment on them all, and to establish the completed Kingdom of God on the renewed earth. This distinction between the two Christ comings postpones the end of the world’s history for a long time; when Christ appears on the clouds of heaven, the end of the centuries has not yet come, but a provisional state of dominion and power, of spiritual and material blessings, of which it

is difficult for the. Chileans themselves find it difficult to form a good idea, and they are strongly divided among themselves as to the character and duration of this state of affairs. The basic error of this chiliastic error lies in a wrong conception of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. The purpose of the election of Abraham and his seed was not to place the people of Israel at the head of all nations in the future, or even in the completed kingdom of God, but to bless all the nations of the earth in Him who was the true seed of Abraham, Genesis 12:3, Galatians 3:8, Galatians 3:14; Israel was elected, not at the expense, but for the benefit of mankind. When the Christ appeared on earth, all the promises of the Old Testament therefore began to be fulfilled in Him and in His congregation. They do not lie in wait for fulfilment throughout the New Testament dispensation, but are continually being fulfilled from the first coming of Christ to his return. Not only is Christ in his person the true prophet, priest and king, the true servant of the Lord, and his sacrifice the true sacrifice of peace, the true circumcision, the true passover, Romans 3:25, 1 Corinthians 2:11, etc.; but his congregation is also the true sacrifice of peace, the true sacrifice of peace, the true sacrifice of peace, the true sacrifice of peace, the true sacrifice of peace, the true sacrifice of peace, the true sacrifice of peace, etc. But his church is also the true seed of Abraham, the true Israel, the true people of God, the true temple and the true Zion; all the blessings of Abraham and all the promises of the Old Covenant are for the church through Christ and are fulfilled for her in the course of the centuries, Romans 9:25-26, Romans 11:17, 2 Corinthians 6:16-18, Galatians 3:14, Galatians 3:29, etc. But just as the life of Christ is divided into a state of humiliation and exaltation, so His congregation and every believer in particular cannot enter the kingdom of glory except through the school of suffering. There is no separate suffering church in purgatory, as Rome says, but the suffering church is the same as the struggling church here on earth. Nowhere does the New Testament open up the possibility that the church of Christ will once again come to power and dominion in this dispensation. On the contrary, a disciple is not above his master and a servant is not above his lord; if they persecuted Jesus, they will also persecute his disciples, John 15:19-20. Even the New Testament repeatedly expresses the expectation that towards the end of the centuries wickedness will increase, temptation and apostasy will spread, - Matthew 24:37 f., Luke 17:26 f., Luke 18:8 etc. The day of Christ is preceded by the great apostasy, the revelation of the man of sin, the antichrist, 2 Thessalonians 3:1 ff, Whose coming has been prepared by many false prophets and false Christs, Matthew 7:5, Matthew 24:5, Matthew 24:24, 1 John 2:22, 1 John 4:3, but who finally appears himself, and concentrates all his power in a worldly empire (the beast from the sea or the abyss, Revelation 11:7, 31:1-10), which, supported by the false religion (the beast of the earth, Revelation 13:11-18), has its seat in Babylon, Revelation 17:1-18 and Revelation 18:1-24, and from there launches the final, fierce attack against Christ and his kingdom. But by his appearing in glory, Revelation 19:11-16, Christ puts an end once and for all to the power of the beast of the sea and the earth, Revelation 19:20, and also brings Satan to his knees. The latter, however, takes place in two stages; first Satan is seized and bound as the tempter of the Christian peoples, Revelation 20:1-3, cf. Revelation 12:7-11, then as the tempter of the peoples who are in the four corners of the earth, Revelation 20:7-10. In the meantime, the faithful, who have been faithful to the testimony of Jesus and to the word of God until death, live and reign as kings with Christ in heaven all the time (symbolically represented by the number of a thousand years, Revelation 20:3-7), during which Satan is driven out from the nations among which the church is spreading, and in the midst of the heathen nations a new power is organized against the kingdom of Christ, Revelation 20:4, compare Revelation

2:26, Revelation 3:21. In this living and reigning with Christ consists the first resurrection; the other dead, who have followed the beast and his image, do not live and reign, but they live and reign, and have no fear of the second death, the punishment of hell; they are already priests of God and of Christ, Revelation 20:6, and after the resurrection and world judgment they will be admitted as citizens into the new Jerusalem. The appearance of Christ is followed by the resurrection of the dead. Although this is also attributed to God in general, 1 Corinthians 6:14, 2 Corinthians 1:9, yet it is more specifically the work of the Son, to whom the Father gave life in Himself, John 5:26, who is the resurrection and the life Himself, John 11:25, and who received the power to raise all the dead from their graves by the voice of His mouth, John 5:28-29. It is clearly taught here, as elsewhere in Daniel 12:2, Matthew 10:28, Acts 24:15, Revelation 20:12-13, that there will be a resurrection of all men, both the unrighteous and the righteous. But between the two there is a great difference; the first is a proof of the power and righteousness of Christ, the second is also a demonstration of His mercy and grace; the first consists only in a reunion of soul and body and is executed in judgment, John 5:29, but the second is a resurrection of life, a resurrection of the whole person, a renewal of soul and body both in the fellowship and through the Spirit of Christ, John 5:29, Romans 8:11, Php 3:21. It does not follow with certainty that both resurrections differ in time, that the resurrection of the righteous precedes that of the unrighteous by a shorter or longer period; but the one differs from the other in quality and nature; only the former is a blessed resurrection and has its cause and guarantee in the resurrection of Christ; Christ is the first, the first-born from the dead, followed by those of Christ in His future, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.

We do not understand how this is possible in the face of the terrible catastrophe of death. Hence the fact that many reject the resurrection of the body and consider that after death the soul takes on another body, whether human or animal, a finer or coarser material body. But they forget that the preservation of the unity of the soul by death encounters other, but in the essence of the matter equally important, objections, so that many teach the immortality of the soul only in the sense that the spirit of the person continues to live, without preserving the unity of the self-consciousness. But then immortality falls away altogether, for if self-consciousness and memory are completely destroyed in death, the person who lives on is no longer the same as the one who lived on earth.

However, this self-consciousness of man includes both the possession of the body and that of the soul. The body is not a prisoner of the spirit, but belongs to the essence of mankind. That is why it is redeemed by Christ, who is a perfect Savior, just as much as the soul. Man was created in the image of God and corrupted by sin; man is therefore redeemed by Christ from sin and death, made in the image of God, and led into His kingdom. But the body that believers receive again at the resurrection does not correspond to their earthly body in outward appearance, in accidental characteristics, or in material quantity, but only in essence. It is not a natural body, but a spiritual one; a body that is elevated above sexual life, Matthew 22:30, above the need for food and drink, 1 Corinthians 6:13, immortal, immortal, spiritualized and glorified, 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, and made like Christ’s after His resurrection, Php 3:21. The resurrection is followed by the judgment. From the beginning, since God set up enmity, there has been a separation among the people between the female and the serpent seed, Genesis 3:15. This division continued in the Old Testament between Seth and Cain, Semahaphet, Israel and the nations, and among Israel itself between the children of promise and the children of the flesh. When Christ came to earth, He

confirmed and sharpened this division, although His first coming was not for the condemnation of the world, but for its salvation, John 3:17, Matthew 10:34-36. Through his person and his testimony he brought about a judgment, a division among the people, John 3:19-21, which continues to the present day and reaches its conclusion in the last judgment. There is a judgment going through the history of all peoples, generations, families and persons; if we knew the secrets of the hearts of men, we would be much more convinced of this than we are today. But still, world history is not world judgment. There remains too much injustice unpunished, too much good unrewarded, for our consciences to be satisfied by the present dispensation of time. Head and heart of mankind, reason and conscience, philosophy and religion, the whole history of the world cries out for a final, just and decisive judgment. And such a judgment we face according to the testimony of Scripture. It is set for man to die once, and after that to face judgment, Hebrews 9:27. Although God alone is the Lawgiver and Judge of all men, Genesis 18:25, Psalms 50:6, Isaiah 33:22, James 4:12, yet the last judgment is held more specifically by Christ, to whom the Father has entrusted it, because He is the Son of man, John 5:22, John 5:27, Acts 10:42, Acts 17:31, Romans 14:9. Judging the living and the dead is the completion of His work as mediator, the final stage of His exaltation; it will show that He has completely fulfilled everything the Father gave Him to do, that He has put all His enemies under His feet and has completely and eternally saved His entire congregation. But when Christ executes the judgment, then we also know how it will be: merciful and gracious, and at the same time strictly righteous. For He knows man and knows all that is in him; He knows the hidden corners of the heart and discovers all malice and deviance, but He also sees the smallest and weakest principle of faith and love that is present there. He does not judge by appearances and does not look at the person of a person, but He judges by truth and righteousness. With law and gospel as His standard, He will judge the works, Matthew 25:35 ff, the words, Matthew 12:36, the thoughts of men, Romans 2:16, 1 Corinthians 4:5, for nothing remains hidden and everything is revealed, Matthew 6:4, Matthew 10:26. For all those who can say with Peter: You know all things, You know that I love You, this judgment is a source of comfort; but for all those who did not want this Christ to be King over them, it is a cause of fear and of anxious dread. For this judgment brings about a complete and eternal separation between man and man. Just as there were among Israel those who said: The Lord does not see, and the God of Jacob does not notice, Psalms 94:7; He who does evil is good in the eyes of the Lord, and He is pleased with such; or, Where is the God of judgment? Malachi 2:17; so there are also many today who placate themselves with the thought that there is no final judgment, that the possibility of conversion remains open even after this life and after the end of the world’s history, that therefore all men, and even the devils, will be partakers of salvation in the long run, or that the wicked, who continue to resist, will finally be destroyed forever. But conscience and Scripture oppose these vain imaginations equally. The history of the world is ending in eternal separation. In the night of judgment two will be on one bed; one will be accepted and the other will be abandoned; two women will be milling together, one will be accepted and the other will be abandoned; two will be in the field, one will be accepted and the other will be abandoned, Luke 17:34-36. The righteous shall enter into eternal life, but the unrighteous shall be given over to eternal pain, Matthew 25:46. There is a heaven of glory, but there is also a gehenna, a hell, where the worm does not die and the fire is not extinguished, Mark 9:44, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, Matthew 8:12, where there is darkness and destruction and death for all eternity, Matthew 7:13, Matthew 8:12, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, Revelation 21:8. It is the place where God’s wrath will be revealed in all

its horror, Romans 2:8, Matthew 9:22, Hebrews 10:31, Revelation 6:16-17.

Yet in this eternal punishment, which afflicts all the wicked, there will be a great difference of degree and degree. The Gentiles, who did not know the Mosaic law, but sinned against the law, which was known to them by nature through their conscience, will also be lost without that law, Romans 2:12. Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon will be more bearable in the day of judgment than Capernaum and Jerusalem, Matthew 10:15, Matthew 11:22, Matthew 11:24. Those who knew the will of the Lord and did not do it, will be struck with double blows, Luke 12:47. Even among evil spirits a distinction is made in the degree of their wickedness, Matthew 12:45. Therefore everyone will receive retribution according to his deeds, Matthew 16:27, Romans 2:6, Revelation 22:12. The judgment will be so perfectly righteous that no one will be able to make a comment on it; his own conscience will have to say yes and amen to it. Just as Christ fights with spiritual weapons here on earth, so He will also justify Himself in the consciences of all people on judgment day through His Word and Spirit. For he is the faithful and true one, who does not war except in righteousness; the sharp sword that issues from his mouth is the sword of the word, Revelation 19:11, Revelation 19:15, Revelation 19:21.

Therefore at the end of days, whether willingly or unwillingly, every knee shall bow in the name of Jesus, and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, Php 2:11. It is not the punishment of the wicked that is in itself the final goal, but the glory of God, which is revealed in the victory of Christ over all His enemies. Sinners shall be removed from the earth, and the wicked shall be no more. Praise the Lord, my soul, Hallelujah. Psalms 104:35.

After the final judgment and the expulsion of the wicked comes the renewal of the world. The Holy Scriptures often speak of this in very strong terms and then say that heaven and earth will perish, vanish like smoke, become old as a rug, and that God will then create new heavens and a new earth, Psalms 102:27, Isaiah 34:4, Isaiah 51:6, Isaiah 65:17, Isaiah 66:22, Matthew 24:35, Hebrews 1:11-12, 2 Peter 3:10, 2 Peter 3:12-13, 1 John 2:17, Revelation 21:1. But still, an entirely new creation is not to be thought of. For the present heaven and earth pass away in their present form, 1 Corinthians 7:31, and, just as the old earth perished through the waters of the flood, they are burned and cleansed by fire, 2 Peter 3:6-7, 2 Peter 3:10. But just as man is created by Christ, but not destroyed and then created anew, 2 Corinthians 5:17, so also the world remains preserved in its essence, even though it undergoes such a transformation in its form that it can be called a new heaven and a new earth. The world as a whole is also approaching the great day of its rebirth, Matthew 19:28. In this new creation God then establishes His kingdom. For Christ has completed the work that was entrusted to Him ’as Mediator to do; He has reigned as King for so long, until He has put all His enemies under His feet and raised up all those given to Him by the Father to eternal life. After that, and for ever, He remains the head of the church, who gives it His glory to behold and fills it with His fullness, John 17:24, Ephesians 1:23. But His work of redemption is finished; He has completed the kingdom and now surrenders it to God and the Father, in order to be subject Himself as Mediator, who has subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all, 1 Corinthians 15:24, 1 Corinthians 15:28. That kingdom then encompasses heaven and earth, and brings with it a wealth of spiritual and physical blessings. Not only the Old, but also the New Testament clearly teaches that the pious shall inherit the earthly kingdom, Matthew 5:5. The whole creation will one day be freed from the servitude of destruction to the freedom of the glory of God’s children, Romans 8:21. The heavenly Jerusalem, which is now above and signifies the city where

God dwells with His people, will then come down to earth, Revelation 21:2. And in this new Jerusalem, in the immediate presence of God, there will be no more sin, no more sickness and no more death, but in the world of matter also reigns glory and immortality, 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, Revelation 7:16-17, Revelation 21:4, as a revelation of the eternal, holy and blissful life, which all citizens in the community of God share, 1 Corinthians 13:12, 1 John 3:2, Revelation 21:3, Revelation 22:1-5. In that kingdom, too, there will be separation and variation in the unity of the community. There are those who are small and those who are great, Revelation 22:12, those who are first and those who are last, Matthew 20:16; each one receives his own name and place, Revelation 2:17, according to the works of faith and love that he has done on earth. For he that soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly, and he that soweth in blessedness shall also reap in blessedness, 2 Corinthians 9:6. There is reward in heaven for all the reproach that a disciple of Jesus endures for his sake, and for the work he does in his name, Matthew 5:12, Matthew 6:1, Matthew 6:6, Matthew 6:18, etc. Even the cup of cold water, which is given to one of His children in the name of a disciple, will not be forgotten by Jesus on Judgment Day; He will crown and reward the good works that He Himself accomplished in and through His own. Thus all are partakers of the same salvation, the same eternal life, and the same fellowship with God; but among them there is still a difference in splendor and glory. According to the measure of their faithfulness and diligence, the churches receive from their Lord and King a distinctive jewel and crown, Revelation 2:1-29, Revelation 3:1-22. There are many, many dwellings in the one Father’s house, John 14:2.

Through this variety of rank and place and task the community of the saints is enriched. As the harmony of song is increased by the variety of voices, and the beauty of light is multiplied by the richness of colors and shades, so will Christ one day be glorified in the great multitude of His saints and become wonderful in the thousand times thousands who believe in His name. For all the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem will see the face of God and bear His name upon their foreheads. And they will all sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb before the throne, and each in his own way will proclaim the great works of God: Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord, Thy God Almighty, Thy ways fair and true, Thy King of the saints; who would not fear Thee, and would not glorify Thy name? Revelation 15:3-4. For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things: to him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Chapter 29

02.00. Meditations before and after Communion

MEDITATIONS before and after admittance to the Table of the Lord

Contenido 1. THE BASIS OF THE CONFESSION 2. INSTRUCTED IN THE CONFESSION

3. THE ESSENCE OF THE CONFESSION

4. THE CONTENT OF THE CONFESSION

5. THE DIVERSITY OF THE CONFESSION

6. THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CONFESSION

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02.01. The Basis Of The Confession

THE BASIS OF THE CONFESSION And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to they seed after thee.

Genesis 17:7. The covenant is established on God’s unwavering and everlasting mercies. With the first covenant that was established before the fall, God came to man with the demand of obedience, and promised him eternal life and heavenly salvation only after fulfilling the law. That covenant reckoned with the will and work of man, in some respects it was in his own hand, and therefore it was unstable and could be broken. But the covenant of grace has its foundation and stability in God’s gracious counsel alone. It rests not in man and does not depend on his approval. It is eternal, unchangeable, constant as the Lord Himself. "Mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee" (Isaiah 54:10). In this covenant God is first and last, the beginning and the end, the alpha and omega. In a beautiful way it maintains the absolute Sovereignty of God in the whole work of salvation. For from its beginning to its very end, there is nothing in it of man. Redemption is pre-eminently a Divine work, a work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. All boasting is excluded; all the glory is the Lord’s, Who is Creator and also Re-creator of all things. That is why it is a covenant of grace, of pure grace. This covenant has its origin in the Divine virtue of grace. Its contents are gifts of grace; glorification of grace is its destiny. It is God Who established this well-ordered and eternal covenant. It is God Who accepts the (by sin from Him estranged) man; Who grants him all the blessings of the covenant; Who makes him walk in the way of the covenant and leads him by this covenant to heaven and salvation. The surety of this covenant is reason why in Scripture it is repeatedly introduced as a testament. It is not a mutual treaty or pact; it is not like an agreement between two persons, who after much deliberation sign the contract. But the covenant of grace is an institution, a merciful decree of the Lord, a gift in Christ. "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me" (Luke 22:29). As testament, as last and free arrangement, in the form of an inheritance, the Divine blessings of this covenant become ours, outside and without our will. It is the most precious gift, the most perfect gift, which descends on us ’from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning."

Let us have a look and see, what kind of goods they are, which make out the contents of this free and eternal covenant. Together they form a kingdom of spiritual and material, of heavenly and earthly, of eternal and temporal blessings. There is opened here for man a fullness of blessing, a fountain of salvation and a well-spring of life. One grace changes into another and in turn it is replaced by new grace. From Christ’s fullness we receive grace for grace. In the first place they are benefits, which are granted to man in this covenant. For before anything else Christ came to earth, to seek and save that which was lost. He did not come to reform society, as political leader of the nations, as artist or one worldly wise. Saviour was His name and office. He was thereunto anointed with the Spirit, by the Father, to preach the gospel to the poor; he was sent to heal the

broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

They are first of all spiritual blessings, whereby the congregation is blessed by the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Forgiveness and regeneration, faith and repentance, sanctification and perseverance, become the possession of believers in communion with Christ. Both -their conscience and being, their state and standing are renewed by the Spirit of Christ. Through the Spirit Who Jives in them they became other people; they are not from beneath, but from above; they are born of God, by Him adopted to children, and destined for the heavenly inheritance. The old is past, behold, all things have become new, But these spiritual and eternal blessings are coupled with earthly and temporal blessings. Heaven and earth, spirit and matter, soul and body are closely aligned, and absolute separation would not be possible. The glorious image of the future which is shown by the Old Testament prophets, does not only tell us that Israel will be a holy people, by the Lord from eternity betrothed, that He will cleanse from all impurity and give them a new heart, but also, that under the Prince of Peace, the house of David shall enjoy unknown prosperity and extra-ordinary fruitfulness of the earth. That is also how the New Testament joins spiritual and material blessings. It does emphasise the former. We must seek first the kingdom and its righteousness; and that kingdom becomes already part of those who believe the gospel of Christ, and turn to Christ with a true heart. For in the first place it is established in the heart, it is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Whoever looked for and found that kingdom as a pearl of great price, will receive all the other things on top of the former. These people do not need like the heathen, be anxious and ask the question, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For our heavenly Father knows that we have need of these things. He, Who did not spare His own Son, shall with Him give us all things. The hairs of our head are all numbered. Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.

Those who would follow Jesus must leave everything, but they will receive already in this life, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, friends and fields, and in the age to come everlasting life. Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

All these benefits of the covenant are put together in the one great promise, that God will be our God and the God of our seed. With this promise commences the proclamation of salvation, when God looks for man after the fall, breaks his friendship with Satan, making him his enemy instead, and takes him up again in communion with Himself. It is the most prominent aspect of the covenant that was established with Abraham. It has a place above the law that was given to Israel, and is sum and substance of the dispensation of the covenant of grace in the days of the Old Testament. In the midst of misery God’s people find blessedness and comfort; Whom do they have in heaven besides God? and there is nothing on earth they desire beside Him. He is the strength of their heart and their portion forever. When Israel forsakes the Lord their God, is this their comfort, that in spite of this the Lord will remain their God, gathers them again from exile and on the end of days establishes a new covenant, in which they will be His people and He will be their God. And this promise passes over into the New Testament. It is fulfilled in Christ Who in the greatest temptation, in the agony of Gethsemane, in the suffering on the cross, remained standing,

because God was His God and He His much beloved Son. It is fulfilled in the congregation that came in Israel's place and glorying in Emmanuel, God with us, became His people. It shall be fully realised, when the new Jerusalem shall descend from God in heaven, when His tabernacle will be with man, and He shall dwell among His people. Is there greater gift than the Lord Himself? What can He give more than Himself, Himself with all His virtues and attributes, with His grace and wisdom, with His righteousness and omnipotence, with His un-changeableness and faithfulness? For when God is for us, who can be against us? Whatever may happen, He is and remains ours, in misery and death, in living and dying, for time and eternity. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living. Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord! This promise is so much richer, while God therein commits Himself, to be not only our God, but also the God of our seed. It would be great already if God granted communion with some people, who were not related; when in a arbitrary way He would, not taking in account generations, take His elect regardless of all historic coherence of flesh and blood. But that is not how the lord works. He establishes an organic covenant with humanity, with Christ as its Head, first with Adam then with Abraham who is the father of all believers. With His grace He follows the line of generations. in re-creation he joins creation. He executes election in the way of the covenant, He moves as Father of all mercies in the way, to which as Father of all things, He Himself set His signature. That is why the covenant of grace is eternal in the sense, that in history it continues from generation to generation and is never cut off. Grace is like a stream which commences after the fall, digs a bed for itself in the history of humanity and discharges in eternity. As covenant it may run through several dispensations and appear in different forms, through God's almighty power it has become an element in this world, which cannot be eradicated, and an indestructible good for humanity.

Precisely because it is a covenant it bears this indestructible character. For in all covenants there are contained two parts. First the Lord God gives Himself to us; but then we are admonished of God and obliged to new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength, that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a godly life" (Form for Baptism), When God gives Himself to us, He will that we too shall give ourselves to Him, wholly, undivided, unconditionally with our soul and body, our talents and strength, our money and possessions, with our children and children's children. Before everything with our children, who are the Lord's inheritance and His most cherished earthly blessing. They must be God's, because we are of Him.

Yet, in the covenant He is first and demands us and our children for His service; He glorifies to us and to our children the riches of His grace. He is first, when He calls Adam and Noah, Abraham and Israel into His fellowship, but He remains this also, when He takes their children with them in His covenant. I will be your God, and the God of your seed after you - is the promise, wherewith He commits Himself to the elect in their generations. And before our children did good or evil, He it was, Who as the Sovereign, said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Romans 9:15). Our children do not enter the covenant, because we dedicate them to the Lord. Much less, because by any virtue or merit they made themselves worthy. They are in the covenant by virtue of God's promise. They are in the covenant from the time of their birth, not by nature, but by grace, while God has committed Himself to be the God of believers and their seed. The same law that rules in the spiritual realm, rules in

the natural realm. All of us received a natural life that through our parents we received from God, the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth. It is not by our merits that we possess life. We did not give it to ourselves, did not merit it, we even forfeited it by our guilt. It is God's gift in a complete sense, not of His particular grace, but of His common grace. We receive it by conception and birth, whereby we are altogether passive. Outside of our awareness and will we are placed in a world, that is filled with rich goods, and we enter into the mighty inheritance of former generations. We stand on their shoulders and enjoy what they brought together in the sweat of their brow. In much greater measure this is true of the spiritual goods of the covenant. For it is not so that for a long time we wander about outside of the covenant, until at a later date, by faith and repentance we enter the covenant by our own will. For faith and repentance are no conditions outside and to the covenant of grace, but they are blessings of the covenant, assuming communion with Christ and opening the door to the joy of His blessings.

All these blessings, of forgiveness and renewal, sanctification and glory, come to us only from the Mediator, Who bought them for the price of His blood. They cannot be ours, unless we have an interest in His Person. The mystical union with Christ precedes all blessings, and first reveals itself in faith and repentance. As natural life is granted us in birth and after that turns to acts of understanding, so spiritual life becomes our possession by regeneration, and after that will bear the fruits of faith and repentance.

Again, it is not possible to have communion with Christ, but by the Father Who gave us Christ. The offer and gift of Christ precedes all His benefits. It is God, Who in Christ, gives Himself to us and in communion with Him, successively imparts to us all the blessings of the covenant and complete salvation.

Baptism is the sign and seal of this unspeakable gift of God's grace. For it is certain that someone who is baptised in truth, with Christ's blood and Spirit, of the uncleanness of the soul, that is cleansed from all sin, as the body is outwardly cleansed by water.

Baptism is a baptism in the name of God Triune.

'When we are baptised in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesses and seals unto us that He makes an eternal covenant of grace with us and adopts us for His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptised into the name of the Son, the Son seals unto us that He washes us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from our sins and accounted righteous before God.

"Likewise, when we are baptised into the name of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit assures us by this holy sacrament that He will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, imparting to us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot among the assembly of the elect in life eternal." (Form for Baptism).

Baptism is our witness, that God will be our God forever, being a merciful Father, For He has commanded to baptise all those, who are His, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. In baptism the Lord gives us visible evidence, that in Christ He gives Himself and adopts us to His children. That adoption is the basis of our confession.

02.02. Instructed In The Confession

INSTRUCTED IN THE CONFESSION Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Matthew 4:4. In the covenant the Lord teaches His children to be free and independent.

While election contains only those who will infallibly inherit eternal life, the covenant describes the way in which the elect are led to their destiny. Election and covenant are therefore not distinct in a smaller and larger circle, for both contain the same persons; but while election takes these by themselves, the covenant views them in coherence with the whole human race.

Although the covenant maintains God’s Sovereignty in the work of salvation in a beautiful way, and nothing of man is allowed to enter, at the same time does it not violate man as he was created after God’s image. When the Lord receives His honour, man too receives the place and honour, which is his according to God’s will. He elects His own in Christ, that they should be holy and blameless before Him in love.

Indeed, in the covenant of grace Christ is the Head of the congregation, but He is there with His believers, and does not take them from their place. He is at all times the Surety for His people, but in such a way, that they themselves, taught by His Spirit and enabled, consciously and voluntarily, live and walk in the covenant. The covenant of grace is indeed established with Christ, but through Him extends to all His people and it takes them with body and soul, with mind and will and all their strength.

Since God works in them to will and to do after His good pleasure, He exhorts them to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. By God’s grace they are, what they are; they can do all things through Christ, Who strengthens them. Because Christ lives in them, they live by faith in the Son of God. That is why, although the children of believers are already before they know or will anything, taken up in the covenant of grace, the call comes to the parents to bring up their children in the aforesaid doctrine, and cause them to be instructed therein. Whereas in all covenants there are contained two parts, the covenant of grace admonishes and obligates us to new obedience. When the Lord tells us, "i am your God, He adds: walk ye before My face and be upright! Giving Himself to us, He wants us to give ourselves and all we have to Him.

However, children cannot right away confess and walk in that confession. The parents are responsible for the children, They perform as witnesses by the baptism of their children, and pledge their Christian upbringing. On the basis of adoption from God’s side, they must bring their children to a conscious and voluntary confession of faith.

Here too, the natural is a symbol of the spiritual. Natural life which by conception and birth is ours from the parents, is in complete sense a gift, unmerited and even forfeited before we were born. But life, from its early beginnings, is in need of care and protection. Without care it would languish and perish. The first and highest cause of these provisions is God. He is not only Creator, but also

Provider of all things. When life, by Him called into being, was not kept from moment to moment by His almighty and omnipresent power, it would descend into nothing. If it pleased God, He could keep all this, without making use of any means, like He kept Moses forty days on the mountain and Jesus in the wilderness. He would also be able to feed them, like He fed Elijah at the brook Crith by the ravens and fed Israel forty years with manna from heaven. But as a rule the Lord works by means. He uses food and drink to feed us, and He avails himself of parents as the natural providers for their children. The parents must gather treasures for their children. The children live off these treasures. They don't merit any, they are purely dependent and live by grace.

Yet, it is not really the bread that feeds us, but the Word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Men does not live just by bread only, but by the Word, the commandment, the power, the blessing laid in there and communicated by the Lord. Only that satisfies, which the Lord is pleased to support with strength and virtue.

Feeding in the natural realm, is what instruction is in the spiritual realm. It would not be too wonderful for God to keep the life of man's soul without any means. But it pleases Him to instruct people by people, and especially by use of the word to form the mind. From the early years, mind and heart, conscience and will, emotion and imagination are in this manner formed by the work of others. And also by caring for the spiritual life, which is realized by regeneration, the Lord does not follow any other way. In the first place, the parents serve as instruments in God's hand, to develop the spiritual life of their children. The means they must use thereby is the Word of God as laid down in Scripture. It is not only the parents, and not just the Word by itself, which give life or preserve it. For here too we must remember that man shall not live by bread alone, by the Word without more men cannot live, but by the blessing and power which proceeds from the mouth of God. It is not from Paul who plants, or Appollos who waters, but it is the lord alone Who gives the increase.

Yet, in the hand of parents and teachers, the Word of Scripture, under God's blessing, serves to sustain spiritual life. What food is for the natural body, that is the Word of God for spiritual life. "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalms 119:103). That Word meets us from the first moments of our earliest years. It came to us not only when the Bible was opened, and was read and searched by us; neither did we for the first time meet the Word in the worship service, where it was heard by us. But that Word came to us from our earliest days. It came to us Men Father reprimanded us, in Mother admonishing us, when the teacher instructed us, in associating with friends, in the witness of the conscience, in life's experiences. It accompanies us all the time, from the cradle to the grave, it never leaves us alone. We hear it in the blessing of the congregation, when we sing, when the Word is spoken, in command or prohibition always set before us. We are always led, ruled, admonished and comforted, encouraged and discouraged, convicted of sin and pointed to Christ by the Word. It is the atmosphere we breath, from the time of our birth, it is the food, the drink, the air, the sunshine, the rain for our spiritual life. That Word is always a power. We do not know how or when, but when it exercises the heart of man, at all times it remains in itself a power of God unto salvation. It is never a vain sound, a dead letter, an empty phrase. It is always "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). It

judges the thoughts and intents of the heart; it is a hammer that breaks the heart of the hardest sinner; a sword of the Spirit, which strikes dead the proud and self righteous man; A witness of God, that awakens the conscience; a seed of regeneration, a power unto sanctification, "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (1 Timothy 3:16). In one word, a means of grace, going before, and is much more than the sacraments.

Even there where it does not spread a blessing, it exercises its influence. The devils believe and they tremble. For unbelievers it is a savour of death unto death. It is a rock of offense on which the ungodly hurt themselves. If it does not soften the heart it will harden it. Man who is touched by the Word will never remain the same. He will be better or worse, but can never hide behind the shield of neutrality. "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10-11). The origin of this power lies in the fact that this is the Word of God. Holy Scripture is not just for one time inspired by the Lord, but is continually maintained as such by His almighty and omnipresent power. The gospel, which comes to man from Scripture in many forms and in many ways, is at all times by God upheld and inspired. At all times it remains His Word. It is always accompanied by the Holy Spirit, Who dwells in the congregation, and from there goes out into the world and convinces those in the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. It is a word that continually proceeds from the mouth of God, comes to us in Christ, and by the Spirit of Christ is attested to in our hearts or consciences. That is indeed why the Word is food and drink for our spiritual life. It is a means, not the fountain of grace. God is and remains the giver and steward of all grace; no man, no priest, no word, no sacrament is by Him supplied with the treasure of grace, or charged with its dissemination. Ministers can give the sign and seal, but only God grants the signifying matter. Only He has - this is also grace vowed in sovereign grace, that when the Word is administered after the meaning of the Spirit, everyone who accepts it in faith, will be granted Christ, Who is food and drink for our souls, the bread that came from heaven, the water of life, of which he that drinks shall nevermore thirst. But the Word must be received in childlike faith, and accepted in all humility. It is like bread that can only maintain our body, when we eat it with our mouth and is digested by the body. That is also how the Word of God only becomes food for our soul, when accepted by faith and implanted in the heart.

Both are destined and designed for each other. He Who created food, created also the mouth to eat it. He Who gave the Word, also gave new life through regeneration, a life that can only be fed and strengthened by the food of the Word.

They are related to each other. The Word works and strengthens spiritual life. By its nature, spiritual life in virtue of its character longs for this food, like the child for its mothers milk, like the hungry one for bread and the thirsty one for water. For they both proceed from one Spirit. In the natural realm knowledge is only possible, while reason in us and the thoughts in creation, together and in mutual relation, are made by that Word, which was in the beginning with God, and was God, by which all things are made. It is the same light that illuminates the eye and that illuminates the object. The same light of knowledge shines in human reason, and also in the works of God’s hands. Only then man does see and know, when both rays of light, descending from the one

source of light, meet each other. "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light"(Psalms 36:9) That is how the spiritual man and the Word of the Spirit belong together. It is the same Spirit, i.e., the Spirit of Christ Who brought about and maintains the Word, and saw to it that the spiritual man was born in us. In Scripture He places Christ before our eyes; and in our hearts He has Him living by faith. From Scripture He showed us the image of Christ; and after that image He recreates us more and more. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). It is therefore an unmistakable sign of spiritual life, when our heart goes out to the Word. It is natural that the hungry longs for bread and the thirsty for water and the sick for medicine. It is just as natural for the spiritual man to long with a desirous heart for the Word of God and to Christ, offered to him in the Word. He does not grow above the Word, like the mystic dreams of it; he does not use the word as a ladder, to ascend for a way and then takes to his wings to go in his own power. We cannot deal like that with the Word, for soon we would fall to the ground. Those who refuse bread, will die of hunger. If we do not esteem the Word of Christ, we do not love Him. We don't need the doctor if we refuse to take his medicine. But the spiritual man, as long as he lives, feels himself connected to that Word as a means of fellowship with the Lord. According as he grows in faith and becomes stronger, he moves closer to that Word. He holds on to it like ivy that sticks to a wall. He leans on it like a stick and staff during his pilgrimage. He loves it more all the time, deems it of ever greater value, at all times finds it richer treasure for his heart and life. More and more it becomes to him a Word of God, a letter from his Father, sent to Him from heaven, to guide him to the Father's house above. Thy word is a light upon my path and a lamp unto my feet. Thy law is my delight, how do I love thy law. That is why parents must feed the child of the covenant with that Word. If done with discernment, this cannot begin too early.

Already the reverence shown by family members during prayer and bible reading, cultivates in the child a realization of things that are holy, which often remains until the later years of life. The short prayer that is taught to the children for and after meals, before they go to sleep and after they rise, will many a time leave indelible memories, and in later years it reminds of a devout youth. We don't have to wait with teaching children religious words until they understand them, as if little hypocrites would be raised; for by words they learn to understand the matter, as by the matter they understand the words, the one helps the other. In general there is in the child a striking similarity between the feeling of dependency and humility in its nature, and the attitude the Lord wants to see in us, and which pleases Him most. If we do not become like children, we shall in no wise enter into heaven. But this bringing them to the Word must at the same time be teaching and upbringing, it must affect heart and mind, and together be directed to knowing and doing. We must watch against the onesidedness of orthodoxy and also that of pietism. Religion is not just knowledge but also living. Man has not only understanding, but also feeling and will. God requires in His law, that we must love Him not just with our understanding, but also with the heart, the soul and all our strength.

Therefore we must teach the children; teach them the truth, carefully and painstakingly, that they may have pure ideas, clear concepts, and a true knowledge will be formed in their minds. Cultivating emotions and impressions without clear and true concepts can be dangerous; it short-changes truth; opens the door for errors and lies, and often leads to a dissolute life.

Yet, clear concepts and pure impressions are not enough. These are very difficult to teach, especially in the religious realm, without influencing the mind and the heart. For true understanding and real knowledge cannot be known without the heart. With all learning, attention, interest and love are needed. We only know truly what we love in the depth of our soul. That is why upbringing does not succeed education. The heart does not get its turn shorter or longer time after the mind; we do not first teach pure concepts in the hope that later they will be accepted in true faith and have their influence on life. From the first beginning education must be coupled with upbringing. Education must at all times have an upbringing character. God’s truth is of a nature, that it cannot be rightly known without upright faith in the heart. To memorize these things without the heart, is like having just an image of the matter, but is to remain foreign to the matter itself.

Therefore, influencing the conscience and will, the training to know and to do, imparting clear, pure images and arousing deep impressions of the mind must always go together. We may not separate the matter from the words, or the words from the matter. For God united these two. He has bound Himself to give to everyone who believes the Word in truth, the matter expressed in the Word. To know God in the face of Jesus Christ, is to have eternal life. When we speak of God, Christ etc., these names may not just be sounds, but we must think of those who are indicated by them. Then there is a rich gospel, not something unimportant, but a world of invisible, eternal goods, which are signed, sealed and given to us. When home, school and catechism classes, education and upbringing work together, we may expect, that with the Lord’s blessing, spiritual life will increase, lead to faith and repentance, and reveal itself to the outside world into a confession of mouth and heart. But we may never forget that the increase must come from the Lord. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vein that build it’ (Psalms 127:1). Parents, teachers and pastors are nothing but instruments in His hand. He is the only true Father and Pedagogue of His children. He feeds, leads, preserves, protects and strengthens them to perfection. Not served by the hand of men as being in need, He gives life and breath to all. He disposes of the power over the Word and the working of the Spirit.

Jesus is the Vine, believers are the branches, and the Heavenly Father is the Husbandman.

02.03. The Essence Of The Confession

THE ESSENCE OF THE CONFESSION That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Romans 10:9.

It takes time to live and grow. All what lives and grows takes time to develop. Artificial stimulation of growth results in green house plants, that have no resistance against storms and bad weather.

Spiritual life is also subject to this law of development for organic beings. Holy Scripture knows of a great diversity among God's children. It speaks of lambs and sucklings among the sheep of Jesus' flock; it mentions children, young men and fathers in the faith. Scripture makes a distinction between minors and adults, and in connection with this, between milk and solid food that is administered to believers. Repeatedly it admonishes them, to increase in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, to put on the new man, which is created in true righteousness and holiness, to be strengthened after the inward man and renewed in the spirit of the mind. As the natural, so must spiritual life develop. It may not remain hidden from man or buried like a treasure in the field. Life is foreign to being idle. Life is movement, life is power, life is to act. All what lives moves and develops. It can be hindered in its growth and resisted, but as long as there is life, there is activity from which it cannot be separated. This is certainly true of spiritual life, that is implanted by the Holy Spirit by regeneration, and bears an everlasting indestructible character. It reveals itself wherever it is found in word and deed, and shows itself in deeds of faith and repentance. And when there is faith, there is confession.

Confession is a glorious word for a more glorious matter. But it has largely lost its beauty and power for us. When we ourselves mention it or hear it mentioned by others, we usually think of the doctrinal standards of some Christian Church, or the public confession, when the young people of the congregation, once in their life time, confess their faith, before they are admitted to the Lord's Table. But the meaning of the above are derivatives of the word confession. The original sense in Scripture is much richer and much deeper. It is none other and none less than someone's testimony and speaking of his personal faith in Jesus as the Christ.

Two things are included here. In the first place a true, upright faith, a deep, solid conviction of the heart. A confession in the real sense is not possible, when there is no faith in the heart. Confession is a matter of the heart. Its roots are in the heart. It comes from the heart. It is the, fruit of faith in the heart. Without faith, confession is a work of the lips only, words from the mouth, an impersonal, untrue, hypocritical act, that may not have the fair name of confession, and was condemned by the Lord in the Pharisees of His day. In the second place it is included, that faith is not ashamed and speaks out, openly to the world. Without faith it is impossible to confess. But he who believes in truth and uprightness, must make confession, he will speak in front of friend and enemy, before the face of God, angels and men. Whatever insult may be connected with it, what hate and persecution may be involved, those who believe will speak, loudly, forcefully and boldly. We believe and therefore do we speak.

Jeremiah, by his prophesying, made himself a mockery in the midst of his people, but he could not be silent. The Lord deceived him, was too strong for him and prevailed over him. He said, "I will not make mention of him. But His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones" (Jeremiah 20:9). The lion roared, who will not be afraid? When the Lord speaks, who will not prophecy?

Believing with the heart and confessing with the mouth go together. To believe and not to confess is acting against the Lord's will. Both are necessary, said a certain church father: a sure, solid faith and a voluntary confession, that the heart may be decorated with the certainty of faith and the tongue confess the truth unashamedly. Another witnessed: the heart needs the mouth, for what fruit is it, to believe with the heart, without openly confessing before men? Faith may justify, complete salvation is found in its confession. Only then faith shines, when it speaks out in confessing, and many profit. On the other hand, the mouth is in need of the heart, for there are many who confess Christ, but their heart is far from Him.

Paul the apostle says that faith grants us righteousness, but confession of the mouth must be added to obtain salvation. We cannot think of both separately, even as confessing the Lord Jesus cannot be taken apart from belief in His resurrection. Faith without confession does not grant righteousness, and confession without faith does not grant us salvation. Faith and confession cannot be thought apart from each other, just like Jesus being lord and His resurrection from the dead, and righteousness and salvation cannot be seen separately. Yet it is true - and this is what Paul wants to say - that although faith justifies, this faith must first become known as a true, justifying faith, when it makes confession. Faith, not the confession justifies. But when this faith is a true faith it is shown in confessing it. True, justifying faith leads only to salvation in the way of confessing. Without sanctification, no one shall see God. Without confessing faith, no one will see heaven. Confessing is not meritorious, but the royal way to salvation.

Faith and confession work together, they support each other. Faith that does not confess is timid, fearful, withdraws and fades away. Confession without faith is like a flower without stem, it fades and fails to the ground. On the other hand, by confessing faith is strengthened, it is established, and it roots grow deeper in the heart. In confessing, faith receives its glow and inspiration; gains courage and boldness; is continually kept and fed as by a hidden fire.

It follows that the so-called public confession is not an act all by itself, that takes place only once and is thereby finished. Many think that is the way it is. A few weeks before the solemn occasion takes place preparations are made. One abstains from public amusements. One attends church and catechism classes with greater regularity. On the very day a new garment is put on. After that they participate only once in celebrating the Lord's Supper. Then, everything is forgotten. Life continues as if nothing happened.

Such a confession is without value. It is not confessing the faith. Confessing is much richer and has much deeper significance. It is a serious act and a solemn hour, when youthful members for the first time do confession of their personal faith in the midst of the congregation. It is a die-stone on life's way, when one becomes of age, and requires entrance into all the rights, which Christ grants His believers. For time and eternity we are bound to the confession we make. God holds us to it, and at one time we shall be judged accordingly. Christ will remember it and shall ask us to give an account of it. The Holy Spirit shall point back to it until the hour we die, unto eternity. It will,

if not for us, witness against us in the day of days, and make our judgement heavier.

It is not a matter all by itself that has no connection with life that went before and that follows. It is not a sacrament like what Rome made of it. It has no supernatural holiness in itself. It is not fenced off by the area of unhallowed, natural life. We do not become a new kind of soldier under Christ as King. Confessing our faith publicly is a weighty and grave matter, but is does not stand by itself, it is narrowly connected with the preceding life, and that which follows.

It is preceded by a daily confessing. All faith confesses, after its own measure, in its own way, its own language. Even the faith of the playing child and the youth who is full of life. If it is but a true faith, if there dwells but a true childlike fear of God in the heart, it will come out into the open. It reveals itself in a piety of soul, and upright mind, a tender heart, reverence for what is holy, a delight in prayer, fear for what is evil, in keeping self and others from evil. Our children already confess from the time they were very young, and their confession is pleasing to the Lord. For what says Scripture? "Suffer the children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Mark 10:14). It is because the name of the Lord is glorious in all the earth, for, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger" (Psalms 8:2). "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (1 Corinthians 1:27). Children in their simplicity, their uprightness, their humility are proclaimers of the glory of the Lord, which is found in all the earth and appeared most glorious in Christ. And as confessing from early youth precedes doing public confession, so it is followed by one during one’s whole life until the hour of death.

It is true, public confession in the midst of the congregation is done in the first place to gain admittance to the Lord’s Table. It opens the door to the table of the Covenant. It appears as if it separates baptism from the Lord’s Supper. However, this is not so, much more does it connect the two and keeps them together. That is how it should be. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are sacraments that have the same value. They have the same strength and significance. They are signs and seals of the same covenant. The Word directs both, they are ordained to point our faith to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, as the only foundation of our salvation. They are given to the same believers. Baptism in the New Testament was mostly administered to adults, therefore confession came before baptism. The one baptized was instantly admitted to the Lord’s Table. But since infant baptism came in general use, there gradually came a separation. Baptism can be administered to the children of the covenant, for it is the sacrament of regeneration and incorporation into the Church of Christ. But the Lord’s Table presumes that we ourselves take the bread and eat, that we receive the cup and drink. In order to celebrate the Supper of the Lord to our comfort, it is necessary before all things, rightly to examine ourselves, and distinguish the body of the Lord. It is the sacrament of the growth of our spiritual life in communion with Christ, and is therefore repeated at regular intervals. That is why the confession came gradually between Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, not to separate them, but to the contrary, to keep them connected, and to point from Baptism to the Lord’s Supper. The confession presumes baptism and prepares for the Lord’s Supper. In confession, the one baptised accepts his baptism and it is his desire to be admitted to the second sign of the covenant. By grace the Lord accepted him as His child; and at the present time, having come to years of discretion and awareness, he speaks humbly and childlike, but also believingly, before all God’s people, that God is His God. He places his hand in the hand of the Lord. Wholeheartedly he consents to the covenant, in which he was taken up since

birth. At the promise of the Lord: I am thy God, he now answers: I am thy servant, the son of thy handmaid, thou hast loosed my bonds. Ps. 116. The Lord brings His children up to be free and independent. He wants a willing people at the day of His power. We love Him, because He first loved us. That is what. the believer says, when at the solemn hour of his confession he is admitted to the Holy Supper. Of that he does confession, when with the congregation he celebrates the Lord's Supper. What the Lord does at the Lord's Supper comes first, it is His gift, His grace. Therein He offers Christ to us with all the by Him obtained benefits. The Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, instituted the Supper to feed and nourish all those who already regenerated and in His family, are by Him incorporated into His Church. We eat His flesh and drink His blood with the mouth of faith, to strengthen our spiritual life. But in the second place, the Lord's Supper is our confession. The Lord's Supper follows a, true examination of ourselves, which exists of three parts. In the first place, 'We must remember our sins' accursedness, that we may abhor ourselves and humble ourselves before God." (Form for the Lord's Supper) In the second place, "Let everyone examine his heart whether he also believes this sure promise of God that all his sins are forgiven him only for the sake of the passion and death of Jesus Christ, and that the complete righteousness of Christ is imputed and freely given him as his own. (idem) In the third place, "Let everyone examine his conscience whether he is minded henceforth to show true thankfulness to God in his whole life, and to walk sincerely before His face. (idem).

How significant is the confession we make with the Lord's Supper! We do not go on the Table to testify that in ourselves we are perfect and righteous, to the contrary, since we seek our life outside of self in Jesus Christ, we acknowledge that we lie in the midst of death. In celebrating the Lord's Supper we confess that Jesus Christ is the true food and drink of our souls, and that we are members of His body. For it is one bread, seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body.' for we all partake of the one bread. But the Supper is also not far removed from everyday life. It is extraordinary in the sense, that at all times God's special grace meets us, and in an extraordinary way is set before our eyes and assured to our hearts. We also see it often as strange and wonderful, since it is only celebrated a few times every year, and then not nearly faithfully by everybody. But the grace granted us in the sacrament, is no other then what continually is preached by the Word of the Gospel which feeds us from day to day. The first Christian congregations therefore celebrated the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day, even in their assemblies during the week. It was the highlight of the worship service, where believers exercised the fellowship of the saints, as provisions, they took along on the pathway of life. The Lord's Supper signs and seals the fellowship we have with Christ, in which we share at all times, and which we enjoy by faith. We testify of that faith, not only when we participate of the Supper, nor just on Sunday on our way to the sanctuary.

We confess that faith all our life long, as certainly as we are true believers. For faith can do nothing but confess. It does not ask the question whether good works are in order, but does them before the question can be asked. Confessing with mouth and heart, with word and deed, in our walk and dealings cannot be separated from faith in the heart. It is fruit from the tree, the fragrance of the flower, the light of the sun, the sweetness of honey. It is impossible that those incorporated in Christ should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness. To believe is to confess, not only on Sunday but also during the week, not just in Church, but also in family and school, in shop and factory, in store and office, in state and society, in science and art, among believers and unbelievers, before men

and angels.

He confesses in maintaining the public worship service, in giving to the poor, in supporting schools, in visiting the prisoner, in clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, comforting those who mourn, admonishing the unruly, in refuting those who are contrary, in giving account of the hope that is in him, in keeping oneself unspotted from the world. To believe, is to confess. Life itself becomes a confession, a living, holy, sacrifice in Christ Jesus, pleasing to God.

02.04. The Content Of The Confession

THE CONTENT OF THE CONFESSION And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Acts 8:37.

There are two things, which according to Holy Scripture make out the contents of the confession. In the first place, all true confession is acknowledging our sin and guilt. At the great day of Atonement in Old Testament times the High priest had to lay both of his hands upon the living scape-goat, confess all the sins of the children of Israel and all their trespasses, of any which nature they were, and lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness.

It was a common confession, spoken by the High priest, in name of all the people. But this common confession did not exclude the personal, individual confession of sins. For we read of the latter, again and again, in the books of the Old Covenant, especially in the so-called penitential psalms. They form a significant element in the prayers of all God’s people, of David and Salomon, of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel.

There is no people in the world that have felt their sins so deeply, and confessed them more humbly than Israel, "For innumerable evils compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up. They are more than the hairs on my head" (Psalms 40:12); and: ’If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities. 0 Lord, who shall stand? (Psalms 130:2); and "Enter not into judgement with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Psalms 143:2). And we find confession of sin in the congregation of the New Testament. When John the Baptist preached the message of repentance, many were baptised in Jordan, confessing their sins. A multitude of sufferers, received not only bodily healing from the Lord, but an even greater blessing, i.e., the forgiveness of their sins and the redemption of their soul. He taught His disciples to pray, "Father forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. In the parable of the publican He draws a picture, which befits us sinners, over against a holy and a righteous God. The publican standing afar off, durst not lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat on his breast saying, " God be merciful to me a sinner". "If we confess our sIns, He is faithful and just to forgives us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Although confession of sins is very much needed, all by itself it is not enough. The doctrine of sin and misery is not all there is, but precedes that of redemption and gratitude. Yes, whoever is aware of sin and misery, and makes confession of the same, is already a believer. In the Lord’s Days of the Heidelberg Catechism that deal with sin and misery, the unbeliever is not speaking, but the Christian. In the first Lord’s Day he already glories in his only comfort and confessed, that with soul and body, both in life and death, he is not his own, but belongs to His faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. A true, upright confession of sins is already fruit of a saving faith. Whoever confesses his sin in truth and humility, has already been before the Lord, placed himself before His face and finds himself in God’s presence. He cannot do this but only in believing that God is

gracious and of great compassion.

There is also a certain acknowledging of sin, that is not in faith. People that live in the world may have a deep sense of misery. "Cain said unto the Lord, my punishment is greater than I can bear" (Genesis 4:13). Judas called out, that he had sinned, betraying innocent blood. There is a doubtful speaking, which is not born from a broken heart, but wrested from the heart by the horrible consequences of sin. There is a remorse and despair, which does not drive out to the Lord, but flies away from Him and rises up against Him. There is a sorrow of the world, which worketh death. But the true confession of sins differs from this despairing cry and bears an altogether different character. It is derived from a contrite spirit, which is not despised by the Lord, but is pleasing to Him. It is not about the consequences of sin, but its essence, the guilt of sin, because it displeases God and is in conflict with His law. It is a heartfelt sorrow, that we have displeased God by our sins, we sinned against His righteousness, even more, because we sinned against His love. For, said Jesus at one time, If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have had sin, but now they have no pretext for their sin. This confession is coupled with a sorrow after God and works a sorrow not to be repented of. It is a confession before the face of the Lord and holds nothing back. It is accompanied by, and born of faith that God is not only righteous, but also merciful and gracious. It is already a confession of faith; it is from, through and unto faith. Faith does not enter after we know our misery, but precedes it and gives it the right form. Above the law we find the word of grace: I am the Lord, your God. True repentance is also gratitude. That is why Scripture says in the second place, that confession means confessing the name of the Lord. Repentance and confessing the name of the Lord go together. For confessing that name includes a heartfelt, believing admission, that the Lord is the God of the covenant, Who revealed Himself as the compassionate and faithful, Who in Christ fulfills all His promises of grace. Those who repent with a true heart, repent unto God, the living God, Who in Christ is, a reconciled Father. When therefore in the days of the New Testament, John the Baptist appears, he does not just call to repentance and confession from sin, but he also points them to the Lamb, which bears the sins of the world. John was not just a preacher of the law and penance, but also the herald of the gospel and a preacher of faith. For the kingdom of heaven was near. And after him came He Who was before him, Whose shoelaces he was not worthy to undo. John administered baptism as a sign and seal of the forgiveness of sins, which can be obtained and granted in the way of repentance. The whole content of the confession of faith in the New Testament is summed up in few words, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. He who confesses Him before man as such, shall at one time be confessed by Him before His Father Who is in heaven. It was a grave moment when all of Christ’s disciples went back, and He asked the twelve, "Will you also go away*?" But Simon Peter answered in the name of all, "Lord to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ the Son of the living God" (John 6:68; John 6:69). As soon as the Eunuch confessed this good confession, he was instantly baptized by Philip. The spirits are known by the confession that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. Whoever makes the confession, that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.

Jesus the promised Messiah, the by God anointed Prophet, Priest and King - is the short content of the whole of Christian faith. It is the core of revelation, the heart of Scripture, the bone and marrow of all confession, the central dogma of all bible truths. The centre from which all rays of the knowledge of God flow to the periphery. The Person of Christ determines the essence of

Christendom. With that confession the Congregation took its place in the midst of Jew and Heathen. By its confession she was separated from both. By way of its confession it came to richer development of faith and life. At first, everyone who confessed the Lord Jesus was baptized. Later, this was expanded to the names of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the twelve articles of our undoubted Christian faith, this baptismal confession was further developed. Again later, all these articles of the different confessions of the Christian Church were better realized, and received a more detailed description. The confessions are like branches and leafs, together proceeding from the one trunk, which in faith that Jesus is the Christ, was in the beginning planted in the bottom of the Congregation. For in this short confession, creation and fall, sin and misery are pre-supposed. The whole Person of Christ with His names and natures, with His offices and states is enclosed as a germ. The whole order of salvation, for the individual, for humanity, for the world, is included. In the cross of Christ which was an offense to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, sin and grace, law and gospel, justice and mercy, guilt and forgiveness are united and reconciled. Over that cross, God and world, heaven and earth, angels and men, people and nations offer each other the hand of peace. For thereby God has reconciled the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses onto them, and triumphing over principalities and powers. In the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we are partakers of the love of the Father and enjoy communion with the Holy Ghost.

02.05. The Diversity Of The Confession

THE DIVERSITY OF THE CONFESSION We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. Acts 2:11. The short confession that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God was sufficient for the congregation of the first days.

However this period of simple childlike faith did not last long, and could not last long. The faith was contested from the outside, and deliberations in their own circles pressed the congregation into giving a more detailed account of the contents of its faith. From that moment on many differences and conflicts arose. Soon there was no more confessing of the faith in unison. Although Church and State at all times attempted to preserve that unity by many coercive measures, even if it was only the appearance,, the process of division continues until the present day. There is discord and contention all over. In the name of Christ, denominations and people, with an appeal to His Word, stand as enemies over against each other. The multi-formity of the Christian faith is continually on the increase. It is impossible to think that unity can be restored. The disunity among Christians is a great disappointment. For, do we not have one only God, the Father, from Whom are all things, and we to Him, and but one Lord, Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things and we through Him? The congregation is one body and one spirit, she is also called to one hope of her calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Jesus Himself prayed that His disciples would be one, that the world may know that He was sent by the Father. So we would expect, that one confession flowed from the lips of the congregation.

Moreover, existing disunity is not just a grievous disappointment, it is also a great sin before the Lord. Because of this great sin, as Christians we cannot humble ourselves sufficiently. It holds a heavy accusation against us, since it is caused mainly by the darkness of our minds, and a great lack of love in our hearts. When we are convinced of this, we will appreciate the good intentions of Christians, who in earlier and later times, have attempted to unite Christians, be it through forceful or artificial means.

There is on the other hand the fact, which is of great significance, that all these attempts, in spite of the best intentions, had no other result than that truth was turned into error, freedom was suppressed, and disunity often increased. For, he who withdraws into neutrality, is in danger of becoming the head of another party.

Furthermore, we may never forget, that God has His hand in history, and that He executes His wise counsel. His providence includes all things, nothing happens by chance, least of all in the Christian Church, over which the Father placed Christ in a special sense, as its Head and Lord. The ever continuing divisions in Christianity is a fact which is not outside of God’s government and rule, it is determined and taken up in His decree, through which without doubt, the Lord executes His wise purposes.

Although we may in no wise justify that sin, which is the cause of disunity, it is not fair to deny that much good was derived from these separations and schisms. What men think for evil, the Lord

many a time turns into good. Darkness He can make into light, the dead He can raise to life, and from the shame of men He can glorify His name. So far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity" (Job 10:34); God can use sin and force it to co-operate to the glory of His virtues and the establishment of His kingdom. As soon as the truth revealed in Christ and proclaimed by the apostles, reflected in the human conscience, it was instantly robbed of its purity and mixed with many errors. Heresies and schisms date back to the time of the apostles. But at the same time its expression became clearer and better understood in its riches and many sidedness, and the congregation received ever deeper insight into the mystery of salvation, that was laid down and demonstrated by the Lord in His Word. For already in natural things people are hopelessly separated from each other. Gender and age, aptitude and character, upbringing and environment, land and people, diversity of gifts of mind and heart bring the greatest modifications in the manner that things are viewed and considered. Not in any way are two people exactly like each other. This diversity, which exists by nature, is not by grace eliminated. For grace does not erase and destroy nature, but restores and renews it, and the natural diversity is yet more increased by the diversity of spiritual gifts, which are all worked by one Spirit, but divided to every man severally as He will. The Lord loves unity in diversity. All creation testifies to this. Nature with its mountains and valleys, its seas and islands; the earth with its riches of minerals and plants, of animal and man; the heavens with its planets and stars; the heaven of heavens with its thousands of holy angels. The glory of the infinite rich Being of God, reflects in the works of His hands. God’s virtues and perfections are revealed in His creatures.

Yet, this diversity meets us still clearer and fuller in re-creation. There is first of all, Christ, the fairest of the children of men, on Whose lips grace and truth are shed forth. And around Him the patriarchs and prophets, apostles and evangelists, martyrs and reformers, a great multitude of the redeemed, that are bought with His blood and renewed by His Spirit. They are distinct in heaven, they Were distinct on earth. All this diversity, through the error and guilt of man, is an influence for good, in order that we should come to know the truth, and the glory of His grace. The Lord takes them into His service and uses them to decorate His Church. The Holy Spirit makes use of these diversities that all in their own tongue should proclaim the wonderful works of God. One time, at the end of history, the congregation from all languages and peoples, races and nations shall bring honor and glory to the Lord. For this reason it is not difficult to understand, that the several relationships are reflected, in the diversities of confession, in which grace is placed to nature. The essence of the Christian religion exists herein, that the Father’s creation,which was destroyed by sin, is restored again by the death of Christ, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit recreated into God’s kingdom. The serious question that always returns, is therefore, in which relationship grace places itself to nature. In practice. Every man must regulate this relationship by himself, in his thinking and life, in his will and work. In other areas of life as well, it comes repeatedly up for discussion, in Church and State, in family and society, in art and science. What is the relationship between creation and re-creation, between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of heaven, of humanity and Christianity, of that which is from above and that from beneath?

According to his own peculiarity each man shall determine this relationship and apply it in and to his life in a different way. It makes a great difference, whether we see grace as doctrine or as life; is it seen as a supernatural addition to nature, or as a medicine against the disease of sin; is it destined for the heart and the inner room, or for all of the rich diversities in human life; does it only

serve to save the soul, or does it imply that to God belongs the glory for all His works. Because of this difference their exist among believers, even the members of one Church, many smaller and greater distinctions in the confession. The truth truly is one, but it reflects itself in the consciences of people in many different ways, One sun sends its rays to the earth, but everyone sees it with his own eyes.

Yet, in spite of the great differences that exist between the confessions of the Christian Churches, there is a unity which is plainly revealed, which we may not overlook. So lightly are we in danger of one-sidedness. It is a fact that there are differences, and there is conflict about all the articles of our faith. But seeing what separates believers, we forget so soon what keeps and ties them together. Beyond disunity, any agreement is not seen anymore.

Yet, such agreement is present. All believers are one, not only with respect to spirituality, since all are incorporated in Christ and members of one body, but also in an outward sense, a visible bond embraces all Christian Churches, and keeps them separate from all none Christians.

It is true, there is no Christianity beyond divisions of the faith. Differences between innumerable Christian Churches are not mechanically added to the points of agreement. The first cannot be deducted from the latter, in a way that the remainder would be even with the foregoing. All creeds are an organic whole. The Roman Catholic is Roman Catholic, even in the apostolic confession of faith, which is adopted by all Churches. The Reformed and Lutherans, Anabaptists and Remonstrants are distinct from each other, not just in the doctrine of election, but also of the Church, the sacraments, and also in those of God, of Christ, of creation and providence, of reconciliation and justification.

Yet, there is a unity in Christianity; a unity, which, well considered, is much greater and of infinite more significance than what divides and separates believers from each other. It may be that this unity cannot be separated from the diversity, it is nevertheless truly and really present and becomes clearly visible. It is true that a written creed often just explains the differences; in the unwritten articles, the prayers, the fruits of faith and the works of mercy there is often touching agreement. The imperfect confession of the mouth does not always do justice to the heart’s faith. So it appears to be the will of the Lord, that the unity of faith and acknowledging the Son of God must make a way for itself through the diversities, that once, on the end of history it may gloriously appear. When the body of Christ shall have reached its full increase, and has come to a perfect man, to the measure of the fullness of Christ; when the saints together, may be able to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

02.06. The Catholicity Of Confession

THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CONFESSION Therefore let no man glory in men, For all things are yours;

Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's. 1 Corinthians 3:21-22.

The diversity of the confession does not violate its catholicity. There are many Churches, and all of us Christians, confess one holy, catholic Church, which becomes revealed in the many Churches of Christianity, be it in a very imperfect way. The Christian confession is Universal and Catholic, in the sense, that it is spread out over all the earth, includes all believers, is for all men, and has significance for the whole world. Christianity is the religion of the world, for all peoples and ages, destined and suited for every place and time. And most universal is that Church, which has expressed most purely in its confession this international and cosmopolitan character of the Christian religion. The universality of the Christian religion is a direct reflection of the unity of God, which is taught therein. God is one, and therefore His words and works can never be in conflict, the one with the other. All things have their connection, their system in His Being, His will and counsel. They exist together in the Son, Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creatures, through Whom and to Whom they were created. This Son is also the Christ; the way, the truth and the life, without Whom no one can come to the Father; the only name, given under heaven, whereby man must be saved; the Head of the congregation, in Whom dwells all the fullness of the Father, that He through Him, having made peace through the blood of the cross, should reconcile all things to Himself, be it things on earth or things in heaven.

Christianity is therefore an absolute religion, the only true religion. It will have no other religions of more or less the same value beside itself. By nature it is intolerant, like truth must at all times be intolerant of the lie. It is not even satisfied with being the first of all religions. It claims to be the real, full religion, which absorbs and fulfills all that is good in other religions. For Christ is not a man beside others, but the Son of men, Who by His resurrection declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. He received from the Father a name above every name, and for that name every knee must bow and all tongues confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. In this unity we find the catholicity of the Christian religion implied. While there is but one God, He is the Creator of all things. Because there is but one Mediator of God and man, He is the Saviour of the whole world. And because there is but one Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, He guides in all truth, is the only Teacher in the Church, the all sufficient Comforter of all believers.

Holy Scripture preaches this universality of Christianity in a clear and fair manner. The Father loved the world and therefore sent His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. In the Son God reconciled the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Christ Himself came to earth, not to condemn the world, but to save it. He is the light, the life, the Saviour of the world, reconciling not only our sins, but the sins of the

whole world. In Him, all things in heaven and on earth are reconciled with God, and are gathered into one. The world that was made by the Son, is also destined for the Son as its heir. At one time all kingdoms shall be of our God and His Christ. This great, glorious truth has many a time been denied and misjudged. There have been throughout the ages many Christians, we still have them with us, who see the significance of the gospel for the religious moral life, but restrict its influence for the natural life, and see no use for it in the family, for society and state, for science and art. Yes, many were of the opinion, that creation was an enemy of re-creation, that grace set nature aside, and therefore the best Christian was the man of world-flight, who confined himself to loneliness.

Exponents of unbelief made use of this and said that Christianity is an enemy of culture, and therefore not fitting for this day and age. It may have been of great use at one time, and at the present time it may be of use for depressed spirits; but for humanity in general, Christianity is outdated and vanishing. Civilization, science, the arts, trade, industry - they are the gods, which go before us and deliver us from bondage. But the gospel of Christ is finished; His kingdom is not of this world and has no message for today. Religion may be of some use for the inner room; in everyday life there is not any longer a place for it. Religion and politics do not mix. In the schools of science, the temples of art, in the counselling chambers of the nation the Almighty is not needed. Liberating the world from religion and divine things will be continued until the end.

There is a truth in this way of reasoning, that we may not deny. Jesus came indeed to earth, and assumed our natural life, but He took it upon Himself to deny it again on the cross. He was not married, exercised no trade in society and held no office in the state government. He was no man of science and no artist. All of His life was a sacrifice, which was completed when He gave Himself up to death. He came to die. Death was the purpose of His life. He Himself witnessed of this, when He said, he did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life a ransom for many.

He did not just do that for Himself, He required from His disciples to follow Him and walk in His steps. We must take up our cross, if not, we cannot be His disciples. He who will keep his life, shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose it for Christ’s sake, will find it. If we love father and mother more than Christ, we are not worthy of Him, but he who leaves everything for His name’s sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and inherit life eternal. In order to enter into the kingdom of heaven, the offending eye must be plucked out and the offending hand and foot cut off, for it is better to enter heaven without hands and feet, than to be cast into hell fire.

We may take nothing from this grave demand of the gospel of the cross. The gospel may be for man, it is in no respect to man’s liking. To make it palatable for the spirit of the age, the ideas of the day, is robbing it of its power, and will be a disappointment, when we think this to be the way to make it accessible. For Christ was in no way a political leader, nor a reformer of society. His gospel is not suited to serve a social program; Scripture is no law book nor a manual for art or science; the proclamation of the Word is no preaching of human wisdom; the government of the Church is no display of power; the diaconate is no institution to solve the problem of poverty. Christ did not come, nor was His Word given for any of this. Christ is Saviour, that is His name and His work, nothing more, nothing less. His sacrifice is an atonement for sin. His gospel a glad message for salvation. His Church is a communion of saints. Christianity is religion, no philosophy. But then, that is indeed what it is, fully and completely, the true, real, full religion. Restoration of

the right relationship with God, and therefore to all creatures. Christ is Saviour, nothing else; but He is that so perfectly, that His gospel is the power of God unto salvation, for all who believe.

Therefore He rejects no one. The rich he sends away empty, but the poor He fills with goods. He speaks out a threefold 'Woe" over the Pharisees who think that their own righteousness is sufficient. But when on earth He invites publicans and sinners to come to Him, He heals the sick, He makes the lame to walk, He cleanses lepers, He opens the eyes of the blind, He raises the dead, He blesses little children, He proclaims the gospel of God's kingdom to the poor, and doing good and spreading blessing He traveled through the country side. In all this He is human with humanity. Not like John the Baptist, who came eating and drinking, and was called a glutton and a winebibber. Jesus was at Cana's wedding, took invitations to eat and drink with people, forbade His disciples to fast, portrayed the coming of future salvation like a celebration, and promised His disciples the last night of his life on earth, that He would no more drink with them of the fruit of the vine until He would drink it with them in the kingdom of His Father.

He acknowledged and reverenced the ordinances of natural life in all areas, for He did not come to destroy the works of the Father, but those of the devil. He paid taxes, refused to arbitrate between two brothers who quarrelled about an inheritance, commanded that Caesar should receive that which is his, told the people to be subject to those who sit in Moses' seat, and forbade His disciples to make use of the sword even under most trying circumstances. He never encouraged to resist, words of love always came from His tips. Love your enemies; bless those that curse you; do well to those who hate you; and pray for those that persecute you.

Nature He loves with childlike joy. He enjoys its beauty and is refreshed when He sees its beauty. He has an open eye for the grass that grows out of the earth and the lilies of the field, for the birds of heaven and the fishes in the sea. Vine and figtree, mustard seed and the grain of wheat, grape and thorn, fig and thistle, field and flock, catching fish and business acumen served Him for examples and parables, when He taught about heavenly things. All of nature speaks Him of the Father which is in heaven and Who lets His sun rise over the good and the evil, and rains on the just and the unjust. And so little does He disparages all luxury, that when Mary anoints Him with precious ointment, He does not complain about any waste to His disciples, but accepts the costly token of honor with gratitude. And last but not least - Jesus did indeed laid down natural life, for our sakes, but He took it again and rose from the dead. When in His flesh He bore our sins on the cross, and thus freed natural life from its guilt and curse, He made it again His possession, but now reborn, spiritualized, sanctified. Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead is sufficient evidence, that Christianity is no enemy of humanity or the natural, but it will only redeem it of all that is sinful and sanctify creation unto God. That is the way Jesus' disciples have to go. if we would follow Jesus, we must leave everything, but we receive all of it back again, thirty, sixty and a hundred fold. "For if we have been planted in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:5). If we suffer with Him, we will also be glorified with Him, not first in heaven, but already here on earth. For the believer has eternal life and is renewed from day to day. From the cross to the crown, through death to life - that is the way, for both Jesus and His disciples. That is why through death, everything returns to them in the resurrection. Being dead and raised with Christ, from now on they live the time of the flesh by faith in the Son of God, Who loved them and gave Himself for them. Although crucified to the world, they remain in the world, but are kept by the Father from the evil one. They remain in the calling wherewith they are

called. The Jew who is converted to the Lord, has no need to put on the foreskin, while the Greek who comes to faith, does not have to be circumcised. The servant remains a servant, even though he is the lord’s freeman. He who was free remains free, although he is Christ’s servant. The unbelieving man is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband.

All natural ordinances remain; they are not cast down but recreated by the Spirit. For the kingdom of heaven is not food and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:4). Believers have only to think of, ’Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report" (Php 4:8). It remains that everything is theirs, for they are Christ’s and Christ is God’s. That is why godliness is profitable for all things, not only for the life to come, but also for the present life. When we look for the kingdom of God and its righteousness, all the other things are given us. The best Christian is the best citizen. With his confession he is not outside or above natural life. He takes his confession with him into the world, and everywhere he plants the banner of the cross. The gospel of Christ is a joyous message for all creatures, for mind and heart, for body and soul, for family and society, for science and the arts. For it delivers from guilt and redeems from death. It is a power of God unto salvation, for everyone who believes.

02.07. The Duty To Confess

THE DUTY TO CONFESS For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God’s. 1 Corinthians 6:20.

The root and origin of the confession are from the heart, but confessing itself is a matter of the mouth, a work of the lips.

However, many think that the latter is an addition, in any case, a good work that is superfluous. And they are happy to defend their meaning, for, as they say, concerning our personal faith in Christ and the salvation of the soul, the heart is important, not what we say. Silently confessing and witnessing in the quiet is of more value and bears richer fruit than speaking great words and the use of pious terms. Jesus Himself said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). It is better to confess God in the inner room, than to do so in public, and cast your pearls before swine. For the kingdom of heaven is not of this world, it does not come with observation, it is within us. Man looks at the outside, but the Lord looks at the heart.

Over against the great lie which often dominates confessing with the mouth, the reminder of the necessity of a converted heart is wholly in its place. The confession of the mouth is often rife with hypocrisy. There is a so-called orthodoxy, which seeks to be justified before the Lord, by an outward and intellectual acceptance of the doctrine. We will not be saved by works, but neither by doctrine, which also looks down at the multitude, that does not know the law, and is unfruitful in the works of mercy and charity. That is why it is our duty and calling, over against a false orthodoxy, to emphasize uprightness before the face of the Lord. For "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight" (Proverbs 12:22). The lord is not pleased in a people that honors Him with their lips, but their heart is far from Him. The Lord requires the heart of men in the first place, for from it are the issues of life. It is not for the Christian to speak great words, but to do great things for and with the Lord. But this does not mean that Holy Scripture does not attach great value to the witness of the lips and the confession of the mouth. There is no book that exposes all hypocrisy like Scripture, and at the same time speaks so highly of the significance of the word and the power of testimony.

Speaking is nothing less than one of God’s essential attributes, His eternal, unchangeable work. Speaking, the Father generates from eternity from His Being, the Son, Who is the Word, the spoken and at the same time the speaking Word, which was in the beginning with God, which was God. Speaking in and through that Word, the Lord creates all things from nothing, and at the same time He maintains, rules, recreates and renews them. His Word is action, His Word is power. He speaks and it is, He commands and it stands fast. He calls things, that are not, as though they were. In this respect also, man is created after the image of God. He received from His Creator not only mind and heart, but also the tongue and language, and is therefore called upon, not only to think and feel, but also to speak and witness. His speaking must be praise, a proclamation of God’s mighty works. That is how the angels praise Him, when they, standing before the throne,

call out, the one to the other: holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is filled with His glory! That is how the saved praise Him when they sing ’the song of Moses, the servant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, 0 Lord, and glorify thy name?" (Revelation 15:3-4). Yes, repeatedly God’s creatures are by Scripture called upon to praise the name of the Lord. "Bless the Lord all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure! Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion! Bless the Lord, 0 my soul" (Psalms 103:21-22).

Men, who received the word to utter his thoughts, may not be silent in the midst of those praising and God glorifying creatures. He cannot be silent. Even his silence is counted for consent. Neutrality for the heart, as for the mouth, is impossible. Not to confess Christ, is to deny Him. Silence will shortly turn into doubt, unbelief and enmity ’The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; it defiles the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and is set on fire of hell. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God even the Father, and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God" (James 3). That is why in re-creation, the Lord will have men speak and proclaim His virtues. God redeems the tongue not less than the heart, language as well as thought. Men’s soul and body are both liberated, and his tongue is loosened to speak. He fills the mouth with laughing and the lips with singing. Thought and word belong together and cannot be separated. The word is the finished thought that has become independent and free. The thoughts within men are as it were the branches, and the words are the blossoms, which through the lips and mouth come to fruition. Also of these fruits of the lips, consisting of the sacrifices of praise, God is the Creator. That is why the godly in the Old Testament pray: Lord, open my lips, so shall my mouth proclaim thy praises. Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise, all the day with Thy glory. When the lord sends forth His Spirit, Moses’ prayer, that all the people may be prophets, is heard. Then sons and daughters, old people and servants begin to prophecy, each in his own tongue proclaims the mighty works of God. At such a time silence is impossible, the mouth runs over with the things of the heart. I have not concealed thy loving kindness and thy truth from the great congregation. I shall praise thee with all my heart. I shall sing psalms to thy praise, 0, most high; I shall tell of all thy wonders. I shall praise Him among the nations, I shall praise Him at all times; His praise shall be in my mouth continually. I shall praise Him evermore. The Lord values the fruit of the lips so much, that over against enemies that dishonor His name, He ordains strength from the mouth of sucklings and babes, Psalms 8:2. When the disciples are silent, the stones almost call out. The Lord demands all of our lives for His service. He wants men to love Him with heart and mind, with mouth and tongue and all their strength. When men because of sin withholds honor from the Lord, it is He Himself Who through Christ gathers a Church, which proclaims the virtues of Him, Who called her from darkness into His marvellous light. It is God Himself Who obliges and calls, enables and makes His people willing. He urges them by His Spirit, for the Spirit leads them into all truth, makes them confess Jesus as Lord, testifies in them of their adoption to children and makes them call out: Abba Father. Because they are bought for a price, the blood of the Son of God, they are called to glorify God with body and soul which are God’s.

It is the duty of every believer to confess the name of the Lord. In confessing with the mouth it becomes clear whether we are serious about it, whether the service of the Lord means more to us than the friendship of the world. It is the crown upon God’s work in us. In confessing by the mouth, returns again to God, what through grace and love He worked in our hearts. It is no hard duty, no

command difficult to follow up, but a service of love, a blessed privilege, a great honor. For the children of man there is nothing more glorious, than to be able to confess God and proclaim His praises.

It is the privilege of the individual believer, but also of the congregation as a whole. God's people believe and therefore they speak. The congregation confesses all through the ages. To enemy and friend she gives a reason for the hope that is within her. Her witness is as the voice of many waters. She speaks about her faith in assemblies and other religious duties, her prayers and songs, in her works of mercy and gifts of love. She is, and cannot be anything but a confessing congregation. When the Church makes confession of her faith, it would be very one-sided to think only of the written expression of that faith. It is certain that because of errors, written confessions are needed. Even when the Church comes to the world with its written confessions, that too is a glorious witness of her faith. The right of the congregation to confess its faith in writing, in order to be able to maintain its purity, has been denied from several sides, and we think altogether without basis. For with a written confession she does not curtail the Word of God in any way, but only develops the content of the Word, after the measure of faith and knowledge, that was given her at certain times. The authority of the Word is not at all affected, but an attempt is made to maintain the truth, that Scripture shall not be given into the hands of some who would use it to please self. With her written confessions she does not bind the consciences, but makes them free from the repeatedly returning errors of men, and strives to lead every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Development is not cut off, but an attempt is made to keep and lead in the right track, a way that builds up and does not destroy. The Church places the confession not beside, much less above Scripture. Scripture is, and remains the only, perfect, sufficient rule of faith and life. Is a Church without a written confession, she would always, as long and in as far she is Church, have a confession. But when she describes her faith, she has the advantage, that the truth, in as far as by her acknowledged, can be delivered from generation to generation and better maintained against all error and heresy. The confession of the Church has great educational value. The individual, growing up in the Church, takes these in, freely and independently. Like a child in all areas gradually entering into the labours of former generations, so it identifies itself from year to year with the spiritual inheritance of the fathers. No one begins anew. We all stand on the shoulders of those that went before. Everyone lives off the treasures gathered by the forefathers. Only to us comes the demand, with great effort to make into our own possession, whatever we inherited from the fathers. That is how the child accepts the confession of the Church, in order that this confession may become the free and independent expression of its personal faith. But therefore, no matter how important the written confession may be, it may never be separated from the cohesion with all the testimonies and acts, wherewith the congregation is distinct from the world and places itself against the world. It is not a document that binds us because of its age. it bears no authority laid upon us by the distant past. But she is, with all other acts, from moment to moment inspired by the faith of the congregation, and accompanies her from generation to generation. At the present it is still our confession, not because it was framed by the Fathers and by them delivered to us, but because, like it was for them in another age the most pure expression of God's truth, so for us it is the most beautiful demonstration of the treasures of salvation, which are given us by God in Christ.

Brought up from our earliest days with the confession of the Church, we now confess therein our own faith.

02.08. Resisting The Confessions

RESISTING THE CONFESSION But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.Galatians 1:11.

Confessing is against flesh and blood, against the world and Satan. By nature, each man is an enemy of the preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ. It may seem strange to the shallow minded person, that there has always been so much resistance against the gospel. For it is a joyful message for all creatures; it speaks of nothing but grace, peace and salvation; it demands nothing, but gives everything. Yet, it finds enmity and resistance all over; it is an offense to the Jew and foolishness to the Greek. It may be for man, it is not after man. It is of Divine origin and therefore not in accordance with the thoughts and desires of men. Mind and heart, desire and will, soul and body are against the gospel of Christ. In their resistance men are supported by the world and the whole kingdom of darkness.

There certainly is a difference in circumstances. In days of peace and quiet, it is less serious, then when the congregation is oppressed and persecuted by the world. We need more courage to confess Christ, in an ungodly environment of sinners and mockers, than in the circle of relatives and friends, who together confess the truth. It needs a more courageous faith, not to be ashamed of the cross of Christ, when surrounded by the great and learned, than in the midst of common people in a distant village. But in principle the resistance is the same all over. For flesh, the world and Satan are always the same, and the greatest and strongest enemy that resists the confession of Christ, lives in our own heart. The forms in which the enemy operates may be different, but confessing the name of Christ always demands that we deny self and bear His cross. Whoever, from which circle he may come, when he will follow Jesus, must submit to insult an contempt.

Even when faith is worked in the heart, and urges to confessing, there still be can so much that keeps the lips closed, and keeps us from boldly confessing the name of Jesus!

Look at Peter, who in a hour of danger denies his Master, and later in Antioch from fear for the brethren of the circumcision turns into a hypocrite. Yet, Peter was first among the apostles, who for his glorious and courageous confession that Jesus was Messiah, received the name of Rock. He felt so close to Jesus, had such fervent love for the Master, that he would die for the Lord, and did not think it possible he would ever deny his Lord. When Peter could fall and did fall, who shall remain standing? And who does not need the warning: let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

There are many examples in the history of the Christian Church, where we read of steadfast martyrs, but we also read of the thousands, who denied the faith in the hour of temptation. When oppression and persecution come for the sake of the Word, those, who at first heard the Word with joy, but had no root in themselves, are instantly offended, and are but for a time.

There are so many dangers to which the believer is exposed, so many rocks at which he can suffer shipwreck. The desire of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, fear to lose name

and honor, good and blood, work together to draw Christ's disciple away from the certainty of faith. Among all these temptations, a so-called sense of false shame could be the most severe of all. For even when oppressions and persecutions are past, it continues to slay its thousands and ten thousands. Among the low and mighty, this sense of false shame kept many from confessing the name of the Lord.

There is something very humiliating in the thought, that basically, in our hearts, we are ashamed to confess Jesus. For He was a man going through the country, doing good and blessing men; Who was meek and lowly of heart; Who being innocent, died on the cross, being condemned by those who were His enemies. There must be something out of order with us, we must be spiritually sick, when we are ashamed for such a Man, and are afraid to take His name on our lips.

Shame in general is an unpleasant feeling, which connects itself with some act in us, as if the esteem from others for us becomes less. It can be something positive. When Adam after he sinned is ashamed because he trespassed the commandment, he gives evidence that he sees his act as evil and is aware that he fell. To be ashamed is not always a fruit of faith, it is also known by the natural man, and is evidence that men did not become animal or devil when he fell. He is still man, and a feeling of dignity and honour remains with him. But beside much that is true and good, there is also a false sense of shame. It occurs when we feel embarrassed about something, which is good in itself, but can lower us in the esteem of others. We are often ashamed for the good impressions that are left from the preaching of the gospel; about the accusations of our conscience; about the sorrow that we feel after a sin committed; about emotions to which we are subject at certain times. We are afraid that others knowing about this, will despise us, and make fun of us; that we will lose the name of being courageous and strong people.

It is this sense of false shame, which often surprises us with respect to the gospel of the cross. We are ashamed of the congregation, which consists not of many nobles, not many wise. We are ashamed of the Bible, which is so different and is contested by men of science and culture. We are ashamed of Christ, Who claimed to be God's only Son, the anointed of the Father. We are ashamed of His cross, which was an offense to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek. We are ashamed of God's special revelation, which discovers us to ourselves, and shows us in our spiritual poverty.

We are also afraid when taking the side of Christ, we will lose our name and honour as men and become subject to insult and mockery, libel and oppression. We fear, that by confessing Christ, our dignity, our personality, our being human will suffer harm.

Even a sense of false shame has the dark underground, that at one time we were created in God's image and must uphold a certain honour and status. No one is indifferent to the esteem of self and of others, because in his deepest fall, man remains man, that is, he still retains the image and likeness of God. But under the influence of sin this sense works the wrong way. For it is true indeed when we give ourselves to Christ for our salvation, the esteem of ourselves and that of others will lessen and we will lose our name and honour by men. But such esteem is nothing but delusion, and such honour and delusion are but imagined. For by nature we see ourselves as rich and enriched, having need of nothing. But when we embrace the gospel, we see that we are poor and blind and naked. That is how the honour of men is for the greatest part nothing but ignorance and show. The art of associating with man consists in hiding our real being, so they form a

judgment about our person, according to our outward, acquired behaviour. God is true, but all men are liars. Man just does not happen to speak lies, but he lives a lie; he is untrue in his very existence. Appearance and substance, being and revelation, inward and outward do contrast each other. While at times the mouth flows over with love and the countenance shows nothing but friendship, from the heart of men proceed evil surmisings, murders, fornication, adultery, theft, false witness, slanders. A saint, who knew the inner man and could see the bottom of the heart, would flee from him, horror stricken. And unforgettable is the love of Christ, Who knew man, but in spite of this looked for him and gave Himself over into death for him. That is how we live for ourselves and others in a delusion and imagination. Well considered, we abandon nothing, when we believe in Christ, for we have nothing. We only abandon the delusion that we are rich and enriched, that we have need of nothing. The greatest misery of sin is not that we are blind, but being blind we think that we see. Sin is guilt and shame and stain, but it also is foolishness and lack of wisdom. That delusion is disturbed in us by the Word of the Lord. If we would be saved by Christ we must do away with that delusion. For to become a Christian is to esteem the judgment of others for nothing, accepting the judgment of God upon ourselves and hope in His grace. To confess Christ includes, that we lose ourselves and all that is ours, our name and our honour, our good and blood, our soul and our life. It is exactly this that is resisted by a sense of false shame. The desire to apparent self preservation, urges and drives men to resist the gospel with all his strength.

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Romans 8:7). The natural man does not understand the things of God’s Spirit, and he does not understand, that denial of self is the only way to true self-preservation.

02.09. The Power To Confess

THE POWER TO CONFESS Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

1 Corinthians 12:3.

What is impossible with man, is possible with God. Our sufficiency is from Him. An upright confession comes from the heart, which is God’s gift, and fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit. Had Christ finished everything, it would have been without fruit, had He not sent His Holy Spirit Who leads into all truth, after He ascended into heaven. For all the world stands over against Christ and loves darkness rather than light. But the Holy Spirit came to witness of Christ in the midst of the world. He is the only, but at the same time the Almighty witness of Christ. All others scorn Him, but the Holy Spirit glorifies Him. All others condemn Christ, but the Holy Spirit justifies Him. AII others reject Christ, but the Holy Spirit takes His side and pleads His cause in man’s conscience. All others call Christ accursed, but the Holy Spirit says, that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

He witnesses of Christ in the Word, and by prophets and apostles He wrote that down in a book. He witnesses of Christ in a world, which He reproves of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He witnesses of Christ in the congregation, who confesses Him as her Lord and her God. He witnesses of Christ in the heart of every believer, who thereby knows himself to be a child of God and calls, "Abba Father". Nothing, and no one is able to stand up against that witness of the Spirit. As soon as He couples His Almighty power with the word, the hardest heart is broken, the most daring mouth is stopped. All our thoughts and considerations mean nothing. No one, speaking by the Holy Ghost calls Christ accursed, and everyone who receives the Spirit confesses Him as his Saviour and Lord. But then, when faith is planted in the heart, the working of the Spirit, which makes faith change into word and deed, is needed in all the many temptations. For it is God, Who not only works in us to will, but also to work after His good pleasure. From Him is the strength to believe and the courage to confess. That is why David prayed, that God would not take His Spirit from him, but renew a right spirit within him. When Peter and John stood before the high council, and being let go, they told their experiences to the brethren, and said, "Now Lord behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word" (Acts 4:29). When they finished praying the place was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and spake the Word with boldness. Even Paul requested the congregation to pray for him, that the word should be given him in the opening of his mouth with boldness, to make known the mystery of the gospel. This boldness to speak and testify is in the first place indispensable for the preacher and furthermore for all believers. It is a fearless testimony to each and all, of God’s truth in Christ. It is based on the blessed awareness that our guilt has been taken away, boldness to come before the throne of grace, and to make known all our desires before Him. It is strengthened in us by the many examples of courageous and steadfast confessions that we find in Scripture and

history.

There is first of all the example of Christ. In Himself He was the Word, the Truth, the complete Revelation of God. He came to a world that lay in sin and served the lie. Only His appearance, without more, was a protest that must awake the hate and enmity of the world. The world could not suffer Jesus. His existence was their condemnation. That is why the world attempted the utmost to destroy Jesus. But Jesus remained faithful to the Father and obeyed Him unto the death of the cross. He resisted all temptation, He endured all enmity, before the Jewish council He held up His Divine Sonship, and under Pontius Pilate He confessed a good confession. That is how He showed Himself to be the true and faithful witness, the apostle and High priest of our confession, Who left us an example, that we should follow in His steps.

There is furthermore an innumerable company of angels, to whose fellowship believers came in Christ Jesus. They too encourage us to persevere. For they accompanied Christ in all His ways and ascended and descended on the Son of man all the days that He walked here on the earth.

They followed the congregation on its way throughout the world, and are sent out to minister to those who shall inherit salvation. They are desirous to look into the mysteries of salvation and rejoice in every sinner that repents. In the Lord’s prayer they are set for our examples for their perfect obedience, and must through us be made known with the manifold wisdom of God.

There is also the great cloud of witnesses around us, A the Church triumphant, who by their example encourage us to follow them. Some of them were afflicted, suffered bands and prison. But they were not ashamed to confess a good confession and persevered unto the end. And their number is multiplied daily. A multitude that no one can number form the spirits of just men made perfect, taken up in heaven, who are our leaders and examples of a true confession of the Lord Jesus.

There is finally the church militant on earth, that is our support by holding on to the immovable confession of hope. It has been said, and truly so, that although many around us fall away, the Christian’s faith must be so steadfast, that he remains immovable. But in general, man is not destined for such loneliness. The Lord will grant grace, that although forsaken by others, we will run our race rejoicing. But as a rule He keeps us standing in and through the communion of the saints. So we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. As such all believers have communion with the Lord Christ, of all His treasures and gifts, and we all must use our gifts willingly and joyfully for the other members. So the confessors of Christ are never alone. They may at certain times and in certain places feel lonely and forsaken. But even then it appears that there are the seven thousand that with them did not bow the knee for Baal. And when their souls are oppressed and they look at all the earth, throughout the ages, they are members of a fellowship, who from the beginning of the world unto the end thereof are gathered, protected and kept from all generations, in the unity of faith, by the Son of God. The congregation of Christ is the core of humanity, the salt of the earth, the light of the world. Whoever is a living member of that Church, counts the best and most noble of our race, prophets and apostles, Church fathers, martyrs and reformers, among his brothers and sisters. And more than all is the faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.

There is no reason in our fatherland, to be discouraged and withdraw from the world. For Christians are never and nowhere a sect, even though they are contradicted, at least they are not like that in Holland, for this nation was born out of the Reformation. Christianity here is truly national (early 20th Century, Tr.), and the confessors of the Reformed religion are no strangers and foreigners, but citizens, children of the fathers, who fought with good and blood for the truth. When we think of all these things, we must be truly faithful in confessing and holy conversation! A strong faith is needed to bear up when people spake evil of us for the sake of the gospel, although they speak lies. The influence of the masses is like a charm cast on the individual. The danger is always great to submit to the majority. On the other hand, believers may be encouraged by the thought that together they came to Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the general assembly of the first born, who are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and the spirits of men made perfect, and to the Mediator of the New Covenant. So we have nothing to be afraid of, for those that are with us, are more than those that are with them.

02.10. The Wages For Confessing Good

THE WAGES FOR CONFESSING A GOOD CONFESSION Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven.Matthew 10:32.

A reward is promised to those who confess the Lord's name, a reward that is great in heaven.

Scripture speaks repeatedly of a reward that shall be given to believers when Christ returns from heaven. It is granted as compensation for what the disciples was denied, suffered, or the good works of love and mercy they performed for the sake of Christ. Scripture does not hesitate, by reflecting on these wages, to urge believers to persevere in their confession. Scripture is not concerned that hereby a false principle is brought into practical godliness, that will give occasion to serve God for happiness and heavenly salvation.

Scripture speaks repeatedly of wages, but is averse of all service for wages. Payment that awaits the faithful servant, is no obligation, is no right by nature, is not paying a debt for work that is done. Scripture knows nothing about that kind of wages, and by the relationship in which she places the creature to its Creator, she cuts it off by the roots. He who does everything that is commanded, is still an unprofitable servant. Man is, and has nothing of himself, and therefore can give nothing to God on Whom he depends. He can give nothing, because he must receive everything. He is no party over against God, who has inalienable rights, and in the form of a contract can ask wages for work that he does.

God from His side has freely promised, that all who walk in His ways He will richly crown with gifts of His favour. To that He obligated Himself in the first covenant, when He opened the way to eternal life and heaven's salvation, to all those who obey His commandments. These are no wages as payment for work that is done, for what comparison is there between the relative easy and in itself obligated keeping of the Lord's commandments and the free gift of eternal life in communion with God?

He also obligates Himself in the covenant of grace, to grant eternal life to all who believe in Christ. But for wages is here in the true sense of the word, even less a place. For believing is nothing but accepting the gift of grace, which appeared in Christ, and merits no more than taking hold of the rope by one who is in danger of drowning. But God is so good to grant faith, not for its own sake, but for Christ's sake, forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation, and by glory awaiting the believer, encourages them to persevere. So both are true, on the one hand all benefits of the covenant are secured before any work, and is bound only to faith, and on the other hand we are seriously urged to do good works, as if that is the way in which these benefits are received. Believers are elect from eternity and must make their calling and election sure. By faith they are partakers of life eternal and yet at one time for denying self, shall receive wages from the Father's hand. They are branches of the Vine and without Christ they can do nothing, yet they are admonished to abide in Him, in His Word, in His love. They are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God ordained, yet they must walk in them. They are holy, and yet, must sanctify

themselves from day to day. They crucified the flesh with its lusts, and yet, are called upon to mortify their members that are here on earth. They are certain of their salvation, for God's election cannot be changed, His calling is without repentance, His covenant immovable, His promises Yea and Amen. Yet they are continuously urged to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, to be faithful unto death and to persevere unto the end.

Holy Scripture promotes no passive, but a working, active Christianity. Scripture wants the believer to increase; that they obtain what they inherited; that more and more they make it their possession, what in Christ they own. That is how what is seen as an unmerited gift, can be introduced as wages. It can be called wages, because faith and persevering faith is the only way whereby believers may become full partakers of the benefits, which Christ, by pure grace gives them. Without sanctification no one shall see the Lord. By those wages we can understand heavenly salvation itself, but also the different degrees of glory, which shall be given to believers according to their works. As it is on earth, so shall it be in heaven. There is diversity in unity. Another is the glory of the sun, and another the glory of the moon, and another is the glory of the stars; for the one star differs in glory from another star. In the house of the Father, where all God's children go, are many mansions. According to their faithfulness, the congregations receive their own crown from the King of the Church. For we must all be revealed before the judgment seat of Christ, and everyone shall receive according to what he has done, be it good or evil.

Then the separation between man and man will be complete. With Christ's first coming, yes, with the very first announcement of the promise of His coming, this crisis, this judgment began in the world. Christ came to the rise and fall of many. He did not come to bring peace on the earth, but the sword, to make a man rise up against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. He compels everybody to choose for Him or against Him. His Word is judge of the thoughts of the heart. His gospel is a savour of life, or a savour of death unto death. That separation shall come to an end at the day of His coming, when everything shall be revealed before the judgment seat. For the Father gave all judgment to the Son, for He is the Son of man. The lot of every person is then determined, whether Christ will acknowledge him for His own and confess him before His Father, in heaven. Our salvation depends wholly upon His public confession.

Christ was not ashamed of us at His incarnation. He had many reasons to be ashamed of us. For He was the firstborn of the Father, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, Who thought it not robbery to be equal with the Father. And we were loaded with sins, unclean from the head to the feet, and subject to condemnation. Yet, He was not ashamed to call us His brethren, not before God, neither before the holy angels. He took our flesh and blood, our nature, and became like one of us, sin excepted. Even God was not ashamed to be called our God in Christ. And so He shall not be ashamed of us in the day of His coming. When He comes again it wiill not be as servant, but as Lord, not to suffer, but to be glorified, not to a cross but to a crown. But He shall not be ashamed of us. For He Who ascended far above the heavens, is the same Who descended in the lower parts of the earth. He that judges, is the Son of man, Who came at one time, to seek and save that which was lost, Hallelujah! Our Judge is our Saviour, Who never forgets nor leaves His own. He who shall confess Me before men, He testifies, Him I will also confess before My Father, Who is in heaven.

Openly, in view of the whole world, in the ears of all creatures, He shall speak for them. However despised they were here on earth, Christ shall take their name upon His lips, and speak in the ears of all, that they are His and no power on earth or in hell can take them from Him. And as Christ says, so shall it be. His Word shall have power in all of creation. His confession is valid for all creatures. No one shall be able to criticize these Words. His judgment is above all criticism and shall be high above the judgment of men and devils. Heaven and earth, hell and all creatures shall never be able to change it.

More than this - the Father shall rest in this work of His Son. As God saw, after He created that what He made, see it was very good, so shall He with Divine good pleasure on the end of days, look down at the great work of redemption, that Christ accomplished. When the Church without spot or wrinkle is presented before Him and the finished Kingdom shall be given into His hands, than shall the Father take all those redeemed by the Son to be His children, they shall partake of His fellowship and rejoice in seeing His glorious face. The public confession by Christ, of the believers, before His Father Who is in heaven, shall be warrant for their eternal blessedness and glory.

02.11. The Triumph Of Confessing

THE TRIUMPH OF CONFESSING Wherefore God hath also highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.Php 2:9-11.

Deep in his heart man hides the hope that truth shall at one time gain the upperhand, and good shall triumph over evil.

All religions cherish that expectation and speak of a blessing, which the kingdom of light, on the end of the age shall gain over the kingdom of darkness. All philosophical systems paint an ideal situation, in which humanity surrounded by the pure air of the future and its clear sunshine, shall live in peace and joy, true, free and good. All people seek for paradise, to which innocence returns and prosperity shall be the portion of all. Even the most unbelieving think of this sweet hope and dream of a kingdom of the true, good and beautiful, that after shorter or longer time will be their portion. But only, there is no ground for that hope. For on what ground can we believe on the triumph of truth and righteousness, when there is no God of truth and righteousness, and no Christ, anointed by the Father, to institute the kingdom and create a new heaven and a new earth? The gods of the heathen are the work of the hands of men. The future hope of philosophy is imagination of the human mind: and the true, good and beautiful are pleasant sounds, but no powers that are able to bring themselves to rule all people. To expect salvation here, it is necessary to build on men and to expect from them, that they slowly and gradually will appreciate truth and exercise virtue. Because of this it is very unlikely that this hope will be realised. For certainly, there is progress in material prosperity, expansion of men’s rule over nature, its powers render more charm to everyday living. But as all acknowledge, material progress is not equivalent to moral progress. Our age looks down on all that went before, yet justice is trodden under foot, truth fails in the streets, greed and covetousness are on the increase, and there are no limits to glorifying the powers. Civilization, science and the arts are willing to serve brute force. On the one hand culture is satiated, but there is misery and complaint on the other hand. It seems that man is further removed from paradise than ever before. In any case, history has clearly proven, that we may not expect anything from human efforts, and the immanent self development of humanity in the world. When there is nothing else, there only is room for discouragement and fearful doubt. To be without God and Christ in this world, is to be without hope in the world. Our salvation is from above.

Again, it is in the spiritual as it is in the natural. Like the earth receives its light and air, its rain and sunshine, its increase and fruitfulness from above, so also for its spiritual life, mankind depends on the world of invisible and eternal goods, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. That is why He, Who is the light, the life of the world, descended from above. From there He gathers, keeps and protects His Church, which is His body. For He is exalted to be the Head on the Father’s right hand, and He will fill all things with Himself, and rule as King until all His enemies are

laid at His footstool. And so He will at one time come down from heaven. His second coming is included in the first, and of necessity at its time flow forth from it. It is not just an appendage, but is inseparably connected with it. For the work of Christ is to save; not just making salvation possible, but granting salvation itself, completely and forever. But His work was not finished with just obtaining salvation on earth. How could a Christ, Who only died for us and not lived and prayed for us and not appeared for good before God's countenance for us, be to our profit? But He Who descended is the same, Who ascended far above the heavens, that He should fill all things. He applies what He obtained. What He began, He will finish. He does not rest, may not rest, before He completely saves His people, and renews heaven and earth.

Maranatha, the Lord is coming. He comes again, first of all, for His own sake. His name, His office, His honour are at stake. He comes again to show to all the world, that He is the true, the perfect Saviour; that He saves, not only in name but in deed and truth; that He grants eternal life to all that are given Him of the Father; that no one plucked them out of His hand, or will do so; that He is the same yesterday, today and forevermore.

He comes again, to do vengeance with flaming fire over all those, who know not God and are disobedient to the gospel. But also to be glorified in His saints; to be acknowledged and honoured by all creatures as the only true Lord, to the glory of God the Father. So the history of the world will end in union of confessing. At one time angels and devils, the righteous and the ungodly shall acknowledge with one voice that Christ is God's only Son, and therefore heir of all things. At that time every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord. At the present time this confession can be spoken against and be resisted. For we are looking at a world that contains invisible things. To see its truths, we need a faith that is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. We walk by faith, not by sight. The world that only reckons with things that can be seen, can contradict the congregation, deem its faith foolishness, and sees her hope for a dream. Even the appearance is against us. For from the day that the fathers fell asleep, things remain as they were from the creation, and mockers ask the question, "Where is the promise of His coming?" But it will change, Maranatha. In a vision John saw "Heaven opened, and see, a white horse, and he who sat upon him was named Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and makes war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written: KING of KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:11-; Revelation 19:15). When Christ shall appear in glory, no one will be able to resist Him. All eyes shall see Him, also those who pierced Him. They shall see Him with their own natural eyes, and no unbelief, no doubt shall be possible. Then all creatures must acknowledge, that Christ is Lord. They must acknowledge it, if not voluntary, they will be pressed into acknowledging it, if not willing, than unwilling. From the throne in the midst of heaven, through all creation, into the depths of the abyss, only one voice will be heard: Christ the Lord! And all creatures together, shall bow the knee for Him, Who was deeply humiliated and died on a cross, but is also highly exalted and is set on the throne on the right-hand of the Father.

What a future, what a spectacle! All creation on its knees before Jesus! And on all lips, the ever repeating, but all embracing, now by many despised, but then by all acknowledged confession, that Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father!

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment. And He Who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, Will not blot out the name of that believer from the book of life, but will confess his name before the Father, and before His angels.

S. Creation or Development

Creation or Development? By Herman Bavinck

Unless we are mistaken in our interpretation of the signs of the times, the twentieth century, upon which we have just entered, is to witness a gigantic conflict of spirits. Faith and unbelief, says Goeethe, is the deepest theme of the history of the world. This it has been in the centuries that lie behind us. This it was in that one which we have just closed and abandoned to the past. And this it will be above all things else and in an entirely special sense in the twentieth century, which has just disclosed itself to us. For the conflict of convictions and intentions has spread itself across an ever-widening domain, and has assumed an even more radical character. It is well known that at present this conflict is no longer confined to one or another article of our Christian confession, to the authority of Scripture or tradition, to justification or election; and not even any longer to the Deity of Christ or the personality of the Holy Spirit. But in the spiritual conflict which is now waging in every part of the civilized world, the points at issue more and more are the principles of Christianity itself, and the very fundamentals of all religion and of all morality. This conflict extends the whole length of the line. More serious and fiercer than ever before the conflict is between the old and the new world-view. For man has undertaken the gigantic effort of interpreting the whole world, and all things that are therein, in their origin, essence, and end, what is called purely and strictly scientifically, that is, without God, without any visible, supernatural, spiritual element, and simply and alone from the pure data of matter and force.

Such effort, indeed, has been tried before. But then the men who undertook to do it stood isolated, and wielded only a limited influence in their own circles. Ordinarily also they succeeded no further than a few crude outlines of world- interpretation, but failed of furnishing the data from which to work them out and to apply them to the divisions and subdivisions of what exists. The systems which they offered did not agree; lame parts were soon discovered in them; they allowed too much room for accident. Even such a thinker as Spinoza was not able to establish other than a mathematical relation between the substance and its attributes and modes, and left the origin of the world altogether unexplained. But, it is said, all this is now entirely changed. Hegel’s pantheism has furnished the idea of the absolute, eternal process of becoming. The materialism of Feuerbach has applied this idea to the world of matter and force as the only existing one. And in the struggle for existence, in the natural and sexual choice of propagation, in the inheritance of the acquired properties, and in the accommodation to surroundings, Darwin’s theory of development has provided the necessary means to make this process of the eternal becoming intelligible in the material world. Thus with the change of the century there has been gradually a new world-view arisen which undertakes to interpret not merely the inanimate but also the animate creations, not merely the unconscious but also the conscious, and all this without exception independently of God, and only and alone from an immanent self-development. As a matter of course the followers of this doctrine of development do not all go equally far in the application. There are many who shrink from the inferences, who halt at a given point, and who in imitation of Kant abandon a lesser or greater domain to mystery. These are the agnostics, the dualists, who say, "We do not know,"

and also, "We shall never know," and who take it for granted that the realm which is accessible to science is surrounded by an unknown land of impenetrable mystery of the unknowable. While they limit the real, the strictly scientific knowing to the world of the sensually observable, and of the measurable and ponderable things, they seek to maintain round about this world an inaccessible domain which can be peopled by each individual with the representations of his faith or the creations of his imagination. Despairing of an all-embracing and all-inclusive world-view they leave faith and knowledge divided and irreconciled, and the keep two sets of books of truths. But it is readily perceived that this standpoint is untenable. All conservatism stands weak over against radicalism, with which it agrees in principle. He who fully accepts the theory of development in the sensual, observable world cannot dismiss it at once and without explanation when spiritual phenomena appear. Even though provisionally a small domain is then set aside for faith, this domain is bound to become ever smaller; even as it was with the domain of the redskins in America, as they were forced to recede from before the invading whites. One fortification after another must then be sacrificed, one line of defense after another be abandoned, and one concession after another be granted. There is no immovable conviction in these conservative dualists, no strength of faith, no enthusiastic courage. And hence they are ever bound to lower the flag before the radicals, who have the courage of their convictions, who shrink from no inferences, and who, beginning and continuing without God, are determined also to end without God. Hence these are the men of the future. Conservatives and liberals die out, but the radicals and socialists are to be the leaders of the twentieth century. They have agreed to hold a total and final clearing out of whatever of the old Christian world-view consciously or unconsciously still remains in our laws and morals, in our education and civilization. For they realize that in the long run man, who thirsts after unity, cannot live by the duality and amphibiousness of believing and knowing. They feel the urgency of the need of harmony between all our convictions, tendencies, and deeds. And therefore they exert themselves all the more strenuously by philosophic thought to erect upon the foundation of the materialistic natural science a well-finished and harmonious world-view which will put an end to the imperfect knowledge as well as to the foolish faith of former days and cause all things to appear before the soul’s eye in the magical light of a world-embracing system.

Thus presently over against the old world-view there will be placed the new world-view thought out to its latest instance and consequently applied to every department of life, namely, the irreligious over against the Christian, the atheistic over against the theistic, the mechanical over against the organic, or as it has been named, the world-view of development over against that of creation. It is our purpose to compare these two world-views at three points, as the questions are put after the origin, essence, and end of all things, in order that the comparison may establish us the more firmly in the Christian faith and may gird us with strength for the conflict which, in lesser or greater measures of fierceness, awaits us all.

Part I.

There are many, many things whose knowledge is of little consequence to man. No slightest value attaches to the knowledge of how many drops of water there are in the ocean, how many grains of sand lie on the shore of the sea, how many leaves there are on one tree, or how many hairs there are on our heads. There are those who busy themselves with these things and seek pleasure in curiosities. Even science is sometimes in danger in our times of losing itself in all sorts of detail investigation, and by reason of the numerous trees to loose sight of the forest. Literature, for

instance, is often bent upon tracing out the smallest particulars from the lives of the poets and especially to exhibit their chronique scandaleuse in broadest folds, without adding thereby the least help to a better knowledge and a broader appreciation of their art products. But science is not aided by all this. For science is no knowledge of all sorts of insignificant minutiae, but an insight into the essence of things, and an understanding of the idea, the logic, and the universal which is to be observed in things. But even then, on scientific ground there is a great difference in the value of knowledge. There is knowledge which is of highest importance to the school which tends to the development of the head, but which is altogether apart from the interests of the heart, and has therefore no significance for life. The saying of Schopenhauer contains a great truth; namely, You do not cease from praising the reliability and accuracy of mathematics; but what does it avail me to know with utmost certainty the thing which does not concern me? Thomas Aquinas has truly said that the least that can be known of highest interests is more desirable and of greater value than the completest and most accurate knowledge of futile and indifferent things.

There is knowledge which is of highest interest and urgent necessity to every man, without distinction. These are questions of life, whose answer each man requires because it stands in closest connection with the temporal and eternal wellbeing. Whatever is said, all people are conscious of it in turn that the life of man is no play, but an awful reality, whose seriousness creates concern, since nothing less than an eternity hangs on it. Each man is convinced of this in the deepest parts of his soul, and shows it by seeking, even though in wrong ways, after a highest, enduring, and eternal good. Our heart is created for God, and it does not rest until it finds this at his Father heart. Hence we should know whence we come, what the source and origin of all things is, whether the last ground of all existing things is matter or spirit, force of person, unconscious impulse, or almighty will of God, he Creator of heaven and earth. The development theory of our times meets this question with the answer that in reality there is no origin and no beginning of things. All what is always was, though it be in other forms, and always shall be. The law of substance, that is, the theory the every equal quantity, of the indestructibility of matter and force, especially since the famous treatise by Helmholtz on Die Erhaltung der Kraft, published in 1847, is according to naturalists irrefutably demonstrated and established beyond all doubt. This is the great discovery of the nineteenth century. Said Professor Haga at Gronigen last year, in his rectoral oration on the development of natural science, "A particle of water can be traced from the moment it falls on the tops of the mountains as a snowflake, and as glacier-ice requires years to be pushed ahead, until it melts and in the brook is carried along to river and sea, where once more it evaporates and becomes fluid in the atmosphere as part of a cloud." This is taught of matter. But this same law is valid with reference to the power which can be moved and changed but never reduced or increased in quantity. The railway train, said the same professor, which has suddenly the brakes put on loses its capacity of motion, but the heat developed in the skid, wheels, and rails represents an equally great quantity of capacity of work. From this important law many present-day naturalists infer that substance is eternal. There is no origination and no passing away in any actual sense, no being born and no dying. What is was from all eternity and shall be to all eternity. There is change of form, of appearance, and endless transformation; there is an eternal process, an unbegun and a never-ending circular movement of matter and force. But the substance is indestructible; it is the only, absolute, eternal being, which penetrates and fills eternal time and infinite space. It is, if you please, the Deity of the newer world-view. There is no other god. It has no other properties, no higher virtues and perfections, no more exalted names than

matter and force. And it is no blessed, glorious, and all-sufficient being, but a restless becoming, and eternal urgency subject to an ever-continuing process of motion. From this motion, which is taken as eternally belonging to matter and force, the origin of all things is to be interpreted. Development, evolution is the eternal law, which governs and directs everything that exists; with its blind fate and incalculable accident it displaces Divine Providence. The origin of our planetary system is explained according to this law. Our world in its present form was preceded by thousand others, which in turn came into being after this same law and have passed away. When the last preceding one had dissolved itself into a gaseous mass of mists, from which, according to a probable esteemed hypothesis of Kant and Laplace, the present world has appeared with its sun, moon, and stars, and also our earth, gradually by consolidation, rotation, and forming of the globe. But as everywhere else, upon this earth also development continues itself by the ceaseless motion of matter and force. Along long, immeasurably long lines of regularity the higher develops itself from the lower. By all sorts of evolutions the earth forms itself into a fit dwelling place for living things. First there is the inanimate, the formation of seas and lands, of mountains and streams, of minerals and layers of earth. Then matter organizes itself ever along finer lines and the operations of force become every more intricate, until at length under favorable circumstances from inorganic matter the cell originates, which is the bearer of life. And when it is once again come, then in the course of centuries there develop themselves the kingdoms of plants and animals, in every higher formation, richer variety, and greater numbers. There is no deep, broad chasm between the animate and the inanimate, but a gradual transition. There is only a more intricate construction, finer organization, a higher development. Along the same way at length man arrives upon the scene. He also is not brought by the hand of the Creator, bearing his image; but he is the higher development of that species of animals, whose next of kin still continue to live on in the orangutan, gorilla, and chimpanzee. In the fierce struggle for existence some animals, by acquiring and inheriting every more excellent properties, have gradually developed themselves in one or other part of the earth into men. There has not been a first man. No one is able to indicate where the animal ceases and man begins. There is a slow, gradual development spreading itself across many centuries; by the smallest possible changes in the largest possible spaces of time from the lower all the higher has come forth; and man himself is the result of a process covering many millions of years. This is the new and newest interpretation of the origin of things. There is something imposing, something which takes hold of one mightily in this view. There is contained in it unity of thought, boldness of conception, and sequence of principle. It is readily understood that it charms many. Yes, when one does not believe in revelation which furnishes another interpretation of all creatures, one is bound in a similar way to render the origin of things in some measure intelligible to himself. They must have come from somewhere and have originated in some way. The theory may still be incomplete and leave many phenomena in the physical and psychical world unexplained, nevertheless, according to Straus, Darwin is hailed as the greatest benefactor of the human race, because he has opened the door through which a more fortunate posterity will be able to cast out the miracle for good. An age which denies the supernatural and even shakes off all religion, cannot do other, all opposition notwithstanding, than expect all salvation from the reason, its own thinking, and to see the solution of all the riddles of the world in development. But however much this system may seem to be inwardly united and however readily we may account for its influence and popularity, it is not a product of science, but of the imagination; it is a play of conceptions on the part of the understanding which thirsts after unity. It

is said to be built upon the foundation of empirical physics, aided by logical thinking; but it is a castle in the air, without any solid foundation, and without any severity of style, an air castle in the true sense of the word. With the laying of the very first stone it abandons empirics, the reliable results of physics. It is no science in any serious sense, no science exacte, as it is claimed to be, but a world-view with which the subject plays his parts, a philosophy as uncertain as any system of the philosophers, and individual opinion of as much significance as that of every other man. That this assertion is correct is shown by the fact that though this system has been more broadly worked out in this century just closed and furnished with data from physics, in principle it has been thought out and recommended by philosophers long ago. Neither in former centuries nor in this has materialism been the result of severe scientific investigation, but the fruit of philosophical thought. Indeed, from the nature of the case physics can never go back of nature. It stands on the ground of nature, assumes its existence, and hence cannot answer the question of origin. As soon as it undertakes to do this it leaves its lines, ceases to be physics and becomes philosophy, on an equal standing with the other philosophical systems which as grass and flower of the field may bloom today but wither tomorrow. Physics may have discovered in this century the law of the conservation of work- capacity, but with no logical possibility can the inference be drawn from this that matter and force are eternal. What exists now has for this reason not existed always. And what human power is not able to destroy is therefore not indestructible. The word "eternal" has no place in the vocabulary of physics, for it has only to do with the finite and the seen things and is limited to the relative. It steps across its own boundaries when it speaks of eternal matter, eternal force, infinite space, and time without end. Whenever it does this it plays with words whose meaning it does not understand and whose copulation is as contradictory as that of a wooden iron and a square circle.

It is more foolish still when it speaks of eternal motion. An eternal motion would also have been run down eternally and this be a standstill. For what falls in time is transitory, and what is eternal does not fall in time. Motion assumes a moving force, which gives the impetus, which produces and maintains it. Greek philosophers were so convinced of this, that from the motion of the world they concluded a first mover. It may, indeed, be said that the universe moves itself, that it is a perpetuum mobile; but aside from this being a miracle equally great as the creation, it is as little possible to think this of the world as a whole as of one of its parts. For it is always the same substance, the same matter and force which dwells in the whole universe and in each of its parts. And motion is not everything. There is no motion without direction. What is the force, which not only moves but also leads the motion in a given direction? What is it owing to that motion takes such a direction, that it results in the formation of sun and planets, of heaven and earth, of minerals and plants, of animals and man in an ascending series? An appeal to the blind force of substance by way of explanation is equally absurd, as when, after the example of Cicero, one accounts for a book such as the Iliad from an accidental cast of a thousand letters.

But, apart from all this, what does physics know of the substance of things? Because it moves continually in the world of things that are seen it asserts that there is nothing else than matter and force contained therein. Always dealing with matter it disregards and denies spirit. Theology is accused, and justly so, of having usurped, in early times, all the sciences. But no science has ever done this more entirely than physical science of the present day. It claims to be the only science and even outstrips English and Russian imperialism in its ambition for annexation. It declares

consecutively biology and psychology, theology and philosophy as incorporated with itself, it forces its method upon all the sciences, and considers the mechanical interpretation the only one that is warranted to the claim of being scientific.

And, after all, it does not know what to do with all the phenomena which constitute the object of these several sciences. She does not know what substance is, and when she claims that it is nothing but matter and force, she cannot tell what each of these is, nor how they are related. Such a man as Haeckel, who shrinks from no riddle, was bound to confess that the inner essence of things is unknown. And little as she is able to penetrate the essence of matter and force, she is still less able to analyze the innermost being of life. Life, all life, is a secret which is to be reverenced but not explained. He who analyzes it kills it. All tracings and investigations have not lifted a corner of the veil which hangs across this mystery of creation. By the studies, especially by those of Pasteur at Paris, it has been shown that even with the lowest organic beings, namely, the infusorien, life does not originate of itself by mechanical changes of matter; there is no generatio aequivoca. Despairing of a mechanical interpretation, others, such as the English naturalist Thomson (Lord Kelvin), sought refuge in the supposition that life-germs had fallen in meteor stones from other planets upon this earth and thus had imparted existence to organic creatures; and this, as is seen at once, merely puts the problem off, while, moreover, it ascribes the origin of living creatures in the earth to a pure accident. With Haeckel it was held that life needs no interpretation, since it is equally eternal as matter and force and motion--which is no better than a mere play of words and is equivalent to a confession of weakness. With younger investigators, such as Bunge, Rindfleisch, Driesch, Ostwald, Reinke, Pictet, etc., returns were made to the at first disdainfully rejected life-power and alongside of a mechanical, an organic, energetical principle was also adopted in the world-view. Omne vivum ex vivo, all the living comes forth from the living, is still the latest word of science. This new world-view involves itself still more in a net of contradictions when it handles the question of the origin of man. It is indeed stated, as the consistency of the starting point claims, that man descended from the animal. But it has not been demonstrated by a single phenomenon. It was known in earlier times that all sorts of relationships exist between animal and man, it is taught in the Scriptures, and at most has been indicated in our age in several particulars. With the animals man was created on the sixth day. His body also was formed from the dust; of the earth he is earthy. But all the features of relationship give no right to the conclusion that man and animal belong to one family and that they are blood relations. For greater far than the undeniable points of similarity is the far-reaching difference between man and animal indicated by the vertical position, formation of hand, skull, and brains, and still more by the reason and self-consciousness, by thought and language, by religion and morality, by science and art. Moreover, no single sample has been produced of the transition forms which with a common descent must have existed in great numbers. Some finds of human bones and skulls have been hailed enthusiastically as remnants of the so ardently longed-for transition forms. But a more accurate investigation brought ever again to light that all these remnants were original with common people, men of like movements with ourselves. In spite of diligent and zealous investigations there is nothing in advance this day of the word of Rudolf Virchow, that every fossil type of lower human development is wanting. No one has thus far demonstrated where and when and how the animals have developed themselves into men. As far as we can go back into the past, animals have been animals and men men. The descendance theory of Darwin may be an indispensable link in the doctrine of development; it finds no support in facts. Man always has and

still does form a distinct species in the world of creatures. For this reason there is still room in science for the wondrously beautiful narrative which the opening chapters of the Bible contain concerning the origin of things. We, too, acknowledge a unity which holds and binds together all created things. But we do not take this unity to lie in a cold, dead substance, but in the living God, the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. It lies in his consciousness, in his will, in his counsel. In the beginning it was not chaotic matter, the unconscious force, the impulse devoid of reason, but the conscious, spoken and at the same time speaking Word, which called all things into being. The creatures do not owe their origin to an emanation from, or to an evolution of the Absolute, that is, God. For both are contradictory to the conception of the Absolute, which is in itself unchangeable, eternal, and perfect being, and admits of no emanation of development. Creation alone, which harmonizes with the being of God as well as with that of the creatures, interprets the origin of things. And thus the Scripture states it. In an ascending series, covering a period of six days, by the word of his power the Almighty brings all things to appear from the unseen world of thought. He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. He calleth those things which be not as though they were. Heaven and earth, firmament and clouds, mountains and streams, sun, moon, and stars, grass and herbs, creeping and four-footed animals. He forms them all by the breath of his Spirit from the chaos of being. And he crowns his work with the creation of man after his image and likeness. Hence everything is of divine descent, allied to the Son, animated by the breath of the Spirit; everything is resting upon thought and will, upon understanding and counsel; and therefore everything mutually allied is one world, one cosmos, which receives its crown and glory, its lord and master, in Man of God’s own family.

What an insight into the origin of things! What an exalted simplicity! Here is poetry and truth and religion all in one. This is both natural science and philosophy. Experience and thought, head and heart are here reconciled. Here is a view of the world which satisfies both consciousness and conscience and responds to all the aspirations of man. From the other side, it may be said, better be an ennobled ape than a degenerate Adam, or, better be the highest of animals than the lowest of gods; but these very sayings betray the pride of man, who will be his own creator and in science also fails in the temptation of equality with God. They not only reject the Word of God, and are therefore devoid of wisdom, but they also extinguish the light of reason, saying in their heart, "There is no God," and are darkened in their understanding and vain in the thoughts of their heart.

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Part II.

Equally important as the first inquiry into the origin is the second, which investigates the essence of things. What is the world? What is humanity and the individual? What am I? An answer to these questions is also indispensable to the unity of our thought and the peace of our heart. The new world-view is at once ready with its answer. It asserts, of course, that in reality all creatures are one and the same. There is nothing but matter and force, which constitute the substance of all things and only changes in endless series of forms. There is no God, there are no spirits, there is no heaven, there is no world of invisible things, no kingdom of eternal goods, no moral world-order. Nothing exists save this visible world of measurable and ponderable things, which is

moved by purely mechanical and chemical forces. In a word, the world is a machine, and, as a clock, runs down. It is distinguished, however, from a machine made by man, in that the latter has been put together by a reasonable will and is still governed by it. But the world--wonderful saying--is a machine which has construed itself, which continuously holds itself in motion, and which, completely blind, without reason and purpose, eternally runs on and never down. Hence the world is no living, animated organic unity, but an eternal existence of one and the same sort, a circular motion devoid of purpose, an endless, useless round upon round, monotonous and wearisome as the wave-beat of the ocean and the flying wheels of a factory. The organism, the living being, and man also have their place in this mechanism. For there are no creatures who differ from each other in being; there are no species which, though allied, are separated from each other in origin. All living beings are automatons, machines, even as inorganic creatures, only more finely construed and more artistically constructed. Man also forms no exception. He has neither a soul nor liberty, neither responsibility, independence, nor personality. In fact, he does not live, he is being lived. There are phenomena peculiar to him which we call psychical. But this gives us no warrant to conclude that these are altogether his own. For practical reasons they are only provisionally distinguished from physical, sensually observable phenomena. For in kind and nature they are really the same. The are but the finest products of the richest developed change of matter.

Simply because man is more finely construed than animals, and again because his highest and noblest construction is the brain, he produces finer and nobler products than other creatures. Hence all the psychical phenomena which we find with man find their preparation and analogy with plants and animals. Understanding, reason, consciousness, will, feeling, passions, tendencies, all occur in an undeveloped form with lower organisms. The difference is in degree, not in kind. With man all these phenomena are produced in the same mechanical, chemical way. What a man thinks and wills and does, he must think, will, and do. Even as bile separates itself from the liver, so thought separates itself from the brain. The better, the finer, the greater the brain, the better, the deeper, the richer the thought. Ohne Phosphor kein Gedanke ("without phosphorous no thought"). In a word, as a man eats, so is he. This same interpretation is applied to all spiritual and moral goods which are common to man. Language, religion, morality, art, science, law, history, etc., at its latest instance, is all product of change of matter, results of circumstances. If animals, says Darwin, were educated as men, they too would be men. Fate of accident alone, whichever you please to call it, has determined it otherwise. First living as beasts, climbing the branches of trees, in communion with women, without any sense of right or law, of good and evil, compelled by circumstances, in the manner of bees and ants and beetles, they have gradually formed colonies. And in those colonies, alongside and over against the animal and selfish inclinations which are originally common to man social instincts have slowly developed, which weighed up against the others, and held them in balance, and caused men to live not exclusively for themselves but to some extent for others. Protected and encouraged by society these social instincts have gradually fostered the sense of right and wrong, of good and evil, of true and false, and quickened the need of arts and sciences. Hence there is no moral world-order, no objective right, no unchangeable law of morals, no absolute distinction of good and bad. It is all the product of circumstances. Under other relations the moral law would be entirely different, good would be evil, right wrong, and truth falsehood. Even religion has no objective value. It is born from the conflict of the feeling of self and the feeling of need. Dependent upon and oftentimes helpless over against nature, and bound to

maintain himself in a physical or ethical sense, man reaches out after invisible powers which he takes to exist analogous to his own spiritual life, first in and afterward above nature, and by sacrifice and prayer he tries to engage their help in the conflict. But there is no religion in the sense of a service of God, for there is no God. At most, religion has a subjective value. Man alone is the standard of things.

Such is the thought of the newer world-view concerning the essence of material and spiritual phenomena. One might almost ask, How is it possible? And in any case, How can faith in such a view be claimed in the name of science? For it is at once clear that from this view-point there is no difference of good and evil, of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood. Everything is good and beautiful and true in its time and place, according to the individual faith and choice. And yet the adherents of the newer world-view claim to have the truth--the pure, full truth, which chases away the mists, expels error, and opens the state of happiness. They think they have a world without riddle, without mystery, and with unknown boldness they force it upon others. Skeptical according to their principle, they are on the one side hardened dogmatists in practice, and oftentimes worse fanatics than the adherents of religious belief. While they do not acknowledge objective truth, they are more certain of the truth of their own teaching than many an orthodox believer. By which single fact they pay homage to the validity and the value of the old world-view at a radical and decisive point. Sin is always doomed in spite of itself to pay homage to virtue, and falsehood in whatever garment it hides itself is compelled to confess respect for the truth which it antagonizes. When in the name of science, that is, in the name of truth, the defenders of the new world-view demand faith in their system, they cannot do otherwise than acknowledge the objective, of human opinion, independent difference of truth and falsehood, and thus also of good and bad, or right or wrong, of the beautiful and the unsightly.

Yea, more, when with the warmth of conviction, with eloquence of speech, and force of argument they seek to make their truth the common good of humanity and thereby contribute to the state of future happiness, which is the realm of the true, good, and beautiful, the "trinity of monism," they mean the world of unseen goods which far excels the world of visible things and rules and dominates it. By their trying to break the compulsion of nature by their serious thinking and strong will they show that they themselves are citizens of a higher, reasonable, and moral world which is exalted far above the mechanical order of nature and differs from it in essence. They themselves do not rest content with the physical necessity, but they honor the independence and the liberty of human personality. They furnish the strongest proof that they are no machines, no animals, but men--men of God’s own generation, created after his image.

Indeed, this image never allows itself to be entirely wiped out. It operates also in the most deeply sunken and most widely errant man. It bears an indelible character, and asserts itself even in the unrest and in the accusation of the conscience. Man can adhere to falsehood, but he never does it and never can do it save as he holds it to be truth, and thereby pays homage to the truth. He can be the servant of sin, but he never is nor ever can be, except as he reckons evil to be good and so pays his respect to the good. He can kneel down to an idol, but he never does it and he never can do it except as he thinks that in the idol he sees the only true and living God and confesses awe and fear of the Eternal Being. God leaves himself without witness to no man. In each man’s consciousness and conscience, reason and heart there reveals itself a kingdom of eternal and unseen goods, which steps not out of the way of any doubt and shrinks from no bold denial. The

materialist may gaze himself blind upon the material world; spiritual, ideal goods are also goods, though they cannot be weighed or measured, or converted into bank notes. Sin, guilt, remorse, repentance, grace, love, comfort, forgiveness, etc., are also phenomena which must be interpreted, as well as the world of ponderable material and mechanical force. The interpretation which the newer world-view offers of these spiritual and moral phenomena is really not worthy of the name. Confess, can it be called an interpretation when personality is robbed of its liberty; when the objective existence of true and false, of good and evil, of right and wrong is denied; when religion and morality is dissolved in a fancy? We do not dispute the warrant of tracing out as far and deep as possible the unmistakable connection and mutual relation of the spiritual and material phenomena. But as little as he who anatomically and physiologically investigates the brains, interprets the thought, or he who anatomically or physiologically investigates the heart, interprets love, just so little has he discovered the secret of religion and morality, of art and science, who exposes to the light their connection with the social conditions of any given period of time. Whoever thinks this mocks, indeed, at the needs of the human heart. They do as the unmerciful friends in Jesus' parable: when we ask them for bread they give us a stone; when we ask them for fish they give us a scorpion, as a proof that the mercies of the wicked are still cruel, and he who will feed on this bread of science will, according to Isaiah 29:8, be as a hungry man who dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but when he awaketh his soul is empty; or as when a thirsty man dreams that he drinks, when he awakes, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite. The development theory, therefore, is unable to interpret the richness and variety of creation. Indeed, the word development is not in place at the view-point of the mechanical world-interpretation. Evolutionists have unlawfully appropriated it and use it as a device to hide their poverty, and as a flag which does not cover their cargo. But development does not stand over against creation, but is only possible upon its foundation and belongs to its confession. Development produces nothing of itself, it is not the mother of being or of life; it is only a form of motion, which can only reveal what lies hidden inwardly in the germ. But the so-called development theory has no knowledge of germs; it knows nothing of disposition or capacity, of fitness and susceptibility. In its system there is no room for anything save atoms and complexes of atoms, which are altogether passive in themselves and are collocated only and alone in a mechanical or chemical manner by circumstances from without. This makes no mention of development in its real sense. No one thinks of development with reference to a machine whose parts are prepared in a factor piece by piece and afterward put together. Development is given an opportunity only when by almighty creation existence is given to beings who by way of organic growth must become what in germ and principle they already are. He who speaks of development refers to thought, plan, law, end; he who names development names God, who laid the "cidos" in the "hyle," the completed organism in the germ, the future in the present, and who in the creation had an eye to all times and opportunities. So little does development stand over against creation that there is scarcely any choice left between creation with the richest development on one side and mechanical combination by the accident of a host of similar atoms on the other. Development stands between origin and end; under God's providence it leads from the first to the last and unfolds all the riches of being and of life to which God gave existence.

When, therefore, in distinction from materialistic one-sidedness we embrace not merely a few but all phenomena in our world-view, how greatly does our outlook upon the universe change and enlarge itself. For then the world is no monotonous monism, no mechanical process, no irrational

machine, but an organic, living whole. It contains not only matter and force, but also spirit and consciousness, reason and will. No merely mechanical and chemical, but also spiritual and moral powers operate herein, and not only are there dominant in it laws for material nature, but also laws for plants and animals, for angels and men, for social and political life, for religion and morality, for science and art, and for all the realms of the true and good and beautiful. The world is a unity, but that unity reveals itself in the richness and most beautiful variety. From the beginning heaven and earth have been distinguished from each other; sun, moon, and stars were given a task of their own; plant and animal and man each have their proper nature. Everything is created by God with a nature of its own and exists and lives after its own law. And although the creatures are thus distinguished, they are not separated from each other. Together they form one whole, one organism, one art product, of which God himself is the artist and the master builder. In him, in his counsel, in his will all created things find their origin and maintain their existence. Everything comes forth from him and in him everything is and moves and has being. He is no Deus ex machina, no help in extreme need, whom man invokes as a last resort to assist in his conflict with the mighty forces of nature. But he is the source of all being, the origin of all life and light, and the overflowing fountain of all good, who exhibits his virtues in the world and fills it with his glories.

Again, the newer world-view has no need of God; still less is its need of Christ. It has no knowledge either of sin or of guilt. It needs no Savior and saves itself. It makes mention of a development and of a civilization which leaves the heart unchanged and at most puts a check for a time upon the "wild animal" in man. But it knows nothing of a regeneration and renewal by the Holy Ghost, or of a faith that justifies the ungodly and that overcomes the world. It is the world-view of the heathen who, knowing God, does not glorify him as God, and gives thanks that the truth of God changes into falsehood, and honors and serves the creature above the Creator, to whom be glory forever and ever. It disdains the salvation from above and undertakes from the depths to lift up self on high; it will have nothing to do with the incarnation, the becoming of man on the part of God, but replaces it by the reaching forth unto deity on the part of man. But behold, amid this world of sin and sorrow, of riddles and mysteries, there stands before us on the heights of Golgotha, the cross of Christ. And at that cross God and the world, angels and men, peoples and nations, yea, all creatures take each other by the hand and exchange the token of reconciliation and of peace. In the cross all the riddles of being and of life solve themselves in principle. For thereby has God reconciled himself to the world, and triumphed gloriously over all principalities and powers. All things are of God, they are and remain in God and by God, and from their scattering they shall once return unto God. Is not this world-view more real, more beautiful and richer than that which views the whole universe as an accidental play of lifeless atoms?

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Part III. The third question about the end and aim of things is no less important than the other two. What is the end of the world? What is the issue of the world’s history? Whither am I going? At this point the insufficiency and unsatisfactory character of the theory of development is especially evident. In a word, it knows nothing of an end; it has no mention of a plan and of any destiny of things; there is no room in its system for any history of the world and of man. It is true that oftentimes life appears more potent than doctrine and practice frequently gains the day over

theory. In the writings of evolutionists we meet repeatedly with the mention of a purpose. Haeckel, for instance, declares that "the construction of ear, eye, and hand answers the purpose so wonderfully" as to induce us to accept the errant hypothesis of a "creation after a preconceived plan." But the mention of a purpose occurs in these instances either unconsciously or without ground. The system of the development theory offers no room for a plan or a purpose. Nothing is dominant, then, save the compulsion of fate of the capriciousness of accident. Everything is as it is, without reason and without purpose. The theory of evolution furnishes no answer whatever to the inquiry to what purpose everything serves. On this question it remains silent.

There is no purpose which the individual man serves. He exists, but why and to what end cannot be told. He is, remains here for a time, and departs. Then it is done, la farce est jouee, death is the end of a pitiful life. Since there is neither soul nor spirit, immortality is folly and faith in it is nothing but egoism, the grave, or better yet, the cremation oven, is man’s latest dwelling place.

There is no purpose for humanity. History is no theater of liberty, but is dominated just like the physical world, and with equal necessity, by mechanical forces and laws. The study of history which reckons with the will, with individuals and persons, and deems the course of history dependent upon these is entirely wrong. And homage is due to the method of physics, which views the only and all dominating factor of history in society, in the masses, in economical relations, and in social conditions, and from this interprets men with their thoughts and wishes, their religion and morality, their art and science. Irrational, planless, purposeless humanity goes forward to meet its ruin.

There is no purpose for the earth, the present world as a whole. Science teaches that a certain end awaits the whole planetary system of which the earth forms a part. Even as it once proceeded out of the mass of vapors so it shall once return into the same. There are a few who assert that present conditions will continue eternally. But physics disputes this point and deems it untenable. Endless duration together with and endless progress is inconceivable for the earth as well as for man. An end must come. To reckon with millions of years, in the past or in the present, is child’s play and unworthy of mature minds, and is at best of no greater value than the gigantic numbers of Indian mythology. All physicists teach that after some millions of years the earth shall come to an end. However rich in provisions, the earth is not inexhaustible. Coal, wood, peat, minerals, etc., decrease gradually in quantity as the human race increases and covers the whole earth. For this reason alone the development of humanity cannot be taken as endlessly progressing. To this is added that gradually a violent disturbance must occur in our whole planetary system. The velocity in the earth’s revolution is diminished according to computation by at least one second every six hundred thousand years. This may be ever so little; after billions of years it is bound to bring about a change in the relation of day and night which renders life on earth simply impossible. The only point of difference among physicists is, which of the two will last longer, the sun or the earth. If the sun will be first to consume his provision of warmth, the earth is bound to face death by congealing. If the earth will be the first to be exhausted, it will land in the sun, and finds there its ruin. But whether by freezing or by burning, death is the end of the world as well as of the individual man and of the entire human race.

Creation or Development? Part 3 By Herman Bavinck

III. The third question about the end and aim of things is no less important than the other two. What is the end of the world? What is the issue of the world's history? Whither am I going? At this point the insufficiency and unsatisfactory character of the theory of development is especially evident. In a word, it knows nothing of an end; it has no mention of a plan and of any destiny of things; there is no room in its system for any history of the world and of man. It is true that oftentimes life appears more potent than doctrine and practice frequently gains the day over theory. In the writings of evolutionists we meet repeatedly with the mention of a purpose. Haeckel, for instance, declares that "the construction of ear, eye, and hand answers the purpose so wonderfully" as to induce us to accept the errant hypothesis of a "creation after a preconceived plan." But the mention of a purpose occurs in these instances either unconsciously or without ground. The system of the development theory offers no room for a plan or a purpose. Nothing is dominant, then, save the compulsion of fate of the capriciousness of accident. Everything is as it is, without reason and without purpose. The theory of evolution furnishes no answer whatever to the inquiry to what purpose everything serves. On this question it remains silent.

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congealing. If the earth will be the first to be exhausted, it will land in the sun, and finds there its ruin. But whether by freezing or by burning, death is the end of the world as well as of the individual man and of the entire human race. And when in view of this future the defenders of the development theory are asked to what purpose all things here have existed and lived, they have nothing to say and leave us without answer. When once it shall have come thus far, says Von Hellwald, then the eternal rest of death shall dominate over the earth. Robbed of its atmosphere and of its living creatures, in eternal moonlike ruin the earth will revolve around the sun, as before; but the human race, is culture, its struggles and efforts, its creations and ideals shall have been. And with the question "to what purpose" unanswered, he closes his history of culture. This is the eschatology, the doctrine of the last things in the dogmatics of the theory of development. It is evident that no one can live by so sad an expectation. The defenders of evolution often say that in science the question is not, What brings comfort? but What is true? And they mock at the first question of the Heidelberger, What is thine only comfort in life and death? But in the end even they cannot afford to go without comfort in life. And since in the far future everything appears deathlike and dark to them, they comfort themselves with the thought that it will take millions of years still before it comes about. The books and writings are not actual, said Professor Haga in his oration referred to above, in which the earth is described as missing all warmth of the sun, and the last human pair is pictured as dying in a cold embrace. It were childish indeed, says Henne am Rhyn, to bemoan the fact that once everything shall have been, and that no one shall then take notice of us and our efforts and labors. For there are still innumerable centuries before us, and it is worth the pains to establish something substantial for our children and our children’s children. As the latest future becomes darker and sadder, the evolutionists foster a proportionately higher expectation of the future near at hand. Man cannot live without hope. The individual may perish; after millions of years the human race may burn up or be frozen; in the near centuries a blessed and glorious future awaits us all. The paradise of the past was a piece of the imagination, according to the prophets of the development theory, in the near future it will be a tangible reality. A heaven above earth is a pious but idle dream, but a heaven upon earth is near at hand. The development theory is made serviceable to this expectation. Behold, how far man has already advanced. He was an animal; he became a man; why should he not also become an angel? His dominion over the earth is extended ever more broadly. All the forces of nature are becoming subject to him. The riddles of creation disappear before his searching gaze. Life is enriched and glorified by his inventions and discoveries. Still a little while and paradise is instituted in the earth. From the mist the day shall break. With glowing colors this future state is drawn by many evolutionists. When that day shall have come, says Haeckel, the service of the true, good, and beautiful shall be universal, and displace the old religion. Modern man shall have no more need of a church building. In free nature, wherever he looks out upon the boundless universe, he will find his church in nature itself. Nordau prophecies that in that day humanity shall no longer be an abstraction but a reality. Happy shall be the later born generations to whom it is apportioned to be bathed in the pure air and clear sunshine of this future, to live in the fraternity of humanity, and to be true, wise, free, and good. And Allard Pierson proclaims that, in that future the man who prizes the higher civilization shall love woman as his sister, and the woman who respects herself shall love man as her brother, and the noblest of men shall indeed be children of one and the same family. The young man shall company with the young woman, and nothing shall divert their mind from the study and practice of highest interests; innocence shall have been restored.

Thus do the defenders of the so-called strictly scientific development theory dream dreams and picture pictures. They abandon themselves to greater illusions than the Chiliasts among Christians, who look for a kingdom of Christ in this present dispensation. For what can science know of the future? Who assures us that the high culture which the nations have attained unto shall endure and not become trodden down underneath threatening revolutions? Where is the culture of the Babylonians and the Assyrians, of the Egyptians and Persians, even the Greeks and the Romans? Has nothing been heard of the black, yellow, and red danger, of social revolutions, which threaten our whole civilization with overthrow and ruin? And what can one build upon a development which in days like the present is made serviceable to the strongest, to the triumph of violence, and to the glorification of the "Wille zur Macht"?

Anarchism refuses to practice patience any longer and is no more satisfied with the idle promises but distant future. The men of a faithless science have continually reproached the Christians for confronting the comfortless with the promise of a blessed life in the hereafter. Now the complaint comes back upon their own heads; it is cast at their feet by their own spiritual children. What will it benefit us, they say, that thousands of years from now our posterity will taste of peace and plenty and gladness, while in the meantime we and our families must perish of hunger and need? The orthodox take out a draft on heaven, the liberals on a misty future. Both are equally uncertain. Provide us with means this day to live, to eat, and to be merry! And threats are on the increase, that unless this be willingly granted they will obtain the same by violence, with the aid of petroleum and dynamite, of revolution and slaughter. No, truly, the golden age, so eagerly expected by many, has not yet come. Its dawn is not yet seen on the horizon. Watchman, what of the night? No wonder that the increase is ever larger of such as wean themselves of expectation of the future and in gloomy despair preach pessimism. It is simple illusion, they say, to hope for better times. Socialistic equality is folly. To a few only it is given, at the price of the life and happiness of thousands, to devote themselves to the beautiful, to live in wealth and luxury, and to make use of the right of the strongest. They are the Ubermenschen (the overmen), the elect, the only blessed, the gods of the earth. But men have been animals and will remain such. Hence what befalls one man befalls humanity. It passes through its periods of infancy, youth, and years of maturity. After that it becomes aged, loses its strength, and desires nothing save rest and quite, the rest of death, the silence of the grave, the eternal sorrowlessness of the nothing.

Complete bankruptcy, moral and spiritual, is the end of the modern world-view. It confirms the significant word of Paul, that he who is without God and without Christ is also without hope in the world. We Christians, however, thank God, have another hope, and a better founded expectation. We can talk of more glorious things since God has revealed them unto us in his word. The Holy Bible is a wonderful book. It narrates the creation of man after the divine image, and his terrible fall in sin and death. But at once the description follows of how God in infinite grace has appointed in history and prophecy, in psalm and proverb the deliverances which he wrought for his people. And finally it leads us to the manger, places us at the foot of the cross, where the Christ dies, bearing our sin and reconciling the world unto God, and in the end points us to a glorious prospect of a new heaven and earth, in which God will dwell with his people and be all in all. This is the development theory, and this is the course of history according to the Scriptures; this is its expectation of the future; and this also the hope and desire of the children of God; they foster this hope without any fear that science can deprived them of it, for what can science know of

tomorrow? Foolish are the expectations by which science seeks to displace the hope of Christians. There is indeed no other choice save between the ruin of all existing things as taught by present-day science, and the hope of the glory of the children of God, as preached by the Holy Scripture. And can the choice be doubtful? It is true that this future of the Christ will not be accomplished except by a violent crisis and conflict. Jesus came to the earth, not to bring peace but the sword, and to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. They of a man's own household will be his foes. Nevertheless the future is glorious and the hope certain. The kingdom of heaven, founded by Jesus in the earth, is and abides, and shall nevermore be banished from the earth. The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal: the Lord knoweth them that are his. The gates of hell shall not prevail against his Church. The near future may be the portion of the world and Satan, the later future belongs certainly to Christ. If we had no knowledge except that of an immanent self-development, we would have no ground for this hope. The kingdom of heaven has not once come along the lines of gradual ascent, neither will it come along these lines in the future. Not from beneath but from above do we expect the righteousness and life, the blessedness and glory of God. But Christ who has come down to earth is he who has also ascended above all heavens, that he might fulfill all things. And he is exalted that once every knee to him should bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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S. Death

Death 1. Conception of Sin and Death:

According to Genesis 2:17, God gave to man, created in His own image, the command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and added thereto the warning, "in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Though not exclusively, reference is certainly made here in the first place to bodily death. Yet because death by no means came upon Adam and Eve on the day of their transgression, but took place hundreds of years later, the expression, "in the day that," must be conceived in a wider sense, or the delay of death must be attributed to the entering-in of mercy (Genesis 3:15). However this may be, Genesis 2:17 places a close connection between man's death and his transgression of God's commandment, thereby attaching to death a religious and ethical significance, and on the other hand makes the life of man dependent on his obedience to God. This religious-ethical nature of life and death is not only decidedly and clearly expressed in Genesis 2:1-25, but it is the fundamental thought of the whole of Scripture and forms an essential element in the revelations of salvation. The theologians of early and more recent times, who have denied the spiritual significance of death and have separated the connection between ethical and physical life, usually endeavor to trace back their opinions to Scripture; and those passages which undoubtedly see in death a punishment for sin (Genesis 2:17; John 8:44; Romans 5:12; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:21), they take as individual opinions, which form no part of the organism of revelation. But this endeavor shuts out the organic character of the revelation of salvation. It is true that death in Holy Scripture is often measured by the weakness and frailty of human nature (Genesis 3:19; Job 14:1,Job 14:12; Psalms 39:5-6; Psalms 90:5; Psalms 103:14-15; Ecclesiastes 3:20, etc.). Death is seldom connected with the transgression of the first man either in the Old Testament or the New Testament, or mentioned as a specified punishment for sin (John 8:44; Romans 5:12; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:21; James 1:15); for the most part it is portrayed as something natural (Genesis 5:5; Genesis 9:29; Genesis 15:15; Genesis 25:8, etc.), a long life being presented as a blessing in contrast to death in the midst of days as a disaster and a judgment (Psalms 102:23 f; Isaiah 65:20). But all this is not contrary to the idea that death is a consequence of, and a punishment for, sin. Daily, everyone who agrees with Scripture that death is held out as a punishment for sin, speaks in the same way. Death, though come into the world through sin, is nevertheless at the same time a consequence of man's physical and frail existence now; it could therefore be threatened as a punishment to man, because he was taken out of the ground and was made a living soul, of the earth earthy (Genesis 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:45,1 Corinthians 15:47). If he had remained obedient, he would not have returned to dust (Genesis 3:19), but have pressed forward on the path of spiritual development (1 Corinthians 15:46,1 Corinthians 15:51); his return to dust was possible simply because he was made from dust (see ADAM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT). Thus, although death is in this way a consequence of sin, yet a long life is felt to be a blessing and death a disaster and a judgment, above all when man is taken away in the bloom of his youth or the strength of his years. There is nothing strange, therefore, in the manner in which Scripture speaks about death; we all express ourselves daily in

the same way, though we at the same time consider it as the wages of sin. Beneath the ordinary, everyday expressions about death lies the deep consciousness that it is unnatural and contrary to our innermost being.

2. The Meaning of Death: This is decidedly expressed in Scripture much more so even than among ourselves. For we are influenced always more or less by the Greek, Platonic idea, that the body dies, yet the soul is immortal. Such an idea is utterly contrary to the Israelite consciousness, and is nowhere found in the Old Testament. The whole man dies, when in death the spirit (Psalms 146:4; Ecclesiastes 12:7), or soul (Genesis 35:18; 2 Samuel 1:9; 1 Kings 17:21; Jonah 4:3), goes out of a man. Not only his body, but his soul also returns to a state of death and belongs to the nether-world; therefore the Old Testament can speak of a death of one's soul (Genesis 37:21 (Hebrew); Numbers 23:10 m; Deuteronomy 22:21; Judges 16:30; Job 36:14; Psalms 78:50), and of defilement by coming in contact with a dead body (Leviticus 19:28; Leviticus 21:11; Leviticus 22:4; Numbers 5:2; Numbers 6:6; Numbers 9:6; Numbers 19:10 ff; Deuteronomy 14:1; Haggai 2:13). This death of man is not annihilation, however, but a deprivation of all that makes for life on earth. The Sheol (she'ol) is in contrast with the land of the living in every respect (Job 28:13; Proverbs 15:24; Ezekiel 26:20; Ezekiel 32:23); it is an abode of darkness and the shadow of death (Job 10:21-22; Psalms 88:12; Psalms 143:3), a place of destruction, yea destruction itself (Job 26:6; Job 28:22; Job 31:12; Psalms 88:11; Proverbs 27:20), without any order (Job 10:22), a land of rest, of silence, of oblivion (Job 3:13,Job 3:17-18; Psalms 94:17; Psalms 115:17), where God and man are no longer to be seen (Isaiah 38:11), God no longer praised or thanked (Psalms 6:5; Psalms 115:17), His perfections no more acknowledged (Psalms 88:10-13; Isaiah 38:18-19), His wonders not contemplated (Psalms 88:12), where the dead are unconscious, do no more work, take no account of anything, possess no knowledge nor wisdom, neither have any more a portion in anything that is done under the sun (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6,Ecclesiastes 9:10). The dead ("the Shades" the Revised Version, margin; compare article DECEASE, IN NEW TESTAMENT) are asleep (Job 26:5; Proverbs 2:18; Proverbs 9:18; Proverbs 21:6; Psalms 88:11; Isaiah 14:9), weakened (Isaiah 14:10) and without strength (Psalms 88:4).

3. Light in the Darkness: The dread of death was felt much more deeply therefore by the Israelites than by ourselves. Death to them was separation from all that they loved, from God, from His service, from His law, from His people, from His land, from all the rich companionship in which they lived. But now in this darkness appears the light of the revelation of salvation from on high. The God of Israel is the living God and the fountain of all life (Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10; Psalms 36:9). He is the Creator of heaven and earth, whose power knows no bounds and whose dominion extends over life and death (Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6; Psalms 90:3). He gave life to man (Genesis 1:26; Genesis 2:7), and creates and sustains every man still (Job 32:8; Job 33:4; Job 34:14; Psalms 104:29; Ecclesiastes 12:7). He connects life with the keeping of His law and appoints death for the transgression of it (Genesis 2:17; Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 30:20; Deuteronomy 32:47). He lives in heaven, but is present also by His spirit in Sheol (Psalms 139:7-8). Sheol and Abaddon are open to Him even as the hearts of the children of men (Job 26:6; Job 38:17; Proverbs 15:11). He kills and makes alive, brings down into Sheol and raises from thence again (Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6; 2 Kings 5:7). He lengthens life for those who keep His commandments (Exodus 20:12; Job 5:26), gives escape from death, can deliver when death menaces (Psalms 68:20; Isaiah 38:5; Jeremiah 15:20; Daniel 3:26), can take Enoch and

Elijah to Himself without dying (Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11), can restore the dead to life (1 Kings 17:22; 2 Kings 4:34; 2 Kings 13:21). He can even bring death wholly to nothing and completely triumph over its power by rising from the dead (Job 14:13-15; Job 19:25-27; Hosea 6:2; Hosea 13:14; Isaiah 25:8; Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:11-12; Daniel 12:2).

4. Spiritual Significance: This revelation by degrees rejects the old contrast between life on earth and the disconsolate existence after death, in the dark place of Sheol, and puts another in its place. The physical contrast between life and death gradually makes way for the moral and spiritual difference between a life spent in the fear of the Lord, and a life in the service of sin. The man who serves God is alive (Genesis 2:17); life is involved in the keeping of His commandments (Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 30:20); His word is life (Deuteronomy 8:3; Deuteronomy 32:47). Life is still for the most part understood to mean length of days (Proverbs 2:18; Proverbs 3:16; Proverbs 10:30; Isaiah 65:20). Nevertheless it is remarkable that Prov often mentions death and Sheol in connection with the godless (Isaiah 2:18; Isaiah 5:5; Isaiah 7:25; Isaiah 9:18), and on the other hand only speaks of life in connection with the righteous. Wisdom, righteousness, the fear of the Lord is the way of life (Isaiah 8:22; Isaiah 11:16; Isaiah 12:6; Isaiah 13:14; Isaiah 14:27; Isaiah 19:23). The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death (Isaiah 14:32). Blessed is he who has the Lord for his God (Deuteronomy 33:29; Psalms 1:1-2; Psalms 2:12; Psalms 32:1-2; Psalms 33:12; Psalms 34:9, etc.); he is comforted in the greatest adversity (Psalms 73:25-28; Habakkuk 3:17-19), and sees a light arise for him behind physical death (Genesis 49:18; Job 14:13-15; Job 15:16-21; Job 19:25-27; Psalms 73:23-26). The godless on the contrary, although enjoying for a time much prosperity, perish and come to an end (Psalms 1:4-6; Psalms 73:18-20; Isaiah 48:22; Malachi 4:3, etc.). The righteous of the Old Testament truly are continually occupied with the problem that the lot of man on earth often corresponds so little to his spiritual worth, but he strengthens himself with the conviction that for the righteous it will be well, and for the wicked, ill (Ecclesiastes 8:12-13; Isaiah 3:10-11). If they do not realize it in the present, they look forward to the future and hope for the day in which God’s justice will extend salvation to the righteous, and His anger will be visited on the wicked in judgment. So in the Old Testament the revelation of the new covenant is prepared wherein Christ by His appearance hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10). See ABOLISH . This everlasting life is already here on earth presented to man by faith, and it is his portion also in the hour of death (John 3:36; John 11:25-26). On the other hand, he who lives in sin and is disobedient to the Son of God, is in his living dead (Matthew 8:22; Luke 15:32; John 3:36; John 8:24; Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13); he shall never see life, but shall pass by bodily death into the second death (Revelation 2:11; Revelation 20:6,Revelation 20:14; Revelation 21:8).

5. Death in Non-Christian Religions and in Science: This view of Scripture upon death goes much deeper than that which is found in other religions, but it nevertheless receives support from the unanimous witness of humanity with regard to its unnaturalness and dread. The so-called nature-peoples even feel that death is much more of an enigma than life; Tiele (Inleiding tot de goddienst-artenschap, II (1900), 202, referring to Andrew Lang, Modern Mythology, chapter xiii) says rightly, that all peoples have the conviction that man by nature is immortal, that immortality wants no proof, but that death is a mystery and must be explained. Touching complaints arise in the hearts of all men on the frailty and vanity of life, and the whole of mankind fears death as a mysterious power. Man finds comfort in death only when he hopes it will be an end to a still more

miserable life. Seneca may be taken as interpreter of some philosophers when he says: Stultitia est timore morris mori ("It is stupid to die through the fear of death") and some may be able, like a Socrates or a Cato, to face death calmly and courageously; what have these few to say to the millions, who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:15)? Such a mystery has death remained up to the present day. It may be said with Kassowitz, Verworm and others that the "cell" is the beginning, and the old, gray man is the natural end of an uninterrupted life-development, or with Metschnikoff, that science will one day so lengthen life that it will fade away like a rose at last and death lose all its dread; death still is no less a riddle, and one which swallows up all the strength of life. When one considers, besides, that a number of creatures, plants, trees, animals, reach a much higher age than man; that the larger half of mankind dies before or shortly after birth; that another large percentage dies in the bloom of youth or in the prime of life; that the law of the survival of the fittest is true only when the fact of the survival is taken as a proof of their fitness; that the graybeards, who, spent and decrepit, go down to the grave, form a very small number; then the enigma of death increases more and more in mysteriousness. The endeavors to bring death into connection with certain activities of the organism and to explain it by increasing weight, by growth or by fertility, have all led to shipwreck. When Weismann took refuge in the immortality of the "einzellige Protozoen," he raised a hypothesis which not only found many opponents, but which also left mortality of the "Korperplasma" an insoluble mystery (Beth, "Ueber Ursache und Zweck des Todes, Glauben und Wissen (1909), 285-304, 335-48). Thus, science certainly does not compel us to review Scripture on this point, but rather furnishes a strong proof of the mysterious majesty of death. When Pelagius, Socinus, Schleiermacher, Ritschl and a number of other theologians and philosophers separate death from its connection with sin, they are not compelled to do so by science, but are led by a defective insight into the relation between ethos and phusis. Misery and death are not absolutely always consequences and punishment of a great personal transgression (Luke 13:2; John 9:3); but that they are connected with sin, we learn from the experience of every day. Who can number the victims of mammonism, alcoholism and licentiousness? Even spiritual sins exercise their influence on corporal life; envy is a rottenness of the bones (Proverbs 14:30). This connection is taught us in a great measure by Scripture, when it placed the not yet fallen man in a Paradise, where death had not yet entered, and eternal life was not yet possessed and enjoyed; when it sends fallen man, who, however, is destined for redemption, into a world full of misery and death; and at last assigns to the wholly renewed man a new heaven and a new earth, where death, sorrow, crying or pain shall no longer exist (Revelation 21:4).

Finally, Scripture is not the book of death, but of life, of everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord. It tells us, in oft-repeated and unmistakable terms, of the dreaded reality of death, but it proclaims to us still more loudly the wonderful power of the life which is in Christ Jesus. published in 1939 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

S. Development of the Doctrine of Predestination

Development of the Doctrine of Predestination by Bavinck The Development of the Doctrine of Predestination among the Reformed: the Controversy in regard to Infra- and Supralapsarianism:

(1) This controversy is rooted in the struggle between Augustine and Pelagius. According to Pelagianism both original and actual sin (unbelief) logically precede election and reprobation; according to Augustine ONLY original sin precedes predestination. According to supra, predestination logically precedes not only actual but also original sin. Hence, Pelagianism: original sin, actual sin, predestination; Augustinianism or infralapsarianism: original sin, predestination, actual sin; supralapsarianism: predestination, original sin, actual sin.

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

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

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

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

Among the Reformed another controversy soon arose, namely, in regard to supra- and infralapsarianism. This controversy is rooted in the struggle between Augustine and Pelagius. With the Pelagians the order in the elements of God’s counsel was as follows: A decree to create man. A decree to send Christ in order to redeem fallen humanity, to cause him to die for all and to be proclaimed to all, and to grant to all "grace sufficient" unto salvation. A decree determining the eternal salvation of some on the ground of foreseen faith, and the eternal punishment of others on the ground of foreseen unbelief. A totally different order was presented by Augustine. At times he makes reprobation a part of predestination, but even then he views foreknowledge not as something negative and passive but as a divine activity. For, God’s will is the "necessary ground of things"; what happens "contrary to his will does not defeat his will"; when God "permits" something, this permission is positive, efficacious. "Surely, he permits willingly, not unwillingly." The supralapsarian position, viz., that reprobation is an act of God’s sovereignty, is already implied in this view. Usually, however, Augustine uses the words divine foreknowledge and permission when he speaks about the fall. Augustine has the following order: A decree to create man and to permit him to fall. A decree to elect some out of this corrupt mass unto eternal life, and to allow others to remain in the perdition wherein they have involved themselves. Accordingly, both election and reprobation presuppose a fallen humanity, a "corrupt mass." From this it appears that Augustine usually favors the infralapsarian representation; in his reasoning he does not go back beyond the fall; he views reprobation as an act of God’s justice. "God is good, God is just. Because he is good, he is able to deliver some that are undeserving of salvation; because he is

just, he is not able to condemn any one who is undeserving of condemnation."

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

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

Augustine does not directly deduce a decree establishing the means unto perdition from the decree of reprobation as such. He does teach that even in regard to sin God proceeds in an active and positive manner; God is the "Disposer of sins," he deemed it right that there should be sin, he punishes sin with sin; but Augustine generally views reprobation negatively, i.e., as preterition or dereliction (passing by or abandonment), and he does not as a rule view it as part of predestination, but identifies the latter with election, and subsumes both election and reprobation under God's providence. On the other hand there is a predestination of the means unto salvation. With Augustine predestination or election is always a predestination unto glory. It implies foreordination unto grace. Accordingly, foreseen faith and good works are not the ground of election, neither is Christ the final ground. But election is foreordination unto the desired goal, hence, unto the means whereby this goal will he realized, i. e., unto Christ who was himself predestinated, and thus unto calling, baptism, faith, and the gift of perseverance; predestination is a preparation for grace. Accordingly, the elect, by way of grace in Christ, will surely obtain heavenly salvation. Therefore, in later years many followers of Augustine arrived at the doctrine of twofold predestination: a "predestination unto death" began to be coordinated with a "predestination unto glory." Nevertheless, the former could not be construed in the same sense as the latter; hence, a distinction was made between a negative and a positive reprobation. The negative reprobation logically precedes the fall; it is an act of God's sovereignty; it does not depend upon foreseen demerits any more than election depends upon foreseen merits; it implies "the decree to permit certain individuals to fall into a state of guilt" and it is "the cause of dereliction." Thus many Thomists, Alvarez, the Salmanticenses, Estius, Sylvius. etc., taught that negative reprobation precedes the fall and that it is purely an act of God's sovereignty and good pleasure. Nevertheless, this supralapsarian reprobation was viewed as wholly negative, i.e., as God's purpose not to elect certain individuals, to permit them to fall, and afterward to ordain them to everlasting punishment (positive reprobation). Essentially, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and all supralapsarian Reformed theologians never went beyond this point. They neither taught a

"predestination unto sins" nor did they represent God as the author of sin, as is falsely charged by Roman Catholics, who advance this accusation against the Predestinationists of the fifth century, Gottschalk, Bradwardina, Wyclif, and especially against the Reformers. They do this merely in order to justify their own Semi-Pelagian view, and to harmonize it with the teachings of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

Essentially the teaching of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas in regard to predestination was accepted by the Reformers: the modifications introduced by them were slight and unessential, if we except the doctrine of assurance. The Reformers agreed with Augustine and Thomas Aquinas on many points; viz., they, too, believed that election is not conditioned upon foreseen merits, but that it is the source of faith and good works; that predestination unto glory always implies predestination unto grace; that negative reprobation is not to be explained as an act of God’s justice but as an act of his sovereignty, and that it logically precedes sin; that this negative reprobation is followed by a decree to permit sin and to allow some to remain in their fallen state and that positive reprobation takes sin into account. To all this they added, however, that the concepts foreknowledqe and permission, though not wrong in themselves, cannot and should not be interpreted in a merely passive sense; that even if they could be so construed, they would offer no real solution of the problem; and that the distinction between positive and negative reprobation has very little value. Thus. all three Reformers arrived at the so-called supralapsarian view of the doctrine of predestination, according to which both election and reprobation are to be viewed as acts of God’s sovereignty, logically preceding God’s decree concerning the fall, sin, and redemption through Christ. But it is especially Calvin who often purposely refuses to go beyond the secondary causes of salvation and perdition, and therefore often reasons in an infralapsarian manner. Let not the reprobate view God’s decree as the cause of his perdition, but let him rather look upon his own corrupt nature with respect to which he himself is guilty. The elect and the reprobate were equally guilty but God is merciful toward the former, just toward the latter. In Romans 9:21 the "clay" indicates men in their fallen condition, of whom God elects some while he leaves others "in their own ruin, to which by nature all are exposed." The fall in Adam is the nearest cause of reprobation. God hates only sin in us. And of this representation: "that out of the race doomed in Adam God elected those whom he was pleased to elect, and reprobated those whom he willed to reprobate." Calvin says, "just as it is a great deal more suitable unto the cultivation of faith, so it is discussed with greater profit.. . is not only more conducive unto piety, but, it seems to me, more theological, more suitable to practical Christianity, and also more conducive unto edification." Nevertheless, this does not fully satisfy Calvin. Sin may be the proximate cause of perdition, it is, nevertheless. not the deepest cause. For the theory that God apart from any previous plan decided to create man, then sat down, as it were, in a watchtower to see what man would do, and having seen and foreseen this, only afterward proceeded to the act of election and reprobation, is altogether untenable. Foreknowledge and permission do not solve the problem. because God, foreseeing the fall, could have prevented it; accordingly, he voluntarily permitted the fall because it seemed good to him. Accordingly, the fall of Adam, sin in general, and all evil, were not only foreseen by God but in a certain sense were willed and determined by him. Accordingly, there must have been a reason, unknown to us, why God willed the fall: there is "a deeper divine decree" logically preceding the fall. Hence, when Pighius answers Calvin by objecting that according to the latter’s view there would have been in the divine mind a "distinction between elect and reprobate previous to the fall of man," Calvin indeed answers that Pighius fails

to distinguish between "proximate and remote causes," that every reprobate must consider his own sin to be the direct cause of his perdition, and that the opposite view is handicapped with the same objections, he does not deny the validity of the conclusion drawn by Pighius: there is a "secret divine decree" anteceding the fall, The final and deepest cause of reprobation as well as of election is the will of God. Hence, with Calvin the supralansarian and infralapsarian representation alternates. This is also true of most of the later theologians who embraced supralapsarianism. They regard the supralapsarian view to be admissible they do not think of condemning infralapsarianism or of demanding that their view be embodied in the official confession of the church as the only standard of truth. They do not ask that their own view he substituted for the infralapsarian representation but they plead for actual recognition of both views.

According to the supralapsarian view a divine knowledge of all possibilities precedes every decree, a "knowledge of simple intelligence." According to the rule "what is ultimate in execution is first in design," supra teaches the following order in the elements of God’s counsel: A decree determining the purpose for which God would create and govern all things, namely. the revelation of his virtues, esp. of his mercy and of his justice; respectively, in the eternal salvation of a definite number of men conceived as yet only as possibles, "creatable and fallible." and in the eternal punishment of another definite number. The manifestation of these virtues necessitated: A second decree determining the existence of human beings who would be so wretched and pitiable that they would be fit objects of God’s mercy and justice. The actual existence of such human beings necessitated: A third decree to create a man adorned with the image of God to be the head of humanity, and "by an efficacious permission" to allow him to fall so that he would involve his entire posterity in that fall.

Finally, a decree to manifest God’s mercy in the elect by providing a Mediator for them and by granting them the gifts of faith and perseverance, and to show God’s justice in the reprobate by withholding saving grace from them and by giving them up unto sin. In this order of the decrees election and reprobation precede not only faith and unbelief, regeneration and hardening, but also creation and the fall. However, one difficulty presents itself immediately: it was the established Reformed doctrine that the election of Christ and of the church are not to be separated and that both are included in one single decree that has as its object "the mystic Christ." But in the supralapsarian scheme the election of the church is separated from the election of Christ by the two decrees of creation and the fall. Comrie, however, tried to overcome this objection by teaching that before the decree of creation and the fall the believers are chosen unto union with Christ. This union is so close and unbreakable that when those chosen fall, as is determined in a subsequent decree, Christ, who had been elected as Head, is now also chosen to be the Mediator of redemption. From this it is clear that Comrie understood that the election of the church as the body of Christ cannot be separated from the election of Christ as the Head of the Church. Accordingly, he placed the election of both before the decree of creation and the fall. However, in this manner not only men considered as mere possibilities but also a merely possible Christ was made the object of the decree of election. The churches, however, always objected to this supralapsarian view. As a result, there is not a single Reformed confession that offers this representation. At the Synod of Dort there were a few adherents of this view, esp. Gomarus and Maccovius; moreover, the delegates of South Holland, Overisel, and Friesland preferred to leave the question undecided and to use an expression that would satisfy both parties. But although the "opinions" of the Dutch

and of the foreign delegates, also of those from Geneva, were definitely Reformed in character, nevertheless, they were without exception infralapsarian and clothed in mild and moderate terms. And the Synod at length defined election as "the unchangeable purpose of God whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to salvation in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation." Nevertheless, the Synod purposely refused to condemn supralapsarianism; for, various theologians, among whom were Calvin, Beza, Piscator, Perkins, Hommins, Bogerman, etc., had at times used strong expression; e.g., "that some men are created in order that they may be damned; that men viewed as innocent are reprobated or damned; that God hates men irrespective of sin; that men were predestinated unto sin; that God has need of man as a sinner; that God willed and brought about the fact that men sinned; that God acted insincerely in the calling of certain persons," etc. At the conference held in the Hague the Remonstrants had made ready use of these expressions and of the difference between infra- and supralapsarianism; consequently, the members of the synod were intent on avoiding such "phrases that were too harsh." But when the delegates from England, Bremen, and Hesse insisted that these expressions be condemned, the Synod refused to grant this request. In defence of this refusal Synod stated that Scripture also uses very strong expressions at times, that such phrases may have a much milder meaning when examined in their context than they appear to have when considered apart from their context, and that the responsibility for them rests with the respective authors. In addition, Synod admonished against the use of immoderate phrases without mentioning any specifically and against "many other things of the same kind," and at a later session administered a severe rebuke to Maccovius because of the manner in which he had conducted himself. Accordingly, although the supralapsarian view was not embodied in the confession, neither was it condemned. The Westminster Assembly purposely refrained from attempting to decide this question and from siding with either the infra- or the supralapsarian party. For that reason many continued to favor supralapsarianism although the rights of infralapsarianism were at the same time recognized inasmuch as the latter view had been embodied in the confession of the churches, was zealously and ably defended by many theologians, and was usually placed in the foreground in the preaching of the Gospel.

S. On Creation

Herman Bavinck on Creation Excerpts from Our Reasonable Faith Extracted from Ordained Servant vol. 9, no. 1 (January 2000), pp. 2-3

I

Creatures, because they are creatures, are subject to time and space, though not all of them are this in the same way. Time makes it possible for a thing to continue existing in a succession of moments, for one thing to be after another. Space makes it possible for a thing to spread out to all sides, for one thing to exist next to another. Time and space therefore began to exist at the same time as the creatures, and as their inevitable modes of existence. They did not exist beforehand as empty forms to be filled in by the creatures for when there is nothing there is no time nor space either. They were not made independently, alongside of the creatures, as accompaniments, so to speak, and appended from the outside. Rather they were created in and with the creatures as the forms in which those creatures must necessarily exist as limited, finite creatures. Augustine was right when he said that God did not make the world in time, as if it were created into a previously existing form or condition, but that He made it together with time and time together with the world.[1]

II

Although we cannot speak on this point with absolute certainty, we may consider it likely that the heaven of heavens, the dwelling place of God, was brought into existence by the first creative act of God reported in Genesis 1:1 and that then the angels also came into existence. For in Job 38:4-7 the Lord answers Job from the whirlwind that no man was present when He laid the foundations of the earth and set the cornerstone of it, but that He did complete that work accompanied by the song of the morning stars and the shouting of the sons of God for joy. These sons of God are the angels. The angels therefore were present; at the completion of the earth and the creation of man. For the rest, very little is told us about the creation of the heaven of heavens and its angels. After having mentioned it briefly in the first verse, the account of Genesis proceeds in the second verse to the broader report of the finishing of the earth. Such a finishing or arrangement was necessary, for, although the earth had already been made, nevertheless it existed for a while in a wild and empty state and was covered with darkness. We do not read that the earth became wild, that is, without form. Some have held that it was so, and in taking this position they thought of a judgment that had accrued through the fall of the angels to the already perfected earth. But Genesis 1:2 reports merely that the earth was without form, that is, that it existed in a formless or shapeless state, undifferentiated into light and darkness, the several bodies of water, dry land and sea. It was only the works of God, described in Genesis 1:3-10, which put an end to that formlessness of the earth. Just so it is reported that the original earth was void. It lacked the garnishing of plant and tree, and was not yet inhabited by any living being. The works of God, summed up in Genesis 1:11 ff., put an end to this emptiness of the earth, for God did not create the earth for it to be void, but in order that men should live in it (Isaiah 45:18).

Clearly, therefore, the works of God in the arrangement or completion of the void and formless earth are divided into two groups. The first group of works or acts are introduced by the creation of light. It brings differentiation and distinction into being, form and shape, tone and color. The second group begins with the forming of the bearers of light, sun and moon and stars, and serves further to populate the earth with inhabitants—birds and fishes, and animals and man.[2]

III The whole work of creation—according to the repeated testimony of the Scriptures[3]—was completed in six days. There has, however, been a good deal of difference of opinion and freedom of speculation about those six days. No one less than Augustine judged that God had made everything perfect and complete at once, and that the six days were not six successive periods of time, but only so many points of vantage from which the rank and order of the creatures might be viewed. On the other hand, there are many who hold that the days of creation are to be regarded as much longer periods of time than twenty-four hour units.

Scripture speaks very definitely of days which are reckoned by the measurement of night and morning and which lie at the basis of the distribution of the days of the week in Israel and its festive calendar. Nevertheless Scripture itself contains data which oblige us to think of these days of Genesis as different from our ordinary units as determined by the revolutions of the earth. In the first place we cannot be sure whether what is told us in Genesis 1:1-2 precedes the first day or is included within that day. In favor of the first supposition is the fact that according to Genesis 1:5 the first day begins with the creation of light and that after the evening and the night it ends on the following morning. But even though one reckons the events of Genesis 1:1-2 with the first day, what one gets from that assumption is a very unusual day which for a while consisted of darkness. And the duration of that darkness which preceded the creation of light is nowhere indicated. In the second place, the first three days (Genesis 1:3-13) must have been very unlike ours. For our twenty-four hour days are effected by the revolutions of the earth on its axis, and by the correspondingly different relationship to the sun which accompanies the revolutions. But those first three days could not have been constituted in that way. It is true that the distinction between them was marked by the appearance and disappearance of light. But the Book of Genesis itself tells us that sun and moon and stars were not formed until the fourth day. In the third place, it is certainly possible that the second series of three days were constituted in the usual way. But if we take into account that the fall of the angels and of men and that also the Flood which followed later caused all sorts of changes in the cosmos, and if, in addition, we notice that in every sphere the period of becoming differs remarkably from that of normal growth, then it seems not unlikely that the second series of three days also differed from our days in many respects.

Finally, it deserves consideration that everything which according to Genesis 1:1-31 and Genesis 2:1-25 took place on the sixth day can hardly be crowded into the pale of such a day as we now know the length of days to be. For on that day according to Scripture there occurred the creation of the animals (Genesis 1:24-25), the creation of Adam (Genesis 1:26 and Genesis 2:7), the planting of the garden (Genesis 2:8-14), the giving of the probationary command (Genesis 2:16-17), the leading of the animals to Adam and his naming them (Genesis 2:18-20), and the sleep of Adam and the creation of Eve (Genesis 2:21-23).[4]

Endnotes [1] Our Reasonable Faith, p. 170.

[2] Op. cit., p. 171.

[3] Genesis 1:2; Exodus 20:11 and Exodus 31:17.

[4] Op. cit., pp. 172, 173.

Chapter 45

S. Supralapsarianism and Infralapsarianism

Supralapsarianism and Infralapsarianism By Herman Bavinck The supralapsarian and infralapsarian interpretation of the decree:

(1) Points of agreement. Both agree:

(a) That God is not the Author of sin (supra as well as infra).

(b) That Scripture (not philosophy) is the only source of our knowledge of God's decree (supra as well as infra).

(c) That man's fall and punishment is not merely the object of God's foreknowledge but of his decree and foreordination (infra as well as supra).

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

(2) Points of disagreement:

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

Supralapsarianism: predestination fall Infralapsarianism: fall predestination

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

1. a decree determining the purpose of all things, namely, the revelation of God's virtues; specifically, the revelation of his mercy in the salvation of a definite number of possible men; and the revelation of his justice in the perdition of another definite number of possible men 2. a decree to create the men thus elected and reprobated.

3. a decree to permit them to fall.

4. a decree to provide a Mediator for the elect and through him to justify them, and to condemn the reprobate. The logical order according to infra:

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

2. a decree to permit man to fall.

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

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

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

the decree.

(3) Objections:

(a) To infra:

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

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

(b) To supra:

1. Supra is correct when it maintains that God's glory is the final goal of all God's works, but the manner in which that goal will be realized is not thereby given; it is incorrect to say that in the eternal perdition of the reprobate God reveals his justice only and that in the eternal salvation of the elect he reveals his mercy exclusively.

2. According to supra the decree of predestination has for its object possible men and a possible Redeemer; but just how are we to conceive of a decree concerning possible men whose actual future existence has not even been determined? 3. Supra makes the damnation of the reprobate the object of the divine will IN THE SAME SENSE as the salvation of the elect. This position is not sustained by Scripture.

(c) To both infra and supra:

1. It is incorrect to define the final goal of all things as the revelation of God's mercy in the elect and of his justice in the reprobate.

2. It is incorrect to represent the lost condition of the reprobate in hell as an object of predestination.

3. Predestination unto eternal death should not be coordinated with predestination unto eternal life, for while certain Individuals constitute the object of reprobation, the human race under a new Head, even Christ, is the object of election.

4. Both supra and infra err when they regard the various elements of God's counsel as subordinately related to each other.

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

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

Pelagianism it is merely the decree whereby God, on the ground of foreseen faith and perseverance on the part of some, and foreseen sin and unbelief on the part of others, has determined to give to the former eternal salvation and to the latter eternal punishment. According to this conception, creation, the fall, Christ, the proclamation of the Gospel and the offering of grace to all, persevering faith and unbelief precede predestination and are not included in it but excluded from it; the decree of predestination is no more than the assignment to eternal life or eternal punishment. In this way the most restricted meaning is given to the word predestination, which is then made entirely dependent upon "the bare foreknowledge of God," is a matter of uncertainty, and is not worthy of the name predestination. In that case not God but man is the maker of history and the arbiter of its destiny. This error has been sufficiently refuted in the former paragraph. The important difference between infra- and supralapsarianism. however, must be given more detailed discussion. At bottom this difference consists in a broader or a more restricted definition of the concept "predestination." Augustine accepted a twofold restriction of this concept: in his system the decree of predestination follows that concerning creation and the fall, and he generally used the term "predestination" in the favorable sense, as a synonym for "election," while he gave the preference to the term "foreknowledge" to indicate reprobation: predestination, then, is what God does, namely that which is good; while "foreknowledge" refers to what man does, namely evil. In general, scholasticism, Roman Catholicism, and Lutheranism, accepted this interpretation of the term predestination. Also in the writings of Reformed infralapsarian theologians the decree of creation and of the fall precedes that of election and of reprobation; but while most of them were willing to look upon reprobation as a part of predestination -- just so the decree of predestination follows that of the fall -- and to speak of a twin or double predestination, others considered it better to conceive of predestination as a synonym for election, and to discuss reprobation separately and under a different name. Now, if the term "foreknowledge" is not used in a Pelagian sense, and if the decree of reprobation is not withdrawn from the province of the will of God, as was done by later Roman Catholic and Lutheran theologians, the difference is not essential but merely verbal. But it. is characteristic of infralapsarianism that, in the decree, creation and the fall precede election and reprobation; while supralapsarianism’s concept of predestination is broad enough to include creation and the fall, which are then looked upon as means to an end: the eternal destiny of rational creatures. In the Reformed Church and in Reformed theology equal recognition has always been given to both supra- and infralapsarianism, viewed as interpretations of the decree of predestination. To be sure, the Dutch confessional standards are infralapsarian; nevertheless, no ecclesiastical assembly, not even the Synod of Dort, has ever troubled the supralapsarians. The Lambeth articles of Confession, purposely leave the question unanswered. Reformed theologians have always granted charter privileges to both conceptions. Spanheim used to say that in the cathedra he was supra, but when he was teaching his congregation he was infra. On the one hand, supralapsarians as well as infralapsarians teach that God is not the Author of sin, but that the cause of sin lies in the will of man. Though, as the Omnipotent One. God predestined the fall, and though, as Supreme Ruler, he executes his plan even by means of sin; nevertheless, he remains holy and righteous; of his own accord man falls and sins: the guilt is his alone. "Man falls according to the appointment of divine providence, but he falls by his own fault." Also, the supralapsarians did not arrive at their conception by means of philosophical speculation, but they presented their view because they considered it to come closer to the teaching of Scripture. just as Augustine arrived at the doctrine of predestination through his study of Paul, so

Calvin became convinced of the truth of supralapsarianism by means of his reflection on the Scriptural doctrine of sin. According to his own statement he was not giving a philosophy but the truth of God's Word. On the other hand, Reformed infralapsarian theologians are fully agreed that man's fall, sin, and the eternal punishment of many was not the object of "bare foreknowledge" but of God's decree and foreordination. Hence, the difference does not concern the content of God's counsel. Both infra- and supralapsarianism deny the freedom of the will, reject the idea that faith is the cause of election and that sin is the cause of reprobation, and thus oppose Pelagianism; both in the final analysis pay homage to God's sovereignty. The difference concerns only the order of the decrees. Infralapsarians prefer the historical, causal order; supralapsarians defend the ideal, teleological order. The former give a more limited meaning to the concept predestination, and exclude from it a preceding creation, fall, and providence; the latter subsume all the other decrees under predestination. The former emphasizes the manyness, the latter the oneness, of the decree. With the former each of the several decrees has significance by itself; with the latter all the preceding decrees are subordinate to the final decree. The problem is not solved by means of an appeal to Scripture. Whereas infralapsarianism is supported by all those passages in which election and reprobation have reference to a fallen universe, and are represented as deeds of mercy and of justice, Deuteronomy 7:6-8; Matthew 12:25-26; John 15:19; Romans 9:15-16; Ephesians 1:4-12; 2 Timothy 1:9; supralapsarianism seeks its strength in all those texts that declare God's absolute sovereignty, especially with reference to sin, Psalms 115:3; Proverbs 16:4; Isaiah 10:15; Isaiah 45:9; Jeremiah 18:6; Matthew 20:15; Romans 9:17, Romans 9:19-21. The fact that each of the two views leans for support on a certain group of texts without doing full justice to a different group indicates the one-sided character of both theories. Though infralapsarianism deserves praise because of its modesty -- it abides by the historical, causal order -- and though it seems to be less offensive and though it shows greater consideration for the demands of practical life, it fails to give satisfaction. It is just as difficult to conceive of reprobation as an act of God's justice as it is thus to conceive of election. Faith and good works, to be sure, are not the cause of election, but neither is sin the cause of reprobation; God's sovereign good pleasure is the cause of both; hence, in a certain sense, the decree of reprobation always precedes the decree to permit sin. Moreover, if in the divine conscious ness the decree of reprobation follows that to permit sin, the question cannot be suppressed, "Then why did God permit sin?" Did this permission consist in a "bare foreknowledge" and was the fall in reality a frustration of God's plan? But no Reformed theologian, even though he be an infralapsarian, can ever or may ever say this. In a certain sense he must include the fall in God's decree; he must conceive of it as having been foreordained. But why did God "by an efficacious permission" foreordain the fall? Infralapsarianism can answer this question only by referring to God's good pleasure, and then it agrees with supralapsarianism. Reprobation cannot be explained as an act of God's justice, for the first sinful deed at any rate was permitted by God's sovereignty. Reasoning backward, infralapsarianism finally arrives at the position of supralapsarianism; in case it should be unwilling to admit this, it would have to resort to foreknowledge. Add to all this the fact that infra places the decree of reprobation after the fall, but just where? Is original sin the only sin that is taken into account by the decree of reprobation, and in making this dreadful decree does God leave actual sins entirely out of consideration? If, as infra insists, reprobation must be referred to God's justice, then instead of placing this decree immediately after the entrance of original sin, why not place it after the complete accomplishment -- respectively by each reprobate person -- of all actual sins? This is exactly what was done by

Arminius -- who also included the sin of foreseen unbelief -- but such a procedure would never do on the part of a Reformed theologian. Reprobation would then become dependent upon bare foreknowledge, i.e., upon man; man's sinful deeds would then become the final and deepest cause of reprobation; hence, in order to avoid this error the decree of reprobation was placed immediately after the fall. But by doing this infra becomes supralapsarian with respect to all actual sins: reprobation does not precede original sin, but it does precede all other sin. At first glance infralapsarianism seems to be more moderate and less offensive than supralapsarianism, but deeper study reveals the fact that appearances deceive.

Accordingly, supralapsarianism undoubtedly has in its favor the fact that it refrains from every attempt to justify God, and that both with respect to reprobation and with respect to election it rests in God's sovereign, incomprehensible, yet wise and holy good pleasure. Nevertheless, it is at least just as unsatisfactory as is infralapsarianism, and perhaps even more so. It wishes to pass for a solution, but in no sense whatever does it give a solution of even a single problem. In the first place, to say that the manifestation of all God's excellencies is the final goal of all of the ways of God is indeed correct; but when supra includes in that goal the manner in which the divine glory will be revealed in the eternal destiny of rational creatures, it errs. For, the eternal state of salvation or of perdition is not in itself the goal, but one of the means employed in order to reveal God's excellencies in a manner suited to the creature. It would not do to say that God would have been unable to manifest his glory by saving all men, if this had been his pleasure. Neither is it correct to say that in the eternal state of the reprobate God reveals his justice exclusively, and that in the eternal state of the elect he manifests his mercy exclusively. Also in the church, purchased with the blood of the Son, God's justice is revealed; and also in the place of perdition there are degrees of punishment and sparks of divine mercy. The final goal of all God's work's must needs be his glory, but the manner in which that glory will shine forth is not thereby given, but has been determined by God's will; and although there were wise and holy reasons why God purposed the perdition of many and not the salvation of all, nevertheless these reasons, though known to him, are not known to us: we are not able to say why God willed to make use of this means and not of another. A further objection to supralapsarianism is the fact that according to this view the objects of the decree of election and reprobation are men considered merely as possibilities and -- as Comrie added -- a Christ viewed as a mere possibility. To be sure by some this element has been eliminated from the supralapsarian scheme. But the principle which gave rise to this error still remains. Logic requires that a possible Christ should be added to possible men as the object of election, for in the decree of election the church and its Head, i.e., the saved and the Savior cannot be separated. But even aside from this, the decree of election and reprobation which has for Its object "creatable and fallible men" is not the real, but merely a tentative decree. In the end supralapsarianism is forced to proceed to the infralapsarian order in the elements of the decree. For, following the decree concerning the election and reprobation of these possible men comes the decree to create them and to permit them to fall, and this must be succeeded by another decree respecting these men, who are now no longer viewed as mere possibilities but as realities -- even in the decree -- viz., to elect some and to reprobate others. The logic of the supralapsarian scheme is very weak, indeed. Supralapsarianism really differs from infralapsarianism only in this respect, viz., that after the manner of Amyraldism, it prefixes a decree concerning possibilities to the infralapsarian series of decrees. But just how are we to conceive of a decree respecting possible men, whose actual future existence has as yet not been determined? In the

consciousness of God there is an infinite number of "possible men," who will never live. Hence, the decree of election and reprobation has for its object "nonentities," not definite persons known to God by name. Finally, there is this difficulty connected with supra, viz., that it makes the eternal punishment of the reprobates an object of the divine will in the same manner and in the same sense as the eternal salvation of the elect; and that it makes sin, which leads to eternal destruction, a means in the same manner and in the same sense as the redemption in Christ is a means unto eternal salvation.

Now Reformed theologians all agree that the entrance of sin and punishment was willed and determined by God. It is perfectly true that words like "permission" and "foreknowledge" do not solve anything. The difficulty remains the same, and the same questions arise; viz., why, if God foreknew everything, did he create man fallible, and why did he not prevent the fall? Why did he allow all men to fall in Adam? Why does he not grant to all men faith and the blessing of hearing the Gospel? In brief, if God foreknows and permits something, he does this either "willingly" or "unwillingly." The latter is impossible. Accordingly. only the former remains: God’s permission is an "efficacious permission," an act of his will. Nor should it be supposed that the idea of permission is of any force or value over against the charge that God is the Author of sin; for he who permits or allows someone to sin and to perish in his sin although he was able to prevent him from sinning is just as guilty as he who incites someone to sin. On the other hand, however, all agree that although sin is not "excluded" from the will of God it is, nevertheless, "contrary" to his will; that it is not merely a means to the final goal, but a disturbance in God’s creation; and that Adam’s fall was not a step ahead but a fall in the real sense of the word. It is also a fact that admits of no doubt that, however much logical reasoning may demur, no one is able to suggest other and better words than "permission, foreknowledge, preterition, dereliction," etc. Even the most outspoken supralapsarian is not able to dispense with these words, neither in the pulpit nor in the cathedra. For, although it be admitted that there is a "predestination unto death," no Reformed theologian has ever dared to speak of a "predestination unto sin." Without any exception all (i.e., Zwingli, Calvin, Beza, Zanchius, Gomarus, Comrie, etc.) have rejected the idea that God is the Author of sin, that man was created unto damnation, that reprobation is the "cause" of sin, and that sin is the "efficient cause" of reprobation; and all have maintained, that the inexorable character of God’s justice is manifest in the decree of reprobation, that reprobation is the "accidental cause" of sin, and that sin is the "sufficient cause" of reprobation, etc. Accordingly and happily, supralapsarianism is always inconsistent: it begins by making a daring leap, but it soon retreats and returns to the previously abandoned position of infralapsarianism. This is very evident from the works of supralapsarians. Nearly all of them hesitate to place the decree of reprobation in its entirety and without any restriction before the decree to permit sin. The Thomists differentiated between a "negative and a positive reprobation"; the former was made to precede creation and fall, the latter was made to follow them. This same distinction, be it in a modified form, recurs in the works of Reformed theologians. Not only do all admit that reprobation should be distinguished from condemnation, which is the execution of that decree, takes place in time, and has sin for its cause; but in the decree of reprobation itself many differentiate between a preceding, general purpose of God to reveal his excellencies, especially his mercy and justice, in certain "creatable and fallible men"; and a subsequent, definite purpose to create these "possible men," to permit them to fall and to sin, and to punish them for their sins.

Accordingly, neither supra- nor infralapsarianism has succeeded in its attempt to solve this problem and to do justice to the many-sidedness of Scripture. To a certain extent this failure is due to the one-sidedness that characterizes both views. In the first place it is incorrect, as we stated before, to define the "final goal" of all things as the revelation of God's mercy in the elect, and of his justice in the reprobate. God's glory and the manifestation of his excellencies is, to be sure, the final goal of all things; but the double state of salvation and damnation is not included in that final goal, but is related to it as a means. No one is able to prove that this double state must of necessity constitute an element in the final goal of God's glory. In all his "outgoing works" God always has in view his own glory; but that he seeks to establish this glory in this and in no other way is to be ascribed to his sovereignty and to nothing else. But even aside from this, it is not true that God manifests his justice only in the damnation of the reprobate, and his mercy only in the salvation of the elect, for also in heaven God's justice and holiness shines forth, and also in hell there is a remnant of his mercy and compassion. Secondly, it is incorrect to represent the lost condition of the reprobate in hell as an object of predestination. To be sure, sin should not be referred to "bare foreknowledge and permission"; in a certain sense, the fall, sin, and eternal punishment are included in God's decree and willed by him. But this is true in a certain sense only, and not in the same sense as grace and salvation. These are the objects of his delight; but God does not delight in sin, neither has he pleasure in punishment. When he makes sin subservient to his glory, he does this by means of the exercise of his omnipotence, but to glorify God is contrary to sin's nature. And when he punishes the wicked, he does not take delight in their sufferings as such, but in this punishment he celebrates, the triumph of his virtues, Deuteronomy 28:63; Psalms 2:4; Proverbs 1:26; Lamentations 3:33. Accordingly, though on the one hand, with a view to the all-comprehensive and immutable character of God's counsel, it is not wrong to speak of a "twofold predestination" (gemina praedestinatio); nevertheless, on the other hand, we must be careful to keep in mind that in the one case predestination is of a different nature than in the other. "Predestination is the disposition, goal and ordination of the means with a view to a goal. Since eternal damnation is not the goal but merely the termination of a person's life, therefore reprobation cannot properly be classified under predestination. For these two things are in conflict with each other: to ordain unto a goal and to ordain unto damnation. For by reason of its very nature, every goal is the very best something, the perfection of an object; damnation, however, is the extreme evil and the greatest imperfection; hence the expression 'God has predestinated some men unto damnation' is incorrect." Hence, no matter how often and clearly Scripture tells us that sin and punishment were ordained by God, nevertheless, the words "purpose" (prothesis), "foreknowledge" (prognosis) and "foreordination" (proorismos) are used almost exclusively with reference to "predestination unto glory." In the third place, there is still another ground for the assertion that those err who coordinate "predestination unto eternal death" with "predestination unto eternal life," and view the former as a goal in the same sense as the latter; while it is true that certain individuals constitute the object of reprobation, the human race under a new Head, namely Christ, is the object of election; hence, by grace not only certain individuals are saved, but the human race itself together with the entire cosmos is saved. Moreover, we are not to suppose that merely a few of God's virtues are revealed in this salvation of the human race and of the universe, so that in order to reveal God's justice the state of eternal perdition must needs be called into being; on the contrary, in the consummated Kingdom of God all of God's virtues and excellencies are unfolded: his justice and his grace, his holiness and his love, his sovereignty and his mercy.

Hence, this "state of glory" is the real and direct end of creation, though even this goal is subordinate to the exaltation of God. In the fourth place, both supra and infra err when they regard the various elements of the decree as standing in subordinate relation to each other. Now it is true, of course, that the means are subordinate to the final end in view, but from this it does not follow that they are subordinate to one another. Creation is not a mere means toward the fall, neither is the fall a mere means toward grace and perseverance, nor are these in turn merely means toward salvation and perdition. We should never lose sight of the fact that the decrees are as rich in content as the entire history of the universe, for the latter is the unfoldment of the former. The history of the universe can never be made to fit into a little scheme of logic. It is entirely incorrect to suppose that of the series: creation, fall, sin, Christ, faith, unbelief, etc., each constituent is merely a means toward the attainment of the next, which as soon as it is present renders the former useless. As Twissus already remarked, "The different elements of the decree do not stand to one another in a relation merely of subordination, but they are also coordinately related." It is certainly wrong to suppose that the sole purpose of creation was to produce the fall; on the contrary, by means of God’s creative activity a universe that will remain even in the state of glory was called into being. The fall took place not only in order that there might be a "creature in the condition of misery," but together with all its consequences it will retain its significance. Christ not merely became a Mediator, which would have been all that was necessary for the expiation of sin, but he was also ordained by God to be the Head of the church. The history of the universe is not a mere means which loses its value as soon as the end of the age is reached, but it has influence and leaves fruits, for eternity. Moreover, here on earth we should not conceive of election and reprobation as two straight and parallel lines; on the contrary, in the unbeliever there is much that is not the result of reprobation, and in the believer there is much that should not be ascribed to election. On the one hand, both election and reprobation presuppose sin, and are deeds of mercy and of justice, Romans 9:15; Ephesians 1:4; on the other hand both are also deeds of divine right and sovereignty, Romans 9:11, Romans 9:17, Romans 9:21. So, Adam even before the fall is a type of Christ, 1 Corinthians 15:47 ff.; nevertheless, in Scripture the fact of the incarnation always rests upon the fall of the human race, Hebrews 2:14 ff. At times Scripture expresses itself so strongly that reprobation and election are coordinated, and God is represented as having purposed eternal perdition as well as eternal salvation, Luke 2:34; John 3:19-21; 1 Peter 2:7-8; Romans 9:17-18, Romans 9:22, etc.; but in other passages eternal death is entirely absent in the description of the future; the victorious consummation of the kingdom of God, the new heaven and earth, the new Jerusalem in which God will be all and in all is pictured to us as the end of all things, 1 Corinthians 15:1-58; Revelation 21:1-27; Revelation 22:1-21; the universe is represented as existing for the church, and the church for Christ, 1 Corinthians 3:21-23; and reprobation is completely subordinated to election.

Accordingly, neither the supra- nor the infralapsarian view of predestination is able to do full justice to the truth of Scripture, and to satisfy our theological thinking. The true element in supralapsarianism is: that it emphasizes the unity of the divine decree and the fact that God had one final aim in view, that sin’s entrance into the universe was not something unexpected and unlooked for by God but that he willed sin in a certain sense, and that the work of creation was immediately adapted to God’s redemptive activity so that even before the fall, i.e., in the creation of Adam, Christ’s coming was definitely fixed. And the true element in infralapsarianism is: that the decrees manifest not only a unity but also a diversity (with a view to their several objects), that

these decrees reveal not only a teleological but also a causal order, that creation and fall cannot merely be regarded as means to an end, and that sin should be regarded not as an element of progress but rather as an element of disturbance in the universe so that in and by itself it cannot have been willed by God. In general, the formulation of the final goal of all things in such a manner that God reveals his justice in the reprobate and his mercy in the elect is too simple and incomplete. The "state of glory" will be rich and glorious beyond all description. We expect a new heaven, a new earth, a new humanity, a renewed universe, a constantly progressing and undisturbed unfoldment. Creation and the fall, Adam and Christ, nature and grace, faith and unbelief, election and reprobation -- all together and each in its own way -- are so many factors, acting not only subsequently to but also in coordination with one another, collaborating with a view to that exalted state of glory. Indeed, even the universe as it now exists together with its history, constitutes a continuous revelation of God’s virtues. It is not only a means toward a higher and richer revelation that is still future, but it has value in itself. It will continue to exert its influence also in the coming dispensation, and it will continue to furnish material for the exaltation and glorification of God by a redeemed humanity. Accordingly, between the different elements of the decree -- as also between the facts of the history of the universe -- there is not only a causal and teleological but also an organic relation. Because of the limited character of our reasoning powers we must needs proceed from the one or from the other viewpoint; hence, the advocates of a causal world and life-view and the defenders of a teleological philosophy are engaged in continual warfare. But this disharmony does not exist in the mind of God. He sees the whole, and surveys all things in their relations. All things are eternally present in his consciousness. His decree is a unity: it is a single conception. And in that decree all the different elements assume the same relation which a posteriori we even now observe between the facts of history, and which will become fully disclosed in the future. This relation is so involved and complicated that neither the adjective "supralapsarian" nor "infralapsarian" nor any other term is able to express it. It is both causal and teleological: that which precedes exerts its influence upon that which follows, and that which is still future already determines the past and the present. There is a rich, all-sided "reciprocity." Predestination, in the generally accepted sense of that term: the foreordination of the eternal state of rational creatures and of all the means necessary to that end, is not the sole, all-inclusive and all-comprehensive, purpose of God. It is a very important part of God’s decree but it is not synonymous with the decree. God’s decree or counsel is the main concept because it is all-comprehensive; it embraces all things without any exception: heaven and earth, spirit and matter, visible and invisible things, organic and inorganic creatures; it is the single will of God concerning the entire universe with reference to the past, the present, and the future. But predestination concerns the eternal state of rational creatures, and the means thereto: but not all things that ever come into being nor all events that ever happen can be included in these means. Hence, in a previous paragraph we discussed "providence" as a thing by itself, although the relation between it and predestination was clearly shown. In the doctrine of God’s decree common grace should receive a much more detailed discussion than was formerly the case, and should be recognized in its own rights. Briefly stated, God’s decree together with the history of the universe which answers to it should not be exclusively described -- after the manner of infra- and supralapsarianism -- as a straight line indicating a relation merely of before and after, cause and effect, means and goal; but it should also be viewed as a system the several elements of which are coordinately related to one another and cooperate with one another toward that goal which

always was and is and will be the deepest ground of all existence, namely, the glorification of God. As in an organism all the members are dependent upon one another and in a reciprocal manner determine one another, so also the universe is God's work of art, the several parts of which are organically related. And of that universe, considered in its length and breadth, the counsel or decree of God is the eternal idea.

S. The Divine Trinity

Bavinck - The Divine Trinity The Eternal Being reveals Himself in His triune existence even more richly and vitally than in His attributes. It is in this holy trinity that each attribute of His Being comes into its own, so to speak, gets its fullest content, and takes on its profoundest meaning. It is only when we contemplate this trinity that we know who and what God is. Only then do we know, moreover, who God is and what He is for lost man-kind. We can know this only when we know and confess Him as the Triune God of the Covenant, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In considering this part of our confession, it is particularly necessary that a tone of holy reverence and childlike awe be the characteristic of our approach and attitude. For Moses it was an awful and unforgettable hour when the Lord appeared to him in the desert in the flame of fire coming from the bramble bush. When Moses looked upon that burning fire, which burned but did not consume, from a distance, and when he wanted to hasten to the spot, the Lord restrained him and said: Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. And when Moses heard that he feared greatly, hid his face, and was afraid to look upon God, (Exodus 3:1-6).

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

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

What the Christian goes on to confess about that God is not summarized by him in a number of abstract terms, but is described, rather, as a series of deeds done by God in the past, in the present, and to be done in the future. It is the deeds, the miracles, of God which constitute the

confession of the Christian. What the Christian confesses in his creed is a long, a broad, and a high history. It is a history which comprises the whole world in its length and breadth, in its beginning, process, and end, in its origin, development, and destination, from the point of creation to the fulfillment of the ages. The confession of the church is a declaration of the mighty deeds of God.

Those deeds are numerous and are characterized by great diversity. But they also constitute a strict unity. They are related to each other, prepare for each other, and are interdependent. There is order and pattern, development and upward movement in it. It proceeds from creation through redemption to sanctification and glorification. The end returns to the beginning and yet is at the same time the apex which is exalted high above the point of origin. The deeds of God form a circle which mounts upward in the form of a spiral; they represent a harmony of the horizontal and the vertical line; they move upwards and forwards at the same time.

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

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

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

If this confession of the trinity of God takes such a central position in the Christian faith, it is important to know on what ground it rests and from what source it has flowed into the church. They are not a few in our time who hold that it is the fruit of human argument and academic learning and who, accordingly, regard it as of no value for the religious life. According to them the original Gospel, as it was proclaimed by Jesus, knew nothing about any such doctrine of the trinity of God—that is, nothing about the term itself nor about the reality to which the term was intended to give expression. It was only—so the argument goes—when the original and simple Gospel of Jesus was brought into relationship with Greek philosophy and was falsified by it that the Christian church absorbed the person of Christ in His Divine nature, and eventually also the Holy Spirit into the Divine Being. And so it came about that the church confessed three persons in the one Divine being. But the Christian church itself has always had quite a different idea about that. It saw in the doctrine of the trinity no discovery of subtle theologians, no product of the wedding of Gospel and Greek philosophy, but a confession rather which was materially concluded in the Gospel and in the whole Word of God—a doctrine, in short, which was inferred by Christian faith from the revelation of God. In answer to the question, Since there is but one Divine Being, why do you speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? the Heidelberg Catechism gives a brief and conclusive

answer: Because God has so revealed Himself in His Word, (Question 25). The revelation of God is the firm ground on which this confession of the church also rests. It is the source out of which this doctrine of the one, holy, catholic, Christian church has grown and been built up. God has thus revealed Himself. And He has revealed Himself thus, that is, as a triune God, because He exists in that way; and He exists in this way because He has so revealed Himself. The Trinity in the revelation of God points back to the Trinity in His existence. This revelation did not happen in a single moment. It was not presented and perfected in a single point of time. Rather, this revelation has a long history, spread out over the centuries. It began at the creation, continued after the fall in the promises and deeds of grace which accrued to Israel, and reached its apex in the person and work of Christ, in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and the establishment of the church. It maintains itself now throughout the centuries, and over against all opposition, in the ineradicable witness of Scripture and in the rock-firm confession of the church. Because the revelation has had this long history, there is progress and development also in the confession of God's triune existence. God undergoes no change, remaining always the same. But in the progress of revelation, He makes Himself always clearer and more glorious to people and to angels. As His revelation continues, our knowledge grows.

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

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

Hence it was necessary that the revelation begin with an emphasis upon the unity of God. It seems to cry out to mankind: The gods before which ye bow are not the true God. There is but one true God, namely, the God who at the beginning made the heaven and the earth, (Genesis 1:1; Genesis 2:1), the God who made Himself known to Abraham as God the Almighty, (Genesis 17:1; Exodus 6:3), the God who appeared to Moses as Jehovah, as the I-Am-that-I-Am, (Exodus 3:14), and the God who, out of sovereign favor, chose the people of Israel, and called them, and accepted them in His covenant, (Exodus 19:4ff.). First of all, therefore, the revelation had as its content: Jehovah alone is Elohim, the Lord alone is God, and there is no other God beside Him.1 For the people of Israel, too, the revelation of the oneness of God was desperately necessary. Israel was surrounded on all sides by heathen and by heathen who at all times tried to tempt it into apostasy and unfaithfulness to the Lord; moreover, right on up to the captivity a great part of the people of Israel felt themselves attracted to the pagan idolatry and image worship, and again and again fell into the practice of them despite the proscription of the law and the warning of the prophets. Therefore, God Himself placed the emphasis on the fact that He, the Lord, who was now appearing to Moses and who wanted to redeem His people through Moses, was the same God who had made Himself known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the Almighty God, (Exodus 3:6, Exodus 3:15). When He gave His law to Israel He wrote above it as its preamble: I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt. And in the first commandment, and the second, He strictly forbade all idolatry and worship of images, (Exodus 20:2-5). Because the Lord our God is one God, Israel must love Him with its whole heart, its whole soul, and all its strength, (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). The Lord alone is Israel's God and therefore Israel may serve only Him.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the oneness of God is so strongly emphasized, and, as it were, constitutes the first article of Israel's basic law, the distinctions within that unity of the Godhead come to light also as in that revelation His fulness of Being progresses. The very name which is usually employed for designating God in the original Hebrew has a certain significance here. For this name Elohim, is in plural form, and therefore, although it does not, as was formerly generally supposed, designate the three persons of the divine Being, it does, in its character as an intensive plural, point to the fulness of life and of power which are present in God. It is, no doubt, in connection with this same fact, that God sometimes, in speaking of Himself, uses a plural referent, and by this means makes distinctions within Himself that bear a personal character, (Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 3:22; Isaiah 6:8). Of greater significance is the teaching of the Old Testament to the effect that God brings everything in His creation and providence into being by His Word and Spirit. He is not a human being, who, at the cost of great difficulty and exertion, makes something else out of the materials He has at hand. Instead, simply by the act of speaking, He calls everything into being out of nothing. In the first chapter of Genesis we are taught this truth in the loftiest way possible, and elsewhere, too, it is expressed most gloriously in word and song. He speaks, and it is done; He commands, and it stands fast, (Psalms 33:9). He sends out His word, and melts the morsels of ice, (Psalms 147:18). His voice is upon the waters, shakes the wilderness, causes the hills to skip like a calf, and discovers the forests, (Psalms 29:3-10). Two truths are contained in this exalted account of God's works: the first is that God is the Almighty One who has but to speak and all things leap into being, whose word is law, (Psalms 33:9) and whose voice is power, (Psalms 29:4); and the second is that God works deliberately, and not without forethought, and carries out all His works with the highest wisdom. The word which God speaks is power, but it is also the vehicle of thought. He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens by His discretion, (Jeremiah 10:12; Jeremiah 51:15). He has made all His works in wisdom: the earth is full of His riches, (Psalms 104:24). This wisdom of God did not come to Him from outside Himself, but was with Him from the beginning. He possessed it as the principle of His way, before His works of old. When He prepared the heavens, set a compass upon the face of the deep, established the clouds above, strengthened the fountains of the deep, then wisdom was already there, brought up alongside of Him, daily his delight, and rejoicing always before Him, (Proverbs 8:22-31; Job 20:20-28). God rejoiced in the wisdom with which He created the world.

Alongside of this word and wisdom the Spirit of God as the Mediator of the creation makes His appearance just as God at one and the same time is wisdom and possesses it, so that He can share it and can exhibit it in His works, so He Himself is Spirit in His being, (Deuteronomy 4:12, Deuteronomy 4:15) and He possesses Spirit, that Spirit by which He can dwell in the world and be always and everywhere present in it, (Psalms 139:7). Without anyone having been His counselor, the Lord by His Spirit brought everything into being, (Isaiah 40:13 ff.). At the beginning that Spirit moved upon the face of the waters, (Genesis 1:2), and He remains active in all that was created. By that Spirit God garnishes the heavens, (Job 26:13), renews the face of the earth, (Psalms 104:30), gives life to man, (Job 33:4), maintains the breath in man's nostrils, (Job 27:3), gives him understanding and wisdom, (Job 32:8), and also causes the grass to wither and the flower to fade, (Isaiah 40:7). In short, by the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the Breath of His mouth, (Psalms 33:6). And this self-diversity of God comes out even more in the works of the re-creation. Then it is not Elohim, but Jehovah, not God in general, but the Lord, the

God of the covenant, who reveals Himself and who makes Himself known in wonders of redemption and salvation. As such He redeems and leads His people, not by His word alone which He speaks or has conveyed to them, but also by means of the Angel of the covenant, (the Angel of the Lord). This Angel appears already in the history of the patriarchs: to Hagar, (Genesis 16:6 ff.), to Abraham, (Genesis 18:1-33 ff.), and to Jacob, (Genesis 28:13 ff.). This Angel reveals His grace and power especially in the emancipation of Israel from the bondage of Egypt.2 This Angel of the Lord does not stand on the same plane of importance as the created angels; rather, He is a special revelation and manifestation of God. On the one hand, He is clearly distinguished from God, who speaks of Him as of His Angel, and yet, on the other hand, is one in name with God Himself, and in power, in redemption and blessing, in worshipfulness and honor. He is called God in Genesis 16:13, the God of Bethel in Genesis 31:13, exchanges places with God or the Lord, (Gen. 28:30, 32; Exodus 3:4), and He bears the name of God within Him, (Exodus 23:21). He redeems from all evil, (Genesis 48:16), rescues Israel from the hand of the Egyptians, (Exodus 3:8), cleaves the waters and dries up the sea, (Exodus 14:21), preserves the people of God in the way, brings them safely into Canaan, causes them to triumph over their enemies, (Exodus 3:8; Exodus 23:20), is to be absolutely obeyed as though He were God Himself, (Exodus 23:20). and always encamps around those who fear the Lord, (Psalms 34:7; Psalms 35:5).

Just as in His re-creating work, Jehovah carries out His redemptive activities through this Angel of the covenant, so He by His Spirit gives out all kinds of energies and gifts to His people. In the Old Testament the Spirit of the Lord is the source of all life, all weal, and all ability. He grants courage and strength to the judges, to Othniel, (Judges 3:10), Gideon, (Judges 6:34), Jephthah, (Judges 11:29), and to Samson, (Judges 14:6; Judges 15:14). He grants artistic perception to the makers of the priests' garments, the tabernacle, and the temple,3 and He gives wisdom and understanding to the judges who bear the burden of the people alongside of Moses, (Numbers 11:17, Numbers 11:25). He gives the spirit of prophecy to the prophets,4 and renewal and sanctification and guidance to all of God's children, (Psalms 51:12-13; Psalms 143:10). In short: the Word, the promise, the covenant, which the Lord gave to Israel at the exodus from Egypt, have existed throughout the ages, and still stood fast even after the Captivity in the days of Zerubbabel, so that the people had no need to fear, (Haggai 2:4-5). When the Lord led Israel out of Egypt He became the Savior of Israel. And this disposition of God towards His people came to expression in the fact that in all their oppression He was oppressed, (He regarded the affliction of His people as His own affliction), and that He therefore sent them His Angel to preserve them. He redeemed them by His love and grace and He took them up and carried them as His own throughout those days of old. He sent them the Spirit of His holiness in order to lead them in the ways of the Lord, (Isaiah 63:9-12). In the days of the Old Covenant, the Lord through the high priest laid His threefold blessing on the people of Israel: the blessing of vigil, the blessing of grace, and the blessing of peace, (Numbers 6:24-26).

Thus gradually, then, but ever more unmistakably, the threefold distinction within the Divine being comes to expression already in the history of God's leading of Israel. However, the Old Testament includes the further promises that in the future there will be a higher and richer revelation. After all, Israel repudiated the Word of the Lord and vexed His Holy Spirit, (Isaiah 63:10; Psalms 106:1-48). The revelation of God in the Angel of the covenant and in the Spirit of the Lord proved to be inadequate: if God wanted to confirm His covenant and fulfill His promise, another and higher

revelation would be necessary.

Such a revelation was heralded by the prophets. In the future, in the last days, then the Lord will call up out of the midst of Israel such a prophet as Moses was, and the Lord will put His words in that prophet's mouth, (Deuteronomy 18:18). This one will be a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, (Psalms 110:4); He will be a king out of the house of David, (2 Samuel 7:12-16), a rod out of the stem of Jesse, (Isaiah 11:1), a king, judging and seeking judgment, (Isaiah 16:5). A human being, a man He will be, and the son of a woman, (Isaiah 7:14), and He will be without form or comeliness, (Isaiah 53:2 ff.); but, at the same time, He will be Immanuel, (Isaiah 7:14), the Lord our righteousness, (Jeremiah 23:6), the Angel of the covenant, (Malachi 3:1), the Lord Himself appearing to His people, (Hosea 1:7; Malachi 3:1). And He bears the name of Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace, (Isaiah 9:6). This manifestation of the servant of the Lord is to be followed by a richer dispensation of the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and strength, of the knowledge and fear of the Lord, this Spirit will rest upon the Messiah, (Isaiah 11:2; Isaiah 42:1; and Isaiah 61:1). He will be poured out upon all flesh, over sons and daughters, old men and young men, servants and handmaids,5 and He will give a new heart and a new spirit, so that His people may walk in His statutes, and keep His ordinances, and do them.6

Thus the Old Testament itself points out that the full revelation of God will consist of the revelation of His triune being. This promise and announcement the fulfillment of the New Testament fully satisfies. In this respect also, the unity or oneness of God is the point of departure of all Revelation 7:1-17 But out of this oneness the difference in the Divine being now, in the New Testament, comes into much clearer light. This happens first in the great redemptive events of incarnation, satisfaction, and outpouring, and next in the instruction of Jesus and His apostles. The work of salvation is one whole, a work of God from beginning to end. But there are three high moments in it, election, forgiveness, and renewal, and these three point to a threefold cause in the Divine being: that is, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The very conceiving of Christ already shows us the threefold activity of God. For while the Father gives the Son to the world, (John 3:16), and while the Son Himself descends from heaven, (John 6:38), that Son is conceived in Mary of the Holy Spirit, (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35). At His baptism Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit, and is there publicly declared to be the beloved Son of the Father, the Son in whom He is well pleased, (Matthew 3:16-17). The works which Jesus did were shown Him by the Father, (John 5:19 and 8:38), and they are fulfilled by Him in the strength of the Holy Spirit, (Matthew 12:28). In His dying He offers Himself to God in the eternal Spirit, (Hebrews 9:14). The resurrection is a raising up by the Father, (Acts 2:24) and is at the same time Jesus' own act by which He is greatly proved to be the Son of the Father according to the Spirit of holiness, (Romans 1:3). And after his resurrection He, on the fortieth day, ascends in the Spirit which quickened Him on high in heaven and there He makes the angels and authorities and powers subject to Himself. The teaching of Jesus and the apostles agrees fully with the lesson of those events themselves.

Jesus came to earth to declare the Father and to make His name known among men, (John 1:18; John 17:6). The name of father applied to God as creator of all things was also used by the pagans. This meaning of the term is supported also by Scripture at various places.8 Besides, the Old Testament several times uses the designation Father to refer to God's theocratic relationship to Israel because in His marvelous ability He has created and maintained that relationship,

(Deuteronomy 32:6; Isaiah 63:16). But in the New Testament a gloriously new light is shed upon this name of father as applied to God. Jesus always indicates an essential difference between the relationship in which He Himself stands to God and that in which others, say the Jews or the disciples, stand to Him. When, for example, He teaches the disciples, at their request, the “Our Father. . .” He says expressly “When ye pray, say. . . .” And when, after the resurrection, He announces His forthcoming ascension to Mary Magdalene, He says: “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God”, (John 20:17). In other words, God is His own Father, (John 5:18). He knows the Son and loves Him in such a way and to such an extent as, reciprocally, only the Son can know and love the Father.9 Among the apostles, accordingly, God is constantly referred to as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (Ephesians 1:3). This relationship between the Father and the Son did not develop in time but existed from eternity, (John 1:1, John 1:14; John 1:17-24). God is therefore Father in the first place because in a very unique sense He is the Father of the Son. This is His original, special personal characteristic. In a derived sense God is further called the Father of all creatures because He is their creator and sustainer, (1 Corinthians 8:6, and elsewhere). He is called the Father of Israel because Israel is His handiwork by virtue of election and calling, (Deuteronomy 32:6 and Isaiah 64:8), and the Father of the church and all believers because the love of the Father for the Son accrues to them, (John 16:27; John 17:24) and because they have been accepted as His children and are born of Him through the Spirit, (John 1:12; Romans 8:15). The Father is therefore always the Father, the first person, He from whom in the being of God, in the counsel of God, and in all the works of creation and providence, redemption and sanctification, the initiative proceeds. He gave the Son to have life in Himself, (John 5:26), and He sends out the Spirit, (John 15:26). His is the election and the good pleasure, (Matthew 11:26; Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 1:9, Ephesians 1:11). From Him proceed the creation, providence, redemption, and renewal, (Psalms 33:6; John 3:16). To Him in a special sense the kingdom and the power and the glory accrue, (Matthew 6:13). He particularly bears the name of God in distinction from the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Christ Himself as Mediator calls Him His Father, not only, but also His God, (Matthew 27:46; John 20:17) and Christ is Himself called the Christ of God.10 In a word, the first person of the Divine being is the Father because “of Him are all things”, (1 Corinthians 8:6).

If God is the Father, the inference is that there also is a Son who received life from Him and who shares His love. In the Old Testament the name of son of God was used for angels,11 for the people of Israel,12 and particularly too for the theocratic king of that people.13 But in the New Testament this name takes on a far profounder meaning. For Christ is the Son of God in a very peculiar sense; He is highly exalted above angels and prophets, (Matthew 13:32; Matthew 21:27; Matthew 22:2), and He Himself says that no one can know the Son except the Father, and no one can know the Father except the Son, (Matthew 11:27). In distinction from angels and men, He is the Father’s own Son, (Romans 8:32), the beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased, (Matthew 3:17), the only-begotten Son, (John 1:18) whom the Father gave to have life in Himself, (John 5:26). This very special, this unique, relationship between Father and Son did not develop in time by way of the supernatural conception of the Holy Spirit, or of the anointing at baptism, or of the resurrection and ascension—though many have maintained this—but is a relationship which has existed from all eternity. The Son who in Christ assumed human nature was in the beginning with God as the Word, (John 1:1). then already had the form of God, (Php 2:6), was rich and clothed with glory, (John 17:5, John 17:24), was then already the brightness of God’s glory and the

express image of His person, (Hebrews 1:3), and precisely therefore He could in the fulness of time be sent out, given, and brought into the world.14 Hence, too, the creation, (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16) and providence, (Hebrews 1:3) and the accomplishment of the whole of salvation, (1 Corinthians 1:30) are ascribed to Him. He is not, as creatures are made or created, but is instead, the first-born of all creatures that is the Son who has the rank and rights of the first-born over against all creatures, (Colossians 1:15) Thus He is also the first-born of the dead, the first-born of many brethren, and therefore among all and in all He is the first, (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:18) And even though in the fulness of time, He assumed the form of a servant, He was nevertheless in the form of God. He was in all things like unto God the Father, (Php 2:6), in life, (John 5:26), in knowledge, (Matthew 11:27), in strength, (John 1:3 and John 5:21, John 5:26), in honor, (John 5:23). He is Himself God, to be praised above all else into eternity.15 Just as all things are of the Father, so they are also all through the Son, (1 Corinthians 8:6).

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

Although the Holy Spirit is in that way given or sent or poured out by the Father and the Son, He often makes His appearance as a power or a gift which qualifies men for their calling or office. Thus, for example, the Holy Spirit is spoken of at various places in the Acts of the Apostles in connection with the gift of prophecy, (Acts 8:15; Acts 10:44; Acts 11:15; Acts 15:8; Acts 19:2). But it is not warranted to infer from that fact, as many do, that the Holy Spirit is nothing more or other than a gift or power of God. At other places He definitely makes His appearance as a person, one who bears personal names, has personal characteristics, and does personal deeds. Thus in John 15:26 and John 16:13-14, (although the Greek of the word translated Spirit in our language is of neuter gender) Christ uses the masculine referent: He shall testify of Me and glorify Me. At the same place Christ calls Him Comforter, using the same name that is used of Christ in 1 John 2:1, a name translated advocate in the English version.

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

that the Holy Spirit is a person not merely but also very God. And Scriptures provide all the data which are necessary to make this confession. We have only to note that despite the distinction between God and His Spirit which was pointed out above, the two frequently exchange places in Scripture, so that it is quite the same whether God or His Spirit says or does a thing. In Acts 5:3-4 the lying to the Holy Spirit is called a lying to God. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 the believers are called God's temple, because the Spirit of God dwells in them. To these facts we must add that various Divine attributes, such as eternity, (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence, (Psalms 139:7), omniscience, (1 Corinthians 2:11), omnipotence, (1 Corinthians 12:4-6), and various Divine works, such as creation, (Psalms 33:6), providence, (Psalms 104:30), and redemption, (John 3:3) are ascribed to the Holy Spirit quite as well as to the Father and the Son. Consequently He shares in the same glory with those two. He takes His place alongside of the Father and the Son as the cause of salvation, (2 Corinthians 13:14 and Revelation 1:4). It is in His name also that we are baptized, (Matthew 28:19), and blessed, (2 Corinthians 13:14). Moreover, the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is an unpardonable sin, (Matthew 12:31-32). In other words, just as all things are of the Father and through the Son, they all exist and rest in the Holy Spirit.

All of these elements of the doctrine of the trinity, spread throughout the Scriptures, were gathered together, so to speak, by Jesus in His baptismal command and by the apostles in their benedictions. After His resurrection and before His ascension, Christ bids His apostles to go out and make all peoples His disciples and to baptize them in the one name in which, nevertheless, three different subjects are revealed. Father, Son, and Spirit are in their oneness and their distinction the fulness of the perfected revelation of God. Just so, too, according to the apostles the whole good and salvation of man is contained in the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.16 The good pleasure, the foreknowledge, the power, the love, the kingdom, and the strength are the Father's. The Mediatorship, the reconciliation, the grace, and the redemption are the Son's. The regeneration, the renewal, the sanctification, the redemption are the Spirit's. The relationship in which Christ stands to the Father corresponds fully with the relationship in which the Spirit stands to Christ. Just as the Son speaks nothing and does nothing of Himself but receives everything from the Father, (John 5:26; John 16:15), so the Holy Spirit takes everything from Christ, (John 16:13-14). As the Son testifies of the Father and glorifies the Father, (John 1:18; John 17:4, John 17:6), so the Holy Spirit testifies of the Son and glorifies Him, (John 15:26 and 16:14). Just as no one comes to the Father but through the Son, (John 14:6), so no one can say that Jesus is the Lord except through the Holy Spirit, (1 Corinthians 12:3). Through the Spirit we have fellowship with the Father and the Son. It is in the Holy Spirit that God Himself through Christ dwells in our hearts. And if this all be so, then the Holy Spirit is, together with the Son and the Father, the one, true God, and is to be eternally lauded and praised as such. To this instruction of the Holy Spirit the Christian church in its confession of the Trinity of God has said yea and amen. The church did not arrive at this rich and glorious confession without a hard and long struggle of the spirits. Centuries on end the profoundest experience of the spiritual life of the children of God and the doughtiest intellect of the fathers and teachers of the church went into the understanding of this point of the revelation of Scripture and to reproducing it purely in the confession of the church. No doubt the church would not have succeeded in this effort at the laying of foundations, if it had not been led into the truth by the Holy. Spirit, and if in Tertullian and Irenaeus, Athanasius and the three Cappadocians, Augustine, and Hillary, and so many others besides, it had not received the men who, endowed and equipped with unusual gifts of godliness

and wisdom, kept to the straight course.

Nothing less than the peculiar essence of Christianity was at stake in this battle of the spirits. From two sides the church was exposed to the danger of permitting itself to be wrested from the firm foundation on which it was built and so to be submerged by the world. On the one hand, there was the threat of Arianism, so called after the Alexandrian presbyter Arius who died in the year 336. Anus held that the Father alone was the eternal and true God, inasmuch as He alone in the full sense of the word was ungenerated. Concerning the Son, the Logos, who in Christ had become flesh, he taught that, inasmuch as this Christ was generated, He could not be God but had to be a creature — a creature, it is true, who had been made before other creatures, but nevertheless was made as they were made through the will of God. And, in the same way, Arius held that the Holy Spirit was a creature or else a quality or attribute of God. On the other side the party of Sabellianism was at work, so called after a certain Sabellius who lived in Rome at the beginning of the third century. Sabellius held that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were but three names for one and the same God—a God who had made Himself known thus successively as His revelation progressed in various forms and manifestations. In the form of the Father, accordingly, God was operative as Creator and Lawgiver. Thereupon He worked as Redeemer in the form of the Son. And He now works in the form of the Holy Spirit as the Re-creator of the church.

While Arianism tries to maintain the oneness of God, by placing Son and Spirit outside the Divine being and reducing these to the level of creatures, Sabellianism tries to arrive at the same end by robbing the three persons of the Godhead of their independence. This it does by metamorphosing the persons into three successive modes of revelation of the same Divine Being. In the first tendency the Jewish, deistic, rationalistic mode of thinking comes to expression rather characteristically, and in the second the idea of Pagan pantheism and mysticism. The moment the church set about giving itself a fairly clear account of the truth which was later stated in the confession of the Trinity of God, these two other tendencies arose alongside at the right and left, and they accompany the confession of the church to this day. Always and again the church and each one of its members must be on guard against doing injustice on the one hand to the oneness of the Divine Being, and on the other to the three Persons within that Being. The oneness may not be sacrificed to the diversity, nor the diversity to the oneness. To maintain both in their inseparable connection and in their pure relationship, not only theoretically but also in practical life, is the calling of all believers. In order to satisfy this requirement, the Christian church and Christian theology in the early period made use of various words and expressions which cannot be found literally in the Holy Scriptures. The church began to speak of the essence of God and of three persons in that essence of being. It spoke of the triune and the trinitarian, or of essential and personal characteristics, of the eternal generation of the Son and of the proceeding of the Holy Spirit from the Father and from the Son, and the like.

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

expression leads to various departures from the confession. At the same time, we should, in the use of these terms, always remember that they are of human origin and therefore limited, defective, fallible. The church fathers always acknowledged this. For example, they held that the term persons which was used to designate the three ways of existence in the Divine Being did not do justice to the truth in the matter but served as an aid towards maintaining the truth and cutting off error. The word was chosen, not because it was accurate in every respect, but because no other and better was to be found. In this matter again the word is far behind the thought, and the thought is far behind the actuality. Although we cannot preserve the actuality in any but this inadequate form, we may never forget that it is the reality itself and not the word that counts. In the dispensation of glory other and better expressions will certainly be laid upon our lips. The reality itself which is concerned in the confession of the holy trinity is of the highest importance, both for the mind and the heart. For it is by that confession that the church maintains, in the first place, both the unity and the diversity in the being of God. The Divine Being is one: there is but one Being that is God and that may be called God. In creation and redemption, in nature and grace, in church and world, in state and society, everywhere and always we are concerned with one, same, living, and true God. The unity of the world, of mankind, of truth, of virtue, of justice, and of beauty depends upon the unity of God. The moment that unity of God is denied or under stressed, the door is open to polytheism. But this unity or oneness of God is, according to Scripture and the confession of the church, not a contentless unity, nor a solitariness, but a fulness of life and strength. It comprises difference, or distinction, or diversity. It is that diversity which comes to expression in the three persons or modes of being of God. These three persons are not merely three modes of revelation. They are modes of being. Father, Son, and Spirit share one and the same Divine nature and characteristics. They are one being. Nevertheless each has His own name, His own particular characteristic, by which He is distinguished from the others. The Father alone has fatherhood, the Son alone has generation, and the Spirit alone possesses the quality of proceeding from both. To that order of existence in the Divine Being the order of the three persons in all Divine work corresponds. The Father is He from whom, the Son is He through whom, and the Spirit is He in whom all things are. All things in the creation, and in the redemption, or re-creation, come from the Father, through the Son and the Spirit. And in the Spirit and through the Son they are come back to Him. It is to the Father that we are particularly indebted, therefore, for his electing love, to the Son for His redeeming grace, and to the Spirit for his regenerative and renewing power. In the second place, the church in maintaining this confession, takes a strong position over against the heresies of deism, (belief in God without revelation) and pantheism, (polytheism) and of Judaism and Paganism. Always there is that dual tendency in the human heart: the tendency to think of God as distant and removed and to think of self and world as independent of God, and the tendency to draw God down into the world, to identify Him with the world, and so to deify the self and the world. When the first tendency prevails in us we come to the point of thinking that we can do without God in nature, in our calling, in our business, in our science and art, and also in the work of redemption. And, if the second tendency prevails in us, we change the glory of God into the image of some creature or other, deify the world, the sun, the moon and the stars, art, science, or the state, and in the creature, usually conceived in our image, we worship our own greatness. In the first instance God is only afar off; in the second He is only nearby. In the first, He is outside of the world, above it, free from it; in the second, He is inside it and identical with it. But the church confesses both: God is above the world, distinguished from it in essence, and yet He is with His

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

Finally, in the third place, this confession of the church is also of the greatest importance for the spiritual life. Quite unjustifiably it is sometimes maintained that the doctrine of the trinity is merely a philosophically abstracted dogma and that it possesses no value for religion and life. The Reformed Confession of Faith takes an entirely different view of this. In Article XI of that Confession the church stated that God is one in essence and three in persons. This we know from the witness of Holy Scripture, and from the activities of the three persons, especially those which we sense within us. True, we do not base our faith in the trinity on feeling and experience; but when we believe it, we notice that the doctrine stands in intimate relationship with the spiritual experience of the children of God. For the believers come to know the workings of the Father, the Creator of all things, He who gave them life, and breath, and all things. They learn to know Him as the Lawgiver who gave out His holy commandments in order that they should walk in them. They learn to know Him as the Judge who is provoked to terrible wrath by all the unrighteousness of men and who in no sense holds the guilty guiltless. And they learn to know Him, finally, as the Father who for Christ's sake is their God and Father, on whom they trust so far that they do not doubt but that He will supply for every need of body and soul, and that He will convert all evil which accrues to them in this vale of tears into good. They know that He can do this as Almighty God and that He wants to do it as a faithful Father. Hence they confess: I believe in God, the Father, the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Thus, too, they learn to know in themselves the workings of the Son, He who is the only-begotten of the Father, conceived in Mary of the Holy Spirit. They learn to know Him as their highest Prophet and Teacher, He who has perfectly revealed to them the secret counsel and will of God in the matter of their redemption. They learn to know Him as their only High priest, who has redeemed them by the one sacrifice of His body, and who still constantly intercedes for them with the Father. They learn to know Him as their eternal King, who rules them with His Word and Spirit and who shelters and preserves them in their achieved redemption. Hence they confess: I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only-begotten Son, our Lord. And they also learn to recognize in themselves the workings of the Holy Spirit, He who regenerates them and leads them into all truth. They learn to know Him as the Operator of their faith, He who through that faith causes them to share in Christ and all His benefits. They learn to know Him as the Comforter, He who prays in them with unutterable longings and who testifies with their spirit that they are children of God. They learn to know Him as the pledge of their eternal inheritance, He who preserves them until the day of their redemption. And they therefore confess: I believe also in the Holy Spirit.

Thus the confession of the trinity is the sum of the Christian religion. Without it neither the creation nor the redemption nor the sanctification can be purely maintained.

Every departure from this confession leads to error in the other heads of doctrine, just as a mistaken representation of the articles of faith can be traced back to a misconception of the

doctrine of the trinity. We can truly proclaim the mighty works of God only when we recognize and confess them as the one great work of Father, Son, and Spirit. In the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is contained the whole salvation of men.

Endnotes

1. Deuteronomy 4:35,Deuteronomy 4:39; Joshua 22:22; 2 Samuel 7:22; 2 Samuel 22:32; 1 Kings 18:39; Isaiah 45:5,Isaiah 45:18, Isaiah 45:21; and elsewhere.

2. Exodus 3:2; Exodus 13:21; Exodus 14:19; Exodus 23:20-23; Exodus 32:34; Exodus 33:2; and Numbers 20:16.

3. Exodus 28:3; Exodus 31:3-5; Exodus 35:31-35; and 1 Chronicles 28:12.

4. Numbers 11:25, Numbers 11:29; Numbers 24:2-3; Micah 3:8; and like passages.

5. Joel 2:28-29; Isaiah 32:15; Isaiah 44:3; Ezekiel 36:26-27; and Zechariah 12:10.

6. Ezekiel 11:19-20; Ezekiel 36:26; Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Jeremiah 32:38-41.

7. John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:4; and 1 Timothy 2:5.

8. Luke 3:38; Acts 17:28; Ephesians 3:15; and Hebrews 12:9.

9. Matthew 11:27; Mark 12:6; and John 5:20.

10. Luke 9:20; 1 Corinthians 3:23; and Revelation 12:10.

11. Job 38:7 12. Deuteronomy 1:31; Deuteronomy 8:5; Deuteronomy 14:1; Deuteronomy 32:6, Deuteronomy 32:18 and Hosea 11:1.

13. 2 Samuel 7:11-14 Psalms 2:7.

14. John 3:16; Galatians 4:4; and Hebrews 1:6.

15. John 1:1; John 20:8; Romans 9:5; and Hebrews 1:8-9.

16. 1 Cor. 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 5:4-6; and Revelation 1:4-6. N

S. The Divine and Human Nature of Christ

The Divine and Human Nature of Christ By Herman Bavinck The testimony which, according to Scripture, Christ has given of Himself is developed and confirmed by the preaching of the apostles. The confession that a man, named Jesus, is the Christ, the Only-Begotten of the Father, is in such direct conflict with our experience and with all of our thinking, and especially with all the inclinations of our heart, that no one can honestly and with his whole soul appropriate it without the persuasive activity of the Holy Spirit. By nature everybody stands in enmity to this confession, for it is not a confession natural to man. No one can confess that Jesus is the Lord except through the Holy Spirit, but neither can anyone speaking by the Holy Spirit call Jesus accursed; he must recognize Him as his Savior and King (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Hence when Christ appears on earth and Himself confesses that He is the Son of God, He did not leave it at that, but He also had a care, and He continues to have a care, that this confession finds entrance into the world, and is believed by the church. He called His apostles, and He instructed them, and made them witnesses to His words and deeds, to His death and resurrection. He gave them the Holy Spirit who brought them personally to the confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16), and who later caused them, from the day of Pentecost on, to minister as preachers of those things which their eyes had seen, and they beheld, and their hands had handled of the Word of life (1 John 1:1). The apostles were really not the real witnesses. The Spirit of truth, proceeding from the Father, is the original, infallible, and almighty witness to Christ, and the apostles are that only in Him and through Him (John 15:26 and Acts 5:32). And it is that same Spirit of truth who by means of the testimony of the apostles brings the church of all ages to the confession and preserves them in it: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God (John 6:68-69). When the four Evangelists in regular order report the events of the life of Jesus, they usually refer to Him simply by the name of Jesus without any more particular qualification or addendum. They tell us that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, that Jesus was led into the wilderness, that Jesus saw the multitude and went up the mountain, and so on. Jesus, the historical person who lived and died in Palestine, is the object of their chronicle. And so we find a few times in the letters of the apostles, too, that Jesus is designated simply by His historical name. Paul says, for instance, that no one can say that Jesus is the Lord except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). John testifies that whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God (1 John 1:5 compare 2:22 and 4:20). And in the book of Revelation we read of the faith of Jesus, and of the witnesses and witness of Jesus.

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

historical events. The Christ- figure is not an idea nor an ideal of the human mind, as many in past ages maintained, and as some in our time also assert, but is a real figure who manifested Himself in a particular period and in a particular person in the man Jesus.

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

Often, therefore, in the letters of the apostles mention is made of events in the life of Jesus. They picture Him before the eyes of their auditors and readers (Galatians 3:1). They stress the fact that John the Baptist was His herald and precursor (Acts 13:25 and 19:4), that He comes from the family of Judah and the stem of David (Romans 1:3; Revelation 5:5 and 22:16), that He was born of a woman (Galatians 4:4), was circumcised on the eighth day (Romans 15:8), that He was brought up in Nazareth (Acts 2:22 and 3:6), and that He also had brothers (1 Corinthians 9:5 and Galatians 1:19). They tell us that He was perfectly holy and sinless,1 that He presented Himself to us as an example (1 Corinthians 11:1 and 1 Peter 2:21), and that He spoke words that have authority for us (Acts 20:35 and 1 Corinthians 7:10-12). But it is especially His dying that is significant for us. The cross stands at the central point in the apostolic preaching. Betrayed by one of the twelve apostles whom He chose (1 Corinthians 11:23 and 1 Corinthians 15:5), and not recognized by the princes of this world as the Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8), He was put to death by the Jews (Acts 4:10; Acts 5:30; and 1 Thessalonians 2:15), dying on the accursed wood of the cross.2 But, even though He suffered greatly in Gethsemane and upon Golgotha,3 He has by the pouring out of His blood achieved the reconciliation and an eternal righteousness.4 And therefore God raised Him up, exalted Him to His right hand, and appointed Him Lord and Christ, Prince and Savior for all nations.5 From these few data it is adequately evident that the apostles did not deny, ignore, or neglect the facts of Christianity but that they fully honored them and penetrated their spiritual significance. No trace is to be found in them of any separation or conflict between the redemptive event and the redemptive word, however much some in the past have tried to postulate such a conflict. The redemptive event is the actualization of the redemptive word; in the second the first takes on its real and concrete form and is at the same time therefore its illumination and interpretation.

If any doubt about this remains at all, it is entirely removed by the battle which the apostles already in their day had to conduct. It was not merely in the second, third, and following centuries but also in the apostolic period that certain men appeared who regarded the facts of Christianity of subordinate and transient importance, or else ignored them altogether, and who held that the idea was the main thing or in itself quite enough. What difference does it make, they argued, whether or not Christ bodily rose from the grave? If only He lives on in the spirit, our salvation is sufficiently assured! But the apostle Paul thought very differently about that and in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 he placed the reality and the significance of the resurrection in the clearest possible light. He preaches Christ according to the Scriptures, that Christ who, according to the counsel of the Father, died, was buried, and was raised again, who after His resurrection was seen of many disciples, and whose resurrection is the foundation and surety of our salvation. And, if possible,

John puts even more emphasis on the fact that he is a declarer of what he has seen with his eyes and handled with his hands of the Word of life (1 John 1:1-3). The principle of the antichrist is this that he denies the incarnation of the Word; and the Christian confession, to the contrary, consists of the belief that the Word has become flesh, that the Son of God has come by water and by blood (John 1:14 and 1 John 3:2-3 and 5 :6). The whole apostolic preaching of the letters and of the gospels, hence of the whole New Testament, comes down to the claim that Jesus, born of Mary and crucified, is -- witness the evidence of His exaltation -- the Christ, the Son of God.6

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

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

It is true that the disciples could not reconcile these Messianic claims of Jesus with His approaching passion and death (Matthew 16:22). But through the resurrection, and after it, they learned to know also the necessity and the meaning of the cross. Now they recognized that God had by the resurrection made this Jesus, whom the Jews had destroyed. to be Lord and Christ and had exalted Him to be a Prince and Savior (Acts 2:36 and 5:31). This does not mean to say that before His resurrection Jesus was not yet Christ and Lord, and that He became this only after the resurrection, for Christ had proclaimed Himself as the Christ beforehand and He was then also acknowledged and confessed as such by the disciples (Matthew 16:16). But before the resurrection He was Messiah in the form of a servant, in a form and shape which concealed His dignity as Son of God from the eyes of men. In the resurrection and after it He laid aside that form of a servant, He re-assumed the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5), and was therefore appointed as Son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness that dwelt in Him (Romans 1:3).

It is therefore that Paul can say that He now, after it has pleased God to reveal His Son to him, no longer knows Christ according to the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:16). Before His repentance He knew

Christ only according to the flesh, judged Him solely by His external appearance, according to the form of a servant in which He walked about on the earth. Then he could not believe that this Jesus, who was without any glory and was even hanged on the cross and put to death, was the Christ. But by his conversion all that has changed. Now he knows and judges Christ not according to appearance, not according to external, temporal, servant forms, but according to the spirit, according to what was in Christ, according to what He really was internally and in His resurrection externally proved to be. And the same can in a sense be said of all the apostles. It is true that they had before the passion and death of Christ been brought to a believing confession of His Messianic reality. But in their mind there remained an irreconcilability of this reality with the passion and death. The resurrection, however, reconciled this conflict for them. He was to them now the same Christ who has descended into the lower parts of the earth and is ascended up far above all heavens, in order that He might fulfill all things (Ephesians 4:9). Speaking of Christ, the apostles think in one and the same breath of the deceased and of the raised Christ, of the crucified and of the glorified Christ. They connect their gospel with the historical Jesus not only, who lived a few years back in Palestine and died there, but also to that same Jesus as He is, exalted, and seated at the right hand of God's power. They stand, so to speak, at the point of bisection of the horizontal line, which is tied to the past, to history, and the vertical line, which connects them with the living Lord in heaven. Christianity is therefore an historical religion, but at the same time a religion which lives in the present out of eternity. The disciples of Jesus are not, according to His historical name, Jesuites, but, according to the name of His office, Christians. This peculiar position which the apostles took in their preaching after the resurrection is the reason why they no longer referred to Jesus by His historical name merely, but virtually always spoke of Him as Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, our Lord Jesus Christ, and so on. As a matter of fact the name Christ soon lost its official significance in the circle of the disciples and began to take on that of a given name. The conviction that Jesus was the Christ was so strong that He could simply be called Christ, even without the article preceding it. This occurs a few times even in the gospels.8 But with the apostles, particularly with Paul, this becomes the rule. Moreover, the two names, Jesus Christ, were more than once reversed, especially by Paul, with a view to accentuating even more the Messianic reality of Christ, and then the name became Christ Jesus. This designation, Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus, was the pre-eminent name for the early churches. The use and significance of the name in the Old Testament is carried over to Christ in the New. The Name of the Lord, or the Name alone, was in the Old Testament the denomination of the revealed glory of God. In the days of the New Testament that glory has appeared in the person of Jesus Christ; and thus the strength of the church now stands in His name. In that name the apostles baptize (Acts 2:38), speak and teach (Acts 4:18), heal the cripple (Acts 3:6), and forgive sin (Acts 10:43). This name is resisted and it is attacked (Acts 26:9). The confession of it brings on suffering (Acts 5:41). It is appealed to (Acts 22:8) and is magnified (Acts 19:17). In this sense the name of Jesus Christ was a sort of compendium of the confession of the church, the strength of its faith, and the anchor of its hope. Just as Israel in ancient times gloried in the name of Jehovah, so the church of the New Testament finds its strength in the name of Jesus Christ. In this name the name of Jehovah has come into its full revelation. The name of Lord, which in the New Testament is constantly connected with that of Jesus Christ, points in the same direction. In the gospels Jesus is addressed by the name Lord a number of times by persons who were not of the disciples, but nevertheless call on Him for help. In such instances the name usually carries no more force than

that of Rabbi or Master. But we also find this name often spoken by the disciples.9 Further, in the gospel accounts the name of Jesus is sometimes interchanged by Luke and John with that of Lord.10 And, finally, Jesus Himself also makes use of that name, designating Himself as the Lord.11 In the mouth of Jesus Himself and of the disciples this name of the Lord takes on a much profounder significance than is contained in the appellation Rabbi or Master. Just what everybody who came to Jesus for help and addressed Him with the name Lord meant by it cannot be said with certainty. But Jesus was in His own consciousness the teacher, the master, the Lord pre-eminently, and He ascribed an authority to Himself which went far beyond that of the scribes. So much is evident already in such passages as Matthew 23:1-11 and Mark 1:22 and Mark 1:27 where Jesus exalts Himself as the only Master above all other. But it is much more resolutely expressed, and is put beyond all possibility of doubt, when He calls Himself a Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8) and elsewhere calls Himself David's Son and David's Lord (Matthew 22:43-45). In these claims nothing less is involved than that He is the Messiah, who is seated at the right hand of God, shares His power, and judges of the living and the dead.12 This deep significance which attaches itself to the name of Lord is owing in part also, presumably, to the fact that the names of Jehovah and Adonai of the Old Testament were translated by the Greek kurios, Lord, in the New, that is, by the same word which was also applied to the Christ. As Christ more and more clearly explained Himself, who He was, and as the disciples understood better and better which revelation of God had come to them in Christ, the name of Lord took on a richer and richer significance. Texts of the Old Testament in which God was spoken of were applied to the Christ in the New without hesitation. Thus in Mark 1:3 the text from Isaiah, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight, is referred to and applied to the preparation by John the Baptist as its fulfillment. In Christ, God Himself, the Lord, has come to His people. And the disciples, by confessing Jesus as Lord, have thus more and more clearly expressed that God Himself had revealed and given Himself to them in the person of Christ. It is Thomas who mounts to the very climax of this confession during Jesus' sojourn on earth when he falls at the feet of the resurrected Christ and addresses Him with the words: My Lord and my God (John 20:28).

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

Whoever, therefore, shall call upon the name of Jesus as Christ and Lord, shall be saved (Acts 2:21 and 1 Corinthians 1:2). To be Christian is to confess with the mouth and to believe with the heart that God has raised Him up from the dead.13 The content of the preaching is: Christ Jesus, the Lord (2 Corinthians 4:5). So completely is the essence of Christianity epitomized in this confession that in the writings of Paul the name of Lord almost comes to be used as a given name applied to Christ in His distinction from the Father and the Spirit. As Christians we have one God,

the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him, and one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will (1 Corinthians 8:6 and 1 Corinthians 12:11). Just as the name of God in the writings of Paul becomes the domestic name of the Father, so the name of Lord becomes the domestic name of Christ. The apostolic blessing, accordingly, prays that the church may have the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:13). The one name of God interprets itself in the three persons of Father, Son, and Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

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

Nevertheless this same man was distinguished from all men and raised high above them. Not only was He according to His human nature conceived by the Holy Spirit; not only was He throughout His life, despite all temptation, free from sin; and not only was He after His death raised up again and taken into heaven; but the same subject, the same person, the same I who humiliated Himself so deeply that He assumed the form of a servant and became obedient unto the death of the cross, already existed in a different form of existence long before His incarnation and humiliation. He existed then in the form of God and thought it no robbery to be equal with God (Php 2:6). At His resurrection and ascension He simply received again the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5). He is eternal as God Himself, having been with Him already in the beginning (John 1:1 and 1 John 1:1). He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13); He is omnipresent, so that, though walking about on the face of the earth, He is simultaneously in the bosom of the Father in heaven (John 1:18 and John 3:13) ; and after His glorification He remains with His church and fulfills all in all;16 He is unchangeable and faithful and is the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8); He is omniscient, so that He hears prayers;17 He is the One who knows all men's hearts (Acts 1:24; unless the reference here is to the Father); He is omnipotent so that all things are subjected unto Him and all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth, and is the chief of all kings.18

While in possession of all these Divine attributes, He also shares in the Divine works. Together with the Father and the Spirit He is the creator of all things (John 1:3 and Colossians 1:5). He is the firstborn, the beginning, and the Head of all creatures (Colossians 1:15 and Revelation 3:14). He upholds all things by the word of His might, so that they are not only of Him but also

continuously in Him and through Him (Hebrews 1:3 and Colossians 1:17). And, above all, He preserves, reconciles, and restores all things and gathers them into one under Himself as Head. As such He bears especially the name of the Savior of the world. In the Old Testament the name of Savior or Redeemer was given to God,19 but in the New Testament the Son as well as the Father bears this name. In some places this name is given to God,20 and in some places it is given to Christ.21 Sometimes it is not clear whether the name refers to God or to Christ (Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1). But it is Christ in whom and through whom the saving work of God is wholly effected.

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

Christ is the Image of God, the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person.22 In Christ the invisible God has become visible. Whoever sees Him sees the Father (John 14:9). Whoever wants to know who God is and what He is must behold the Christ. As Christ is, such is the Father. Further, Christ is the Word of God (John 1:1 and Revelation 19:13). In Him the Father has perfectly expressed Himself: His wisdom, His will, His excellences, His whole being. He has given Christ to have life in Himself (John 5:26). Whoever wants to learn to know God's thought, God's counsel, and God's will for mankind and the world, let him listen to Christ, and hear Him (Matthew 17:5). Finally, Christ is the Son of God, the Son, as John describes Him, often without any further qualification (1 John 2:22 if. and Hebrews 1:1, Hebrews 1:8), the one and only-begotten, the own and beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased.23 Whoever would be a child of God, let him accept Christ, for all who accept Him receive the right and the power to be called the children of God (John 1:12).

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

Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God -- upon this stone is the church built. From the very beginning the wholly unique significance of Christ was clear to all believers. He was confessed by them all as the Lord who by His teaching and life had accomplished salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and immortality, who was thereupon raised by the Father to His right hand, and who would

soon return as Judge to judge the living and the dead. The same names that are given Him in the letters of the apostles are given Him also in the earliest Christian writings. By those names He is addressed in the early prayers and songs. All were convinced that there is one God, that they were His children, one Lord who had made sure and granted to them the love of God, and one Spirit, who caused them all to walk in newness of life. The baptismal mandate of Matthew 28:19, which came into general use at the end of the apostolic period, is the evidence of this unanimity of conviction. But the moment Christians began to reflect on the content of this confession, all kinds of difference of opinion became apparent. The members of the church, who were previously educated in Jewry or heathendom and for the most part were among the untutored of the country, were not in position immediately to appropriate the apostolic teaching in their own minds. They lived in a society in which all kinds of ideas and currents of thought were criss-crossing, and thus they continuously were subject to much temptation and error. Even during the life of the apostles we notice that various heretical teachers had forced their way into the church and tried to wrench it from the fixity of its belief. At Colosse, for instance, there were members who did injustice to the person and work of Christ and changed the gospel into a new law (Colossians 2:3 ff. and Colossians 2:16 ff.). At Corinth certain libertines stood up, who, abusing Christian liberty, wanted to be bound to no rule (1 Corinthians 6:12 and 1 Corinthians 8:1). The apostle John in his first letter conducts an argument against certain so-called prophets who denied the coming of Christ into the flesh and thus did violence to the genuineness of His human nature (1 John 2:18 ff.; 1 John 4:1 ff.; 1 John 5:5 ff.). And so it remained in the post-apostolic period. In fact, the errors and heresies grew in variety, force, and distribution from the second century on. There were those who believed in the real human nature of Christ, in His supernatural birth, His resurrection and ascension, but who recognized the Divine in Him in nothing more than an unusual measure of the gifts and powers of the Spirit. These were thought of as having been given Him at His baptism in order to equip Him for His religious-moral task. The followers of this movement lived under the influence of the deistic, Jewish idea of the relationship of God and the world. They simply could not conceive of a more intimate relationship between God and man than one which consisted of a sharing of gifts and abilities. Jesus, accordingly, was indeed a richly endowed person, a religious genius, but He was and He remained a man. But others, brought up formerly in heathendom, found themselves attracted rather to the polytheistic idea. They thought that they could very well understand that Christ, according to His inner nature, should be one of the many, or even perhaps the highest, of all Divine beings. But they could not believe that such a Divine, pure being could have assumed a material and fleshly nature. And so they sacrificed the real humanity of Christ and said that it was only temporarily, and in appearance merely, that He had gone about on earth, much as the Angels according to Old Testament report had often done. Both thought-currents, both movements, continue up to the present day. At one time the Divinity of Christ is sacrificed to the humanity; at another it is the humanity that is sacrificed to the Divinity. There are always extremes which sacrifice the idea to the fact, or the fact to the idea. They do not comprehend the unity and harmony of the two. But the Christian church from the very beginning stood on a different basis and in the person of Christ confessed the most intimate, the profoundest, and therefore the altogether unique, communion of God and man. Its representatives in the earliest period sometimes expressed themselves in an awkward way. They had to struggle, first to form a somewhat clear notion of the reality, and then to give expression to this idea in clear language. But, all the same, the church did not for that reason let itself be pushed off its base. Rather, the

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

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

When, in other words, the unity of God -- which is a fundamental truth of Christianity -- was understood in such a way that the being of God was perfectly coterminus and coincident with the person of the Father, then there remained no room in the Godhead for the Christ. Christ then was pushed outside the pale of deity, and placed alongside of man, for between the Creator and the creature there is no gradual transition. One could then go on to say with Arius that in time and status He transcended the whole world, that He was the first among created creatures, and that He was superior to them all in position and in honor. But Christ thus remains a creature. There was a time when He did not exist, and it is in time that He, like every other creature, was called into existence by God. In the attempt, however, to hold to the unity of God and at the same time to grant the person of Christ the place of, honor proper to Him, it is easy to fail into another error, the error named after its foremost proponent, Sabellius. While Arius, so to speak, identified the being of the Godhead with the person of the Father, Sabellius sacrificed all three of the persons to the being of the Godhead. According to His teaching, the three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, are not eternal realities, contained in the being of the Godhead, but they are forms and manifestations in which the one Divine Being manifests Himself successively in the course of the centuries: namely, in the Old Testament, in the earthly sojourn of Christ, and after Pentecost. Both heresies have throughout the centuries found their adherents. The so-called Groningen Theologie, for instance, renewed essentially the doctrine of Arius, and Modern Theology at first walked in the way of Sabellius.

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

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

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

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

It is of course self-evident that this confession of Nicea and Chalcedon may not lay claim to infallibility. The terms of which the church and its theology make use, such as person, nature, unity of substance, and the like, are not found in Scripture, but are the product of reflection which Christianity gradually had to devote to this mystery of salvation., The church was compelled to do this reflecting by the heresies which loomed up on all sides, both within the church and outside of it. All those expressions and statements which are employed in the confession of the church and in the language of theology are not designed to explain the mystery which in this matter confronts it, but rather to maintain it pure and unviolated over against those who would weaken or deny it. The incarnation of the Word is not a problem which we must solve, or can solve, but a wonderful fact, rather, which we gratefully confess in such a way as God Himself presents it to us in His Word.

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

Divine endowment or strength granted to Christ in a particularly high degree. They tend to say, accordingly, that there are two sides to Christ, a Divine and a human side; or that He can be looked at from two points of view; or that He lived in two successive states, that of humiliation and that of exaltation; or that He, although human, by His preaching of the Word of God and the founding of His kingdom, nevertheless was the extraordinary and perfect vehicle of God's revelation and so has obtained for us the value of God. But any unprejudiced reader will feel that these representations are simply so many modifications in the language of the church not merely, but also that they make something of the person of Christ other than that which the church at all times on the basis of the testimony of the apostles has confessed.

After all, Divine gifts and powers are in a certain sense given to everyone, for all good and perfect gifts come down from the Father of lights. And even the unusual gifts, such as were the portion of the prophets, for example, do not raise these prophets above the plane of human beings. Prophets and apostles were men of like passions as we have. If Christ therefore received no more than extraordinary gifts and powers, He was no more than a human being, and then there can be no such thing as an incarnation of the Word in Him. But then He cannot, as others nevertheless maintain, by virtue of His resurrection and ascension be raised to the being of God, or have obtained the value or worth of God for us. The separation between God and man is not a gradual difference but a deep gulf. The relationship is that of Creator and creature, and the creature from the nature of his being can never become Creator, nor have the significance and worth for us human beings of the Creator, on whom we are absolutely dependent.

It is remarkable, therefore, that some in modern times, after having compared all these newer representations concerning the person of Christ with the teaching of the church and of Scripture, have come to the honest conclusion that in the last analysis the doctrine of the church does most justice to the doctrine of Scripture. The teaching that Christ was God and man in one person is not a product of heathen philosophy but is based on the apostolic witness. This certainly is the mystery of salvation that He who was Himself with God in the beginning and was God (John 1:1), who was in the form of God and did not think it robbery to be equal with God (Php 2:6), who was the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person (Hebrews 1:3), in the fulness of time became flesh (John 1:14), was born of a woman (Galatians 4:4), humbled Himself, having taken on the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men (Php 2:7).

Christ was God, and is God, and will forever remain God. He was not the Father, nor the Spirit, but the Son, the own, only-begotten, beloved Son of the Father. And it was not the Divine being, neither the Father nor the Spirit, but the person of the Son who became man in the fulness of time. And when He became man and as man went about on earth, even when He agonized in Gethsemane and hung on the cross, He remained God's own Son in whom the Father was well pleased (had all His pleasure). It is true. of course, as the apostle says, that Christ, being in the form of God, did not.think it robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation and emptied Himself (Php 2:6-7). But it is a mistake to take this to mean, as some do, that Christ, in His incarnation, in the state of humiliation, completely or partly divested Himself of His Divinity, laid aside His Divine attributes, and thereupon in the state of exaltation gradually assumed them again. For how could this be, since God cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13), and as the Immutable One in Himself far transcends all becoming and change? No, even when He became what He was not, He remained what He was, the Only-Begotten of the Father. But it is true that the Apostle says

that in this sense Christ made Himself of no reputation: being in the form of God, He assumed the form of a man and a servant. One can express it humanly and simply in this way: before His incarnation Christ was equal with the Father not alone in essence and attributes, but He had also the form of God. He looked like God, He was the brightness of His glory, and the expressed image of His person. Had anyone been able to see Him, he would immediately have recognized God. But this changed at His incarnation. Then He took on the form of a human being, the form of a servant. Whoever looked at Him now could no longer recognize in Him the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, except by the eye of faith. He had laid aside His Divine form and brightness. He hid His Divine nature behind the form of a servant. On earth He was and He looked like one of us. The incarnation therefore also implies in the second place that He who remained what He was also became what He was not. He became this at a point in time, at a particular moment in history, at that hour when the Holy Spirit came over Mary and the power of the Most High overshadowed her (Luke 1:35). But all the same this incarnation was prepared for during the centuries.

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

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

Since the Son of God, who took on human nature in Mary, had existed before that time, and from eternity, as the person of the Son, His conception in Mary’s womb did not take place through the will of the flesh nor the will of the man, but by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. It is true that the incarnation is linked with the preceding revelation and completes it, but it is not itself a product of nature or of humanity. It is a work of God, a revelation, the highest revelation. Just as it was the Father who sent His Son into the world, and the Holy Spirit who overshadowed Mary, so it was the Son Himself who took of our flesh and blood (Hebrews 2:14). The incarnation was His own work; He was not passive in regard to it. He became flesh by His own will and His own deed. Therefore He sets aside the will of the flesh and the will of the man, and prepares a human nature for Himself in Mary’s womb through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. That human nature did not exist beforehand. It was not brought down with Christ from heaven and borne into Mary from the outside and, so to speak, conducted through her body. The Anabaptists teach this in order to hold to the sinlessness of the human nature in Christ. But in taking this stand, they are following in the example of the ancient gnosticism, and proceed from the idea that flesh and matter are in them selves sinful. But in the incarnation, also, Scripture holds to the good ness of creation and to the Divine origin of matter.

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

Just as the human nature of Christ did not exist before the conception in Mary, so it did not exist for sometime before, nor for some time after, in a state of separation from Christ. The seed conceived in Mary, and the child that was born of her, did not first grow up independently into a man, into a person, a self, in order then to be assumed by the Christ and united with Himself. This heresy, too, had its supporters in earlier and later times, but Scripture knows nothing of it. That holy thing which was conceived in Mary's womb was from the beginning the Son of God and from the beginning He bore that name (Luke 1:35). The Word did not later take a human being unto Himself, but became flesh (John 1:14). And therefore the Christian church in its confession said that the person of the Son did not assume a human person but a human nature, rather. Only in that way can the duality of the natures and the unity of the person be maintained. For -- and this is the third point which requires our attention in this matter -- even though Scripture states as plainly as possible that Christ was the Word and that He became flesh, that according to the flesh He was from the fathers but that according to His essence Re is God over all, blessed forever, still in that Christ it always presents one person to us. It is always the same Self that speaks and acts in Christ. The child which is born bears the name of the mighty God, the everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6). David's Son is at the same time David's Lord. The same one who came down is the one who ascended up far above all heavens (Ephesians 4:10). He who according to the flesh is from the fathers is according to His essence God over all, blessed forever (Romans 9:5). Though going about on earth He was and He remained in heaven, in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18 and 3:13). Born in time and living in time He nevertheless is before Abraham (John 8:58). The fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Him (Colossians 2:9). In short, to one and the same subject, one and the same person, Divine and human attributes and works, eternity and time, omnipresence and limitation, creative omnipotence and creaturely weakness are ascribed. This being so, the union of the two natures in Christ cannot have been that of two persons. Two persons can through love be intimately united with each other, it is true, but they can never become one person, one self. In fact, love implies two persons and effects only a mystical and ethical unity. If the union of the Son of God with human nature were of this character it could at best be distinguished in degree but not in kind from that which unites God with His creatures, specifically with His children. But Christ occupies a unique position. He did not unite Himself in a moral way with man, and did not take an existing human being up into His fellowship, but He prepared a human nature for Himself in Mary's womb and became a human being and a servant. just as a human being can go from one state of life to another, and can live at the same time or in succession in two spheres of life, so, by way of analogy, Christ, who was in the form of God, went about on earth in the form of a servant. The union which in His incarnation came to be effected was not a moral union between two persons, but a union of two natures in the same person. Man and woman, no matter how intimately united in love, remain two persons. God and man, although united by the most intimate love, remain different in essence. But in Christ man is the same subject as the Word which in the beginning was with God and Himself was God. This is a unique, incomparable, and unfathomable union of God and man. And the beginning and end of all wisdom is this: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the

Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). In this union Christ in the unity of His person commands all the attributes and powers which are proper to both natures. Some have tried to effect a still stronger and closer union of the two natures by teaching that the two natures, immediately at the incarnation, were welded into one Divine-human nature, or that the Divine nature divested itself of its characteristics and condescended to the limitation of human nature, or that the human nature lost its properties and received those of the Divine nature (be it all of them, or just some of them such as omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, and quickening power.) But the Reformed confession has always repudiated and attacked such a welding of two natures into one and such a communication of the properties of the one nature to the other. It was a view of the two natures which resulted in a mingling and confusion of them and so in a pantheistic denial of the difference in essence between God and man, Creator and creature.

True, there is an intimate relationship between the two natures and their properties and powers. But it is a relationship which comes into being in the unity of the person. A stronger, deeper, more intimate union is inconceivable. Just as -- to make a comparison and not an equating of the two -- soul and body are united in one person and nevertheless remain distinguished from each other in essence and properties, so in Christ the same person is the subject of both natures. The difference between soul and body is the assumption and condition of the inner union of the two in one and the same human being, and so too the difference between the Divine and the human nature is the condition and basis of their union in Christ. The welding of the two natures into one and the communication of the properties from one to another make for no more intimate relationship, but make for a mingling or fusion, and, in point of fact, impoverish the fulness which is in Christ. They subtract either from the Divine, or from the human, nature, or from both natures, and weaken the word of the Scripture that in Him, that is, in Christ, the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells (Colossians 2:9 and 1:19). That fulness is maintained only if both natures are distinguished from each other, communicating their properties and attributes not to each other, but placing them, rather, in the service of the one person. So it is always the same rich Christ who in His humiliation and exaltation commands the properties and powers of both natures and who precisely by that means can bring those works to pass, which, as the works of the Mediator, are distinguished on the one hand from the works of God and on the other hand from the works of man, and which take a unique place in the history of the world. By this Doctrine of the Two Natures one has the advantage that everything which Scripture says of the person of Christ and everything it ascribes to Him comes into its own. On the one hand He then is and remains the one and eternal Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit has made all things, sustains and governs them,29 and who therefore may remain the object of our worship. He was such an object already in the days of the apostles,30 even as He was then, and now yet is, the object of the faith and confidence of all His disciples.31 But He cannot and He may not be both of these things unless He is true God, for it is written: Thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God and Him only shalt thou serve (Matthew 4:10). The basis for the religious worship of Christ can be only His Divine nature, so that whoever denies this and yet maintains the worship becomes guilty of deifying the creature and of idolatry. The Divinity of Christ is not an abstract doctrine but some- thing which is of the highest importance for the life of the church. On the other hand, the Christ became very man and perfect man, like us in all things, sin excepted. He was infant, child, youth, and man, and He grew in wisdom and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:40 and 52). All this is not appearance and illusion merely, as those must say who hold that the Divine properties belong to the human nature, but it is

the full truth. There was in Christ a gradual development, a progressive growth in body, in the powers of the soul, in favor with God and man. The gifts of the Spirit were not given to Him all at once, but successively in ever greater measure. There were things which He had to learn, and which at first He did not know (Mark 13:32 and Acts 1:7). Even though He was in possession of the not-able-to-sin state of being, there was in Him, because of His weak human nature, the possibility of being tempted and of suffering and dying. So long as He was on the earth He was not according to His human nature in heaven, and hence He too did not live by sight but by faith. He fought and He suffered, and in all this He clung fixedly to the word and the promise of God. Thus He learned obedience from the things which He suffered, continually established Himself in obedience, and so sanctified Himself.32 And in this at the same time He left us an example, and became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him (Hebrews 5:9).

NOTES:

1 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 1:11; 1 Peter 2:22; and 1 John 3:5.

2 Galatians 3:13; Colossians 2:14.

3 Php 2:6; Hebrews 5:7-8; Hebrews 12:2 and Hebrews 13:12.

4 Romans 3:25; Romans 5:9; and Colossians 1:20.

5 Acts 2:32-33, Acts 2:36; Acts 5:30-31; Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:20; Php 2:9; and other passages.

6 John 20:31; 1 John 2:22; 1 John 4:15; 1 John 5:5.

7 Matthew 1:1, Matthew 1:18; Matthew 16:20; Mark 1:1; John 1:17; and John 17:3.

8 Matthew 8:2, Matthew 8:6, Matthew 8:21; Matthew 15:22; Matthew 17:15; and other passages.

9 Matthew 14:28, Matthew 15:30; Matthew 26:22; Matthew 11:3; Matthew 21:15-17, and Matthew 21:21.

10 Luke 1:43; Luke 2:11, Luke 2:38; Luke 7:13, Luke 7:31; Luke 10:1; Luke 11:39; Luke 17:6; and John 4:1; John 6:23; John 11:2; John 20:2, John 20:13, John 20:18, John 20:25, and John 20:28; and so on.

11 Matthew 7:21; Matthew 12:8; Matthew 21:3; Matthew 22:43-45; Mark 5:19; and John 13:14.

12 Matthew 21:4-5; Matthew 13:35; Matthew 24:42 ff.; and Matthew 25:34 ff.

13 Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3; and Php 2:11.

14 Matthew 4:2; John 11:35; and 19:28; and elsewhere.

15 Galatians 4:1-31; Php 2:8; Hebrews 5:8; and Hebrews 10:7, Hebrews 10:9.

16 Matthew 28:20; Ephesians 1:23; and Ephesians 4:10.

17 Acts 1:24; Acts 7:59; Acts 16:13; Romans 10:13 and elsewhere.

18 Matthew 28:18; 1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:22; Revelation 1:4; and 19:16.

19 Isaiah 43:3, Isaiah 43:11; Isaiah 45:15; Jeremiah 14:8; and Hosea 13:4.

20 1 Timothy 1:11; 1 Timothy 2:3; Titus 1:3; and Titus 2:10.

21 2 Timothy 1:10; Titus 1:4; Titus 2:13; Titus 3:6; 2 Peter 1:11; 2 Peter 2:20; and 2 Peter 3:18.

22 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15; and Hebrews 1:3.

23 Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5; John 1:14; Romans 8:32; Ephesians 1:6; and Colossians 1:13.

24 2 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Peter 1:2; and Revelation 1:4-6.

25 Matthew 1:21; John 3:16; Romans 8:3; and Galatians 4:4-5.

26 Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:7; and Galatians 4:4.

27 Acts 2:30; Romans 1:3; and Romans 9:5.

28 Hebrews 2:14, Hebrews 2:17; and Hebrews 4:15.

29 John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-16; and Hebrews 1:2.

30 John 14:13; Acts 7:59; Acts 9:13; Acts 22:16; Romans 10:12-13; Php 2:9; and Hebrews 1:6.

31 John 14:1; John 17:3; Romans 14:9; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Ephesians 3:12; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:27; and other passages.

32 John 17:19 and Hebrews 5:8-8.

S. The Doctrine of God

Bavinck - The Doctrine of God

Herman Bavinck

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

(1) This controversy is rooted in the struggle between Augustine and Pelagius. According to Pelagianism both original and actual sin (unbelief) logically precede election and reprobation; according to Augustine ONLY original sin precedes predestination. According to supra, predestination logically precedes not only actual but also original sin. Hence, Pelagianism: original sin, actual sin, predestination; Augustinianism or infralapsarianism: original sin, predestination, actual sin; supralapsarianism: predestination, original sin, actual sin.

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

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

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

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

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

1. A decree to create man.

2. A decree to send Christ in order to redeem fallen humanity, to cause him to die for all and to be proclaimed to all, and to grant to all "grace sufficient" unto salvation.

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

1. A decree to create man and to permit him to fall.

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

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

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

Augustine does not directly deduce a decree establishing the means unto perdition from the decree of reprobation as such. He does teach that even in regard to sin God proceeds in an active and positive manner; God is the “Disposer of sins,” he deemed it right that there should be sin, he punishes sin with sin; but Augustine generally views reprobation negatively, i.e., as preterition or dereliction (passing by or abandonment), and he does not as a rule view it as part of predestination, but identifies the latter with election, and subsumes both election and reprobation under God’s providence. On the other hand there is a predestination of the means unto salvation. With Augustine predestination or election is always a predestination unto glory. It implies foreordination unto grace. Accordingly, foreseen faith and good works are not the ground of election, neither is Christ the final ground. But election is foreordination unto the desired goal, hence, unto the means whereby this goal will he realized, i. e., unto Christ who was himself predestinated, and thus unto calling, baptism, faith, and the gift of perseverance; predestination is a preparation for grace. Accordingly, the elect, by way of grace in Christ, will surely obtain heavenly salvation. Therefore, in later years many followers of Augustine arrived at the doctrine of twofold predestination: a “predestination unto death” began to be coordinated with a “predestination unto glory.” Nevertheless, the former could not be construed in the same sense as the latter; hence, a distinction was made between a negative and a positive reprobation. The negative reprobation logically precedes the fall; it is an act of God’s sovereignty; it does not

depend upon foreseen demerits any more than election depends upon foreseen merits; it implies “the decree to permit certain individuals to fall into a state of guilt” and it is “the cause of dereliction.” Thus many Thomists, Alvarez, the Salmanticenses, Estius, Sylvius. etc., taught that negative reprobation precedes the fall and that it is purely an act of God’s sovereignty and good pleasure. Nevertheless, this supralapsarian reprobation was viewed as wholly negative, i.e., as God’s purpose not to elect certain individuals, to permit them to fall, and afterward to ordain them to everlasting punishment (positive reprobation). Essentially, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and all supralapsarian Reformed theologians never went beyond this point. They neither taught a “predestination unto sins” nor did they represent God as the author of sin, as is falsely charged by Roman Catholics, who advance this accusation against the Predestinationists of the fifth century, Gottschalk, Bradwardina, Wyclif, and especially against the Reformers. They do this merely in order to justify their own Semi-Pelagian view, and to harmonize it with the teachings of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

Essentially the teaching of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas in regard to predestination was accepted by the Reformers: the modifications introduced by them were slight and unessential, if we except the doctrine of assurance. The Reformers agreed with Augustine and Thomas Aquinas on many points; viz., they, too, believed that election is not conditioned upon foreseen merits, but that it is the source of faith and good works; that predestination unto glory always implies predestination unto grace; that negative reprobation is not to be explained as an act of God’s justice but as an act of his sovereignty, and that it logically precedes sin; that this negative reprobation is followed by a decree to permit sin and to allow some to remain in their fallen state and that positive reprobation takes sin into account. To all this they added, however, that the concepts foreknowledqe and permission, though not wrong in themselves, cannot and should not be interpreted in a merely passive sense; that even if they could be so construed, they would offer no real solution of the problem; and that the distinction between positive and negative reprobation has very little value. Thus. all three Reformers arrived at the so-called supralapsarian view of the doctrine of predestination, according to which both election and reprobation are to be viewed as acts of God’s sovereignty, logically preceding God’s decree concerning the fall, sin, and redemption through Christ. But it is especially Calvin who often purposely refuses to go beyond the secondary causes of salvation and perdition, and therefore often reasons in an infralapsarian manner. Let not the reprobate view God’s decree as the cause of his perdition, but let him rather look upon his own corrupt nature with respect to which he himself is guilty. The elect and the reprobate were equally guilty but God is merciful toward the former, just toward the latter. In Romans 9:21 the “clay” indicates men in their fallen condition, of whom God elects some while he leaves others “in their own ruin, to which by nature all are exposed.” The fall in Adam is the nearest cause of reprobation. God hates only sin in us. And of this representation: “that out of the race doomed in Adam God elected those whom he was pleased to elect, and reprobated those whom he willed to reprobate.” Calvin says, “just as it is a great deal more suitable unto the cultivation of faith, so it is discussed with greater profit.. . is not only more conducive unto piety, but, it seems to me, more theological, more suitable to practical Christianity, and also more conducive unto edification.” Nevertheless, this does not fully satisfy Calvin. Sin may be the proximate cause of perdition, it is, nevertheless. not the deepest cause. For the theory that God apart from any previous plan decided to create man, then sat down, as it were, in a watchtower to see what man would do, and having seen and foreseen this, only afterward proceeded to the act

of election and reprobation, is altogether untenable. Foreknowledge and permission do not solve the problem. because God, foreseeing the fall, could have prevented it; accordingly, he voluntarily permitted the fall because it seemed good to him. Accordingly, the fall of Adam, sin in general, and all evil, were not only foreseen by God but in a certain sense were willed and determined by him. Accordingly, there must have been a reason, unknown to us, why God willed the fall: there is “a deeper divine decree” logically preceding the fall. Hence, when Pighius answers Calvin by objecting that according to the latter’s view there would have been in the divine mind a “distinction between elect and reprobate previous to the fall of man,” Calvin indeed answers that Pighius fails to distinguish between “proximate and remote causes,” that every reprobate must consider his own sin to be the direct cause of his perdition, and that the opposite view is handicapped with the same objections, he does not deny the validity of the conclusion drawn by Pighius: there is a “secret divine decree” anteceding the fall, The final and deepest cause of reprobation as well as of election is the will of God. Hence, with Calvin the supralansarian and infralapsarian representation alternates. This is also true of most of the later theologians who embraced supralapsarianism. They regard the supralapsarian view to be admissible they do not think of condemning infralapsarianism or of demanding that their view be embodied in the official confession of the church as the only standard of truth. They do not ask that their own view he substituted for the infralapsarian representation but they plead for actual recognition of both views.

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

1. A decree determining the purpose for which God would create and govern all things, namely. the revelation of his virtues, esp. of his mercy and of his justice; respectively, in the eternal salvation of a definite number of men conceived as yet only as possibles, “creatable and fallible.” and in the eternal punishment of another definite number. The manifestation of these virtues necessitated:

2. A second decree determining the existence of human beings who would be so wretched and pitiable that they would be fit objects of God’s mercy and justice. The actual existence of such human beings necessitated:

3. A third decree to create a man adorned with the image of God to be the head of humanity, and “by an efficacious permission” to allow him to fall so that he would involve his entire posterity in that fall.

4. Finally, a decree to manifest God’s mercy in the elect by providing a Mediator for them and by granting them the gifts of faith and perseverance, and to show God’s justice in the reprobate by withholding saving grace from them and by giving them up unto sin. In this order of the decrees election and reprobation precede not only faith and unbelief, regeneration and hardening, but also creation and the fall. However, one difficulty presents itself immediately: it was the established Reformed doctrine that the election of Christ and of the church are not to be separated and that both are included in one single decree that has as its object “the mystic Christ.” But in the supralapsarian scheme the election of the church is separated from the election of Christ by the two decrees of creation and the fall. Comrie, however, tried to overcome this objection by teaching that before the decree of creation and the fall the believers are chosen unto union with Christ. This

union is so close and unbreakable that when those chosen fall, as is determined in a subsequent decree, Christ, who had been elected as Head, is now also chosen to be the Mediator of redemption. From this it is clear that Comrie understood that the election of the church as the body of Christ cannot be separated from the election of Christ as the Head of the Church. Accordingly, he placed the election of both before the decree of creation and the fall. However, in this manner not only men considered as mere possibilities but also a merely possible Christ was made the object of the decree of election. The churches, however, always objected to this supralapsarian view. As a result, there is not a single Reformed confession that offers this representation. At the Synod of Dort there were a few adherents of this view, esp. Gomarus and Maccovius; moreover, the delegates of South Holland, Overisel, and Friesland preferred to leave the question undecided and to use an expression that would satisfy both parties. But although the “opinions” of the Dutch and of the foreign delegates, also of those from Geneva, were definitely Reformed in character, nevertheless, they were without exception infralapsarian and clothed in mild and moderate terms. And the Synod at length defined election as “the unchangeable purpose of God whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to salvation in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation.” Nevertheless, the Synod purposely refused to condemn supralapsarianism; for, various theologians, among whom were Calvin, Beza, Piscator, Perkins, Hommins, Bogerman, etc., had at times used strong expression; e.g., “that some men are created in order that they may be damned; that men viewed as innocent are reprobated or damned; that God hates men irrespective of sin; that men were predestinated unto sin; that God has need of man as a sinner; that God willed and brought about the fact that men sinned; that God acted insincerely in the calling of certain persons,” etc. At the conference held in the Hague the Remonstrants had made ready use of these expressions and of the difference between infra- and supralapsarianism; consequently, the members of the synod were intent on avoiding such “phrases that were too harsh.” But when the delegates from England, Bremen, and Hesse insisted that these expressions be condemned, the Synod refused to grant this request. In defence of this refusal Synod stated that Scripture also uses very strong expressions at times, that such phrases may have a much milder meaning when examined in their context than they appear to have when considered apart from their context, and that the responsibility for them rests with the respective authors. In addition, Synod admonished against the use of immoderate phrases without mentioning any specifically and against “many other things of the same kind,” and at a later session administered a severe rebuke to Maccovius because of the manner in which he had conducted himself. Accordingly, although the supralapsarian view was not embodied in the confession, neither was it condemned. The Westminster Assembly purposely refrained from attempting to decide this question and from siding with either the infra- or the supralapsarian party. For that reason many continued to favor supralapsarianism although the rights of infralapsarianism were at the same time recognized inasmuch as the latter view had been embodied in the confession of the churches, was zealously and ably defended by many theologians, and was usually placed in the foreground in the preaching of the Gospel.

S. The Fall

The Fall By Herman Bavinck 1. Meaning of Genesis 3:1-24 2. Genesis 3:1-24 in the Old and New Testaments 3. The Fall and the Theory of Evolution 4. The Character of the Fall The question concerning the origin, the age and the written record of the history of the Fall in Genesis 3:1-24 need not be discussed here. For in the first place, science can never reach to the oldest origins and the ultimate destinies of humanity, and historical and critical inquiry will never be able to prove either the veracity or the unveracity of this history. And in the second place, exactly as it now lies before us, this history has already formed for centuries a portion of holy Scripture, an indispensable element in the organism of the revelation of salvation, and as such has been accepted in faith by the Hebrew congregation (Jewish people), by Christ, by the apostles, and by the whole Christian church.

1. Meaning of Genesis 3:1-24 : That Genesis 3:1-24 gives us an account of the fall of man, of the loss of his primitive innocence and of the misery, particularly death, to which he has since been subjected, cannot reasonably be denied. The opinion of the Ophites, Kant, Schiller, Hegel, etc., that Genesis 3:1-24 relates the awakening of man to self-consciousness and personality (see ADAM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT), and therefore does not tell us of a fall, but a marked progression, is disputed by the name which the forbidden tree bears, as indicating to man not merely a tree of knowledge in the ordinary way, but quite specially a tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3:1-24 is not in the least meant to relate to us how man obtained the idea of his nakedness and sexual passions, and from a state of childlike innocence changed in this respect to manlike maturity (Eerdman’s De Beteekenis van het Paradijsverhaal, Theologisch Tijdschrift, 1905, 485-511). For according to Genesis, man was created full-grown, received a wife immediately as helpmeet, and at the same time saw himself allotted the task of multiplying and replenishing the earth. Moreover, the idea that sexual desire is something sinful and deserves punishment was entirely foreign to ancient Israel.

Finally, the interpretation of Wellhausen (Geschichte Israels, 1878, 344) cannot be accepted, that man in Genesis 3:1-24 should obtain "die intellektuelle Welterkenntniss, die metaphysische Erkenntniss der Dinge in ihrem Zusammenhange, ihrem Werth oder Unwerth, ihrem Nutzen oder Schaden" ("the intellectual knowledge of the world, the metaphysical knowledge of things in their connection, their worth or unworth, their utility or hurtfulness"). For in the first place, according to Gen, this was man’s peculiar province from the beginning; he received indeed the vocation to subdue the earth, to keep and till the ground, to give the animals their names. And in the second place, the acquiring of this knowledge among the Israelites, who esteemed practical wisdom so highly, is difficult to represent as a fall, or as a punishment deserved for disobedience.

There is no other explanation possible of Genesis 3:1-24 than that it is the narration of a fall, which consists in the transgression of an explicit command of God, thus bearing a moral significance, and therefore followed by repentance, shame, fear and punishment. The context of the chapter

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

2. Genesis 3:1-24 in the Old and the New Testaments:

It is indeed remarkable how very seldom the Old Testament refers to this history of the Fall. This is not a sufficient reason for pronouncing it of later origin, for the same peculiarity presents itself at the time when, according to all criticism, it was recorded in literature. Prophets, Psalms, Proverbs never quote it; at the most, allusions may be found to it in Hosea 6:7 and Ecclesiastes 7:29; and even Jesus and His apostles in the New Testament very seldom appeal to Genesis 3:1-24 (John 8:44; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14). But it may be considered that the Prophets, Psalms and Proverbs only mention special facts of the past by way of exception, that the apostles even hardly ever quote the words and deeds of Jesus, and that all lived at a time when revelation itself was still proceeding and did not lie before them as a complete whole. With us it is quite a different matter; we are in a certain sense outside revelation, make it a subject of our study and meditation, try to discover the unity which holds all its parts together, and devote our special interest to Adam as a figure and counterpart of Christ. The creation and fall of man occupy therefore a much broader place in the province of our thoughts than they did among the writers of the books of the Old and New Testaments.

Nevertheless, the Fall is the silent hypothesis of the whole Biblical doctrine of sin and redemption; it does not rest only on a few vague passages, but forms an indispensable element in the revelation of salvation. The whole contemplation of man and humanity, of Nature and history, of ethical and physical evil, of redemption and the way in which to obtain it, is connected in Scripture with a Fall, such as Genesis 3:1-24 relates to us. Sin, for example, is common to all men (1 Kings 8:46; Psalms 14:3; Psalms 130:3; Psalms 143:2), and to every man from his conception (Genesis 6:5; Genesis 8:21; Job 14:4; Psalms 51:7). It arouses God's anger and deserves all kinds of punishment, not only of an ethical but of a physical nature (Genesis 3:14-19; Genesis 4:14; Genesis 6:7, Genesis 6:13; Genesis 11:8; Leviticus 26:14 f; Deuteronomy 28:15; Psalms 90:7, etc.); the whole of Scripture proceeds from the thought that sin and death are connected in the closest degree, as are also obedience and life. In the new heaven and new earth all suffering ceases with sin (Revelation 21:4). Therefore redemption is possible only in the way of forgiveness (Psalms 32:1; Isaiah 43:25, etc.), and circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16; Deuteronomy 30:16; Jeremiah 4:4), and this includes, further, life, joy, peace, salvation. When Paul in Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22 indicates Adam as the origin of sin and death, and Christ as the source of righteousness and life, he develops no ideas which are contrary to the organism of revelation or which might be neglected without loss; he merely combines and formulates the data which are explicitly or silently contained in it.

3. The Fall and the Theory of Evolution:

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

which a man and woman, seated, are figured as plucking fruit from a tree, while a serpent curls up behind the woman as if whispering in her ear), which G. Smith, Lenormant and Friedrich Delitzsch compare with the Paradise narrative, shows no similarity on nearer view (A. Jeremias, Das Altes Testament im Lichte des alten Orients2, Leipzig, 1906, 203). Indirectly, however, a very powerful witness for the fall of man is furnished by the whole empirical condition of the world and humanity. For a world, such as we know it, full of unrighteousness and sorrow, cannot be explained without the acceptance of such a fact. He who holds fast to the witness of Scripture and conscience to sin as sin (as anomia) cannot deduce it from creation, but must accept the conclusion that it began with a transgression of God's command and thus with a deed of the will. Pythagoras, Plato, Kant, Schelling, Baader have all understood and acknowledged this with more or less clearness. He who denies the Fall must explain sin as a necessity which has its origin in the Creation, in the nature of things, and therefore in God Himself; he justifies man but accuses God, misrepresents the character of sin and makes it everlasting and indefeasible. For if there has not been a fall into sin, there is no redemption of sin possible; sin then loses its merely ethical significance, becomes a trait of the nature of man, and is inexterminable. This comes out, in later years, in the many endeavors to unite the Fall with the doctrine of evolution (compare Tennant, The Origin and Propagation of Sin2, 1905; A. S. Peake, Christianity: Its Nature and Its Truth, 1908; W. E. Orchard, Modern Theories of Sin, 1909; Francis J. Hall, Evolution and the Fall, 1910). All these endeavors lead to setting on one side the objective standard of sin, which is the law of God, and determining the nature and importance of sin subjectively by the feeling of guilt, which in its turn again depends on the knowledge of and the love for the moral ideal, and itself forms an important factor in moral progress. It is true that the strength of all these endeavors is drawn from theory of the descent of man from the animal. But as to this theory, it is worthy of notice: (1) that it is up to the present day a hypothesis, and is proved by no single observation, whether direct or indirect; (2) that the fossils of prehistoric men, found in Germany, Belgium, France and elsewhere have demonstrated the low degree of culture in which these men have lived, but in no sense their dissimilarity with mankind of today (W. Branca, Der Stand unserer Kenntnisse vom fossilen Menschen, Leipzig, 1910); (3) that the uncivilized and prehistoric man may be as little identified with the first man as the unjustly so-called nature-people and children under age; (4) that the oldest history of the human race, which has become known through the discoveries at Babylon in the last century, was not that of a state of barbarism, but of high and rich culture (D. Gath Whitley, "What was the Primitive Condition of Man?" Princeton Theol. Review, October, 1906; J. Orr, God's Image in Man, 1906); (5) that the acceptance of theory of descent as a universal and unlimited rule leads to the denial of the unity of the human race, in a physical and also in an intellectual, moral and religious sense. For it may be possible, even in the school of Darwin, to maintain the unity of the human race so long a time as tradition exercises its influence on the habit of mind; but theory itself undermines its foundation and marks it as an arbitrary opinion. From the standpoint of evolution, there is not only no reason to hold to the "of one blood" of Acts 17:26 the King James Version, but there has never even been a first man; the transition from animal to man was so slow and successive, that the essential distinction fails to be seen. And with the effacing of this boundary, the unity of the moral ideal, of religion, of the laws of thought and of truth, fails also; theory of evolution expels the absolute everywhere and leads necessarily to psychologism, relativism, pragmatism and even to pluralism, which is literally polytheism in a religious sense. The unity of the human race, on the other hand, as it is taught in holy Scripture, is not an indifferent physical question, but an important intellectual,

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

4. The Character of the Fall:

What the condition and history of the human race could hardly lead us to imagine, holy Scripture relates to us as a tragic fact in its first pages. The first man was created by God after His own image, not therefore in brutish unconsciousness or childlike naivete, but in a state of bodily and spiritual maturity, with understanding and reason, with knowledge and speech, with knowledge especially of God and His law. Then was given to him moreover a command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This command was not contained in the moral law as such; it was not a natural but a positive commandment; it rested entirely and only on God’s will and must be obeyed exclusively for this reason. It placed before man the choice, whether he would be faithful and obedient to God’s word and would leave to Him alone the decision as to what is good or evil, or whether he would reserve to himself the right arbitrarily to decide what is good or evil. Thus the question was: Shall theonomy or autonomy be the way to happiness? On this account also the tree was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It did not bear this name in the sense that man might obtain from it the empirical knowledge of good and evil, for by his transgression he in truth lost the empirical knowledge of good. But the tree was so named, because man, by eating of it and so transgressing God’s commandment, arrogated to himself "die Fahigkeit zur selbstandigen Wahl der Mittel, durch die man sein Gluck schaffen will": "the capacity of independent choice of the means by which he would attain his happiness" (Koberle, Sunde und Gnade im relig. Leben des Volkes Israel bis auf Christenrum, 1905, 64). Theonomy, as obedience to God from free love, includes as such the idea and the possibility of autonomy, therefore that of antinomy also. But it is the free act and therefore the guilt of man that has changed the possibility into reality. For the mind, there remains here an insoluble problem, as much in the question, why God allowed this Fall to take place, as in the other, how man, created in the likeness of God, could and did fall. There is a great deal of truth in the often-expressed thought, that we can give no account of the origin of sin, because it is not logical, and does not result as a conclusion drawn from two premises. But facts are brutal. What seems logically impossible often exists in reality. The laws of moral life are different from those of thought and from those also of mechanical nature. The narrative in Genesis 3:1-24, in any case, is psychologically faithful in the highest degree. For the same way as it appears there in the first man, it repeatedly takes place among ourselves (James 1:14-15). Furthermore we ought to allow God to justify Himself. The course of revelation discovers to faith how, through all the ages, He holds sin in its entire development in His own almighty hands, and works through grace for a consummation in which, in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He will gather together in one all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10). (J. Orr, Sin as a Problem of Today, London, 1910.)

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S. The Greatness of God

The Greatness of God

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

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

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

man and a father. In short, all that can be found in the whole world in the way of support and shelter and aid is originally and perfectly to be found in overflowing abundance in God. Of Him the whole family in heaven and earth is named (Ephesians 3:15). He is the Sun of being and all creatures are His fleeting rays.

It is important, therefore, in this matter of the knowledge of God, for us to keep a firm hold on both of these groups of statements concerning the Divine being and to do justice to each of them. For, if we sacrifice the absolute transcendence of God above all of His creatures, we fall into polytheism (the pagan religion of many gods) or pantheism (the religion in which everything is God), two false religions which, according to the lesson of history, are closely related to each other and easily pass from the one into the other. And if we sacrifice the close relationship of God to His creatures, we go aground on the reef of deism (belief in God without benefit of revelation) or of atheism (the denial of the existence of God), two religions which, like those others, have numerous characteristics in common with each other.

Scripture clings to both groups of characteristics, and Christian theology has followed in its wake. God actually does not have a name according to which we can truly name Him, and He names Himself and lets us name Him with many, many names. He is the infinitely Exalted One, and at the same time the One who lives along with all His creatures. In a certain sense all of His attributes are such as cannot be shared, and in another sense they are such as can all be shared. We cannot fathom this with our mind. There is no such thing as an adequate concept of God. There is no one who can give a definition, a delimitation, of God that is adequate to His being. The name which fully expresses what He is cannot be found. But the one group of characteristics outlined above does not conflict with the other. Precisely because God is the High and Exalted One, and lives in eternity, He also dwells with those who are of a contrite and humble Spirit (Isaiah 57:15. We know that God did not reveal Himself in order that we should draw up a philosophical concept of God from His revelation, but in order that we should accept Him, the true, living God, as our God, and should acknowledge and confess Him. These things are hidden from the wise and prudent, but they have been revealed to babes (Matthew 11:25). The knowledge which we get of God by way of His revelation is therefore a knowledge of faith. It is not adequate, in the sense that it is not equivalent to the being of God, for God is infinitely exalted above all His creatures. Such knowledge is not purely symbolical either that is to say, couched in expressions which we have arbitrarily formed and which do not correspond to any reality; instead this knowledge is ectypal (ectype: an impression, as in printing) or analogical (analogy: correspondence or similarity in form) because it is based on the likeness and relationship which, notwithstanding God’s absolute majesty, nevertheless exists between God and all the works of His hand. The Knowledge which God grants us of Himself in nature and in Scripture is limited, finite, fragmentary, but it is nevertheless true and pure. Such is God as He has revealed Himself in His Word and specifically in and through Christ; and He alone is such as our hearts require. Our Reasonable Faith. Herman Bavinck. Baker Book House. 1956. Pages 132-134.

S. The Knowledge of God

The Knowledge of God

Herman Bavinck

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

Between these two moments lies the revelation of God in all its length and breadth. As its content this revelation has the one, great, comprehensive promise of the covenant of grace: I will be a God unto thee, and ye shall be my people. And as its mid-point and its high-point this revelation has its Immanuel, God-with-us. For the promise and its fulfillment go hand in hand. The word of God is the beginning, the principle, the seed, and it is in the act that the seed comes into its full realization. Just as at the beginning God called things into being by His word, so by His word He will in the course of the ages bring into being the new heaven and the new earth, in which the tabernacle of God shall be among men. That is why Christ, in whom the Word became flesh, is said to be full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

He is the Word which in the beginning was with God and Himself was God, and as such He was the life and the light of men. Because the Father shares His life with Christ and gives expression to His thought in Christ, therefore the full being of God is revealed in Him. He not only declares the Father to us and discloses His name to us, but in Himself He shows us and gives us the Father. Christ is God expressed and God given. He is God revealing Himself and God sharing Himself, and therefore He is full of truth and also full of grace. The word of the promise, I will be a God unto thee, included within itself from the very moment in which it was uttered, the fulfillment, I am thy God. God gives Himself to His people in order that His people should give themselves to Him. In the Scriptures we find God constantly repeating His declaration: I am thy God. From the mother-promise of Genesis 3:15 on, this rich testimony, comprehending all blessedness and all salvation whatsoever, is repeated again and again, be it in the lives of the patriarchs, in the history of the people of Israel, or in that of the church of the New Testament. And in response the church throughout the ages comes with the endless varieties of its language of faith, speaking in gratitude and praise: Thou art our God, and we are Thy people, and the sheep of Thy pasture. This declaration of faith on the part of the church is not a scientific doctrine, nor a form of unity that is being repeated, but is rather a confession of a deeply felt reality, and of a conviction of reality that has out of experience in life. The prophets and apostles, and the saints generally who appear before us in the Old and New Testament and later in the church of Christ, did not sit and philosophize about God in abstracted concepts, but rather confessed what God meant to them and what they owed to Him in all the circumstances of life. God was for them not at all a cold concept, which they then proceeded rationally to analyze, but He was a living, personal force, a

reality infinitely more real than the world around them. Indeed, He was to them the one, eternal, worshipful Being. They reckoned with Him in their lives, they lived in His tent, walked as if always before His face, served Him in His courts, and worshiped Him in His sanctuary. The genuineness and depth of their experience comes to expression in the language they used to express what God meant to them. They did not have to strain for words, for their lips overflowed with what welled up out of their hearts, and the world of man and nature supplied them with figures of speech. God was to them a King, a Lord, a Valiant One, a Leader, a Shepherd, a Savior, a Redeemer, a Helper, a Physician, a Man, and a Father. All their bliss and well-being, their truth and righteousness, their life and mercy, their strength and power, their peace and rest they found in Him. He was a sun and shield to them, a buckler, a light and a fire, a fountain and a well-head, a rock and shelter, a high refuge and a tower, a reward and a shadow, a city and a temple. All that the world has to offer in discrete and sub-divided goods was to them an image and likeness of the unfathomable fullness of the salvation available in God for His people. Hence it is that David in Psalms 16:2 (according to a telling translation) addresses Jehovah as follows: Thou art my Lord; I have no higher good than Thou. Thus also Asaph sang in Psalms 73:1-28: Whom have I in heaven hut Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For the saint, heaven in all its blessedness and glory would be void and stale without God; and when he lives in communion with God he cares for nothing on earth, for the love of God far transcends all other goods.

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

It was an auspicious moment in which Christ spoke those words. He stood at the point of crossing the brook Kidron in order to enter the garden of Gethsemane and to suffer the last struggle of His soul there. Before He proceeds to that point, however, He prepares Himself as our High Priest for His passion and death, and He prays the Father that the Father may glorify Him in His suffering and after it, so that the Son in turn may glorify the Father in giving out all those blessings which He is now about to achieve by His obedience unto death. And when the Son prays in this way, He knows of nothing to desire except that which is the Father’s own will and good pleasure. The Father has given Him power over all flesh in order that the Son should give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. Such eternal life consists of nothing other than the knowledge of the one, true God and of Jesus Christ who was sent to reveal Him (John 17:1-3). Our Reasonable Faith. Herman Bavinck. Baker Book House. 1956. Pages 24-26.

Chapter 52

S. The Law-Gospel Distinction and Preaching

The Law-Gospel Distinction and Preaching

Herman Bavinck Translated by Nelson D. Kloosterman

Herman Bavinck was born in 1854, and raised in the experimental Calvinism of the Dutch Second Reformation (the Nadere Reformatie). He studied theology at the University of Leiden, and began teaching theology at the Theological School of the Christian Reformed Churches (Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken) at Kampen in 1882. In 1902 Bavinck joined the faculty of the Free University of Amsterdam as Professor of Systematic Theology, where he served until his death in 1921. The following material is a translation of paragraphs 520-521 of Herman Bavinck's Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, 3rd unaltered edition, vol. 4 (Kampen, J. H. Kok, 1918), pages 489-498. Punctuation, sentence length, and paragraph divisions reflect editorial decisions made for ease of reading. Bavinck's footnotes are included in the text between brackets in the form of paraphrased summary.

These two sections form part of Chapter X, "Concerning the Means of Grace." Bavinck opens the chapter with §56, "The Word as Means of Grace." He has some beautiful things to say about the power of the Word in regeneration and about the church as the "nursery" of that working. Within this subsection we find his discussion of the Word of God as law and as gospel.

520. The first and primary means of grace is the Word of God. Lutheran and Reformed agree with each other here. Nevertheless, the latter do not discuss the Word of God under the heading of the means of grace, since in their dogmatics they have usually treated it by this time in a separate chapter [reference to Calvin, Institutes 2.7-9, and others], or also concerning the law in connection with the covenant of works, and concerning the Gospel in connection with the covenant of grace [reference to Marck, Med. Theol. and 'many others']. This peculiar method of treatment does not warrant the claim that the Reformed did not acknowledge the Word of God as means of grace, for they repeatedly declare the very opposite [reference to BC 24, HC qu. 65). But one may indeed conclude from this fact that for the Reformed, the Word of God possessed a far richer meaning than that it served as means of grace only in the narrower sense of the word. The Word of God is to be distinguished from the sacrament in part by the fact that the latter serves to strengthen faith and thus has a role only within the church. But the Word of God, both as law and as Gospel, is revelation of the will of God, is the promulgation of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, addresses all people and every creature, and has a universal meaning. The sacrament can be administered only by a lawfully called minister in the gathering of believers, but the Word of God has an existence and a place beyond that gathering, and performs there too its manifold functions. As means of grace in the proper sense alongside the sacrament, the Word of God is discussed insofar as it is preached openly by the teacher; all the emphasis falls on the Word preached in God's name and by virtue of His commission. But as a rule, people will likely have been in contact with that Word in the home, at school, by means of conversation and reading material, long before they hear it openly proclaimed in the church. So the public administration of

the Word hardly contains all the power proceeding from the Word; it serves also to bring about faith in those who do not yet have it, but still more to strengthen faith among believers in their gathering. In a Christian society the Word of God reaches people in various ways, from various quarters, and it reaches a person from the time of infancy. Yes, God brings that Word often to the hearts of children in the internal calling already before consciousness is awakened, in order to regenerate and to sanctify them, even as God writes the work of the law in the heart of each person from the very beginning of his existence. Therefore we must distinguish between the Word of God and Scripture. Not in the sense that the Word of God is merely to be found in Scripture and Scripture itself is not the Word of God; but in this other sense, that the Word of God most frequently, even in most instances, does not reach us as Scripture, in the form of the Scripture, but in such a way that it is taken up from the Scripture into the consciousness of the church, from there in turn radiating outward to the various people, to accomplish its working, in the form of admonition and address, nurture and instruction, book and writing, tract and summons. And God always stands behind that Word; He is the one who makes it move in those various forms to people and thus calls them to conversion and life. In Scripture, then, the expression "word of God" is never identical to Scripture, even though Scripture may without a doubt be called God’s Word. A few passages come to mind where the expression "word of God" is applied to a part of Holy Scripture, for example, to the written law. But for the rest, the phrase "word of God" when used in Scripture is never the same as the Scripture, something that is impossible, after all, since at that point Scripture was not yet finished. The phrase "word of God" has various meanings in Scripture, and can refer to the power of God whereby He creates and upholds, or His revelation to the prophets, or the content of revelation, or the Gospel proclaimed by the apostles. Nevertheless, it is always a word of God, which means: never simply a sound, but a power, no mere information but also an accomplishment of His will, Isaiah 55:11. By the word God creates and upholds the world, Genesis 1:3, Psalms 33:6, Psalms 148:5, Isaiah 48:13, Romans 4:17, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 11:3, Jesus quiets the sea, Mark 4:38, heals the sick, Matthew 8:16, casts out demons, 9:6, raised the dead, Luke 7:14, Luke 8:54, John 5:25, John 5:28; John 11:43, etc. By the word He also works in the moral and spiritual arenas. The word which God employs to make known and to fulfill His will in moral and spiritual areas is to be distinguished as law and Gospel. When Jesus appeared on earth to proclaim the coming of the kingdom promised in the OT (Mark 1:15), to bring the Gospel of forgiveness and salvation to tax collectors and sinners, to poor and imprisoned (Matthew 5:1 f.; Matthew 11:5, Matthew 11:28-30; Luke 4:18-19; Luke 19:10; etc.), He came into conflict as a matter of course with the pharisaical, nomistic view of religion that dominated His time.

Yet, though He rejected the human inventions of the ancients (Matthew 5:21 f.; Matthew 15:9), and though He had another conception [opvatting] of murder (Matthew 5:16), adultery (Matthew 5:27), oaths (Matthew 5:33), fasting (Matthew 6:16), divorce (Matthew 19:9), sabbath (Mark 2:27), He maintains the entire law, also in its ceremonial particulars (Matthew 5:23-24; Matthew 17:24-27; Matthew 23:2-3, Matthew 23:23; Mark 1:44; Matthew 11:16); He explains it in its spiritual meaning (Matthew 5:1-48; Matthew 6:1-34; Matthew 7:1-29), emphasizes its ethical content, defines love toward God and neighbor as its core (Matthew 7:12; Matthew 9:13; Matthew 12:7; Mark 7:15; Mark 12:28-34), and desires an other, overflowing righteousness than that of the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). Though greater than the temple (Matthew 12:6), He even placed Himself under the law (Matthew 3:15), and came to fulfill the law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17). And though He never

sought to annul the law, He knew that His disciples are inwardly free from the law (Matthew 17:26); that His church is based not on the law but on the confession of His Messiahship (Matthew 16:18); that in His blood a new covenant is established (Matthew 26:28); in a word, that the new wine demands new wineskins (Matthew 9:17), and that the days of the temple, the nation and the law were numbered (Mark 13:2). Jesus desired no revolutionary overthrow of the legislative dispensation of the old covenant, but a reformation and renewal that would be born out of its complete fulfillment. And so, in fact, it went. The church in Jerusalem at first still held to the temple and law (Acts 2:46; Acts 3:1; Acts 10:14; Acts 21:20; Acts 22:12). But a new conception surfaced. With the conversion of the Gentiles the question arose as to the significance of the Mosaic law. And Paul was the first to fully understand that in the death of Christ the handwriting of ordinances was blotted out (Colossians 2:14).

Paul always understood by nomos (except where further qualification pointed elsewhere, e.g., Romans 3:27; Galatians 6:2) the Mosaic law, the entire Torah, including the ceremonial commandments (Romans 9:4; Galatians 2:12; Galatians 4:10; Galatians 5:3; Php 3:5-6). And he described this law not as the letter to the Hebrews does — as imperfect, preparatory, Old Testamental dispensation of the covenant of grace, which then disappeared when the high priest and surety of the better covenant arrived — but as the revelation of God's will, as a religious-ethical demand and obligation, as a God-willed regulation of the relationship between Himself and man. And concerning this law, so understood, Paul taught that it is holy and good, and bestowed by God (Romans 2:18; Romans 7:22, Romans 7:25; Romans 9:4; 2 Corinthians 3:3, 2 Corinthians 3:7); but instead of being able, as the Pharisees argued, to grant righteousness, the law is powerless through the flesh (Romans 8:3); stimulates desire (Romans 7:7-8); increases the trespass (Romans 5:20; Galatians 3:19); arouses wrath, curse and death (Romans 4:15; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 3:10); and was merely a temporary insertion, for pedagogical reasons (Romans 5:20; Galatians 3:19, Galatians 3:24; Galatians 4:2-3).

Therefore, that law has reached its end in Christ, the seed of promise (Romans 10:4); the believer is free from the law (Galatians 4:26 f.; Galatians 5:1), since he is redeemed through Christ from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13; Galatians 4:5), and shares in the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of freedom (Romans 8:15; 2 Corinthians 3:16-17; Galatians 5:18). This freedom of faith, however, does not invalidate the law, but establishes it (Romans 3:31), since its legal requirement is fulfilled precisely in those who walk according to the Spirit (Romans 8:4). After all, that Spirit renews believers so that they delight in God's law according to the inner man and inquire as to what God's holy will is (Romans 7:22; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 5:10; Php 1:10), while they are spurred on through various impulses — the great mercy of God, the example of Christ, the costly price with which they have been purchased, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, etc. — to the doing of God's will.

521. This antithesis between law and Gospel was further intensified and brought into irreconcilable conflict in the Christian church, on the one hand, by antinomianism in its various forms of Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Paulicianism, Anabaptism, Hattemism, etc. The entire OT derived from a lower God, from an angry, jealous, vengeful God, and was replaced with an entirely different revelation from the God of love, from the Father of Christ. On the other hand, the antithesis between law and Gospel was weakened and obliterated by nomism in its various forms of Pelagianism, Semi-pelagianism, Romanism, Socinianism, Rationalism, etc. Already by the church

fathers, and later by scholastic and Roman Catholic theologians, law and Gospel were identified with Old and New Testaments, and then not placed antithetically against one another, but viewed as a lower and higher revelation of God's will. Law and Gospel differed not in that the former only demands and the latter only promises, for both contained commands, threats and promises; musteria, promissiones, praecepta; res credendae, sperandae et faciendae; not only Moses, but also Christ was legislator. But in all of this the Gospel of the NT, or the lex nova, significantly transcended the law of the OT or the lex vetus; the mysteries (trinity, incarnation, atonement, etc.) are revealed much more clearly in the NT, the promises are much richer in content and embrace especially spiritual and eternal goods, the laws are much more glorious and bearable, since ceremonial and civil laws were annulled and replaced with just a few rites. Furthermore, the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came in Jesus Christ. The law was temporary and designed for one nation; the Gospel is eternal and must be brought to every nation. The law was imperfect, a shadow and figure; the Gospel is perfect and the substance of the [promised] goods themselves. The law aroused fear and slavery, the Gospel arouses love and freedom. The law could not justify in the full sense of the word; it provided no richness of grace; it bestowed no eternal salvation; but the Gospel bestows in the sacrament the power of grace, which enables one to fulfill God's commands and obtain eternal life. In one word: the law is the incomplete Gospel, the Gospel is the completed law; the Gospel was contained in the law as the tree is in the seed, as the full head of grain is in the seed [at this point Bavinck refers to vol. 3, 213f., and to a number of theologians, such as Augustine, Lombard, Aquinas, the Council of Trent, and Bellarmine].

Now, to the degree that the Old and New Testament dispensations of the covenant of grace could be described according to their form which came into view with the progress of Holy Scripture, by the terms law and Gospel, to that degree the distinction between both of them that was made by Rome (indeed not in every respect, yet in the main) is to be approved. Still, Rome identified Old and New covenant entirely with law and Gospel. She misperceived the Gospel in the Old Testament and the law in the New Testament. Rome summarized the entire doctrine proclaimed by Christ and the apostles as Gospel, in which they included not only promises but also laws and threats. In this way, Rome made the Gospel into a second law. The Pauline antithesis between law and Gospel was eliminated. For though it is true that Paul understood by the law the entire OT dispensation, he viewed it then precisely in its legislative [wettischen, "lawish"; italics original] form and in this way places it in direct contrast it to the Gospel. And when he did that, he acknowledged that the legislative dispensation in no way invalidated the promise that had already been given to Abraham (Galatians 3:17, Galatians 3:21). Moreover, Paul acknowledged that in the days of the old covenant too the Gospel was proclaimed (Galatians 3:8), and that then, too, righteousness was obtained from and through faith (Romans 4:11-12; Romans 11:32; Galatians 3:6-7).

Concerning the law as law, apart from the promise to which it was made serviceable in the OT, Paul argued that it could not justify; that it increased sin; that it was an administration of condemnation which precisely in that way prepared for the fulfillment of the promise and necessitated an other righteousness, namely, the righteousness of God in Christ through faith. And this antithesis of law and Gospel was again understood by the Reformation. Indeed, the church fathers did make statements that testified to clearer insight. But no clarity resulted, because they always confused the distinction between law and Gospel with that between Old and New Testaments. But the Reformers, while on the one hand maintaining against the Anabaptists

the unity of the covenant of grace in both of its administrations, on the other hand kept in view the sharp contrast between law and Gospel, and thereby restored the unique character of the Christian religion as a religion of grace.

Although law and Gospel can still be employed in a broader sense for the old and new dispensations of the covenant of grace, in their proper meaning they refer nonetheless to two revelations of God's will that differ essentially from one another. The law, too, is God's will (Romans 2:18, Romans 2:20), holy and wise and good, spiritual (Romans 7:12, Romans 7:14; Romans 12:10), giving life to whomever keeps it (Romans 2:13; Romans 3:12). But through sin it has become impotent, and does not justify, but through sin the law stimulates desire, increases the trespass, effects wrath, kills, curses and damns (Romans 3:20; Romans 4:15; Romans 5:20; Romans 7:5, Romans 7:8-9, Romans 7:13; 2 Corinthians 3:6f.; Galatians 3:10, Galatians 3:13, Galatians 3:19). And over against the law stands the Gospel of Christ, the euangelion, containing nothing less than the fulfillment of the OT epangelia (Mark 1:15; Acts 13:32; Ephesians 3:6), coming to us from God (Romans 1:1-2; 2 Corinthians 11:7), having Christ as its content (Romans 1:3; Ephesians 3:6), and bringing nothing else than grace (Acts 20:24), reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18), forgiveness (Romans 4:3-8), righteousness (Romans 3:21-22), peace (Ephesians 6:15), freedom (Galatians 5:13), life (Romans 1:17; Php 2:16; etc.). Like demand and gift, like command and promise, like sin and grace, like sickness and healing, like death and life, so here, too, law and Gospel stand over against one another. [Here Bavinck has a footnote: From the Protestant side as well the distinction between law and Gospel is often weakened or obliterated, e.g., by Stange, Die Heilsbedeutung des Gesetzes, Leipzig 1904; Bruining, already cited in vol. 3, p. 631. Earlier already by Zwingli,, according to Loofs, Dogmengeschichte, 4th ed., 799.] Although they overlap to the extent that they both have God as author, both speak of one and the same perfect righteousness, both are directed to man, to bring him to eternal life, yet they differ in that the law proceeds from God's holiness, the Gospel from His grace; the [works of the] law [are] known from nature, the Gospel only by special revelation; the law demands perfect righteousness, the Gospel bestows it; the law leads to eternal life through works, the Gospel makes works proceed from eternal life bestowed through faith; the law currently condemns man, the Gospel acquits him; the law is directed to all men, the Gospel only to those who live under it; etc.

It was in terms of this distinction that differences arose as to whether preaching for faith and conversion which presented a condition and demand really should be considered as belonging to the Gospel, or rather (according to Flacius, Gerhard, Quenstedt, Voetius, Witsius, Coccejus, De Moor, et al.) to the law. And indeed, in the strictest sense there are in the Gospel no demands and conditions, but only promises and gifts; faith and conversion are, just as justification, etc., benefits of the covenant of grace. Still, the Gospel never appears concretely this way; in practice it is always joined to the law and in Scripture it was then always woven together with the law. The Gospel always presupposes the law, and needs it also in its administration. For it is brought to rational and moral people who before God are responsible for themselves and therefore must be called to faith and conversion. The demanding, summoning shape in which the Gospel appears is borrowed from the law; every person is obliged to take God at His word not first by the Gospel, but by nature through the law, and thus also to accept the Gospel in which He speaks to the person. Therefore the Gospel from the very beginning lays claim to all people, binds them in their

consciences, since that God who speaks in the Gospel is none other than He who in His law has made Himself known to them. Faith and conversion are therefore demanded of the person in the name of God's law, by virtue of the relationship in which the person as a rational creature stands with respect to God; and that demand is directed not only to the elect and regenerate, but to all men without distinction. But faith and conversion are themselves still the content of the Gospel, not effects or fruits of the law. For the law does demand faith in God in general, but not that special faith directed to Christ, and the law can effect metameleia, poenitentia, but not metanoia, resipiscentia, which is rather a fruit of faith. And though by nature a person is obliged to faith and conversion through the law, precisely because they are the content of the Gospel one can speak of a law, a command, an obedience of faith (Romans 1:5; Romans 3:27; 1 John 3:23), of a being obedient to and judged by the Gospel (Romans 2:16; Romans 10:16), etc.

Viewed concretely, law and Gospel differ not so much in that the law always meets us in the form of command and the Gospel in the form of promise, for the law too has promises and the Gospel too has warnings and obligations. But they differ especially in content: the law demands that man work out his own righteousness, while the Gospel invites him to renounce all self-righteousness and to receive the righteousness of Christ, to which end it even bestows the gift of faith.

Law and Gospel stand in that relationship not just before and at the point of conversion; but they continue standing in that relationship throughout the whole of the Christian life, all the way to the grave. The Lutherans have an eye almost exclusively for the accusing, condemning work of the law and therefore know of no greater salvation than liberation from the law. The law is necessary only on account of sin. According to Lutheran theology, in the state of perfection there is no law. God is free from the law; Christ was not subject to the law for Himself at all; the believer no longer stands under the law. Naturally, the Lutherans speak of a threefold use of the law, not only of a usus politicus (civilis), to restrain sin, and a usus paedagogicus, to arouse the knowledge of sin, but also of a usus didacticus, to function for the believer as a rule of living. But this last usus is nonetheless necessary simply and only because and insofar as believers are still sinners, and must still be tamed by the law, and must still be led to a continuing knowledge of sin. In itself the law ceases with the coming of faith and grace, and loses all its significance. The Reformed, however, have thought about this in an entirely different way. The usus politicus and the usus paedagogicus of the law became necessary only accidentally because of sin; even with these uses aside, the most important usus remains, the usus didacticus or normativus. After all, the law is an expression of God's being. As a human being Christ was subject to the law for Himself. Before the fall Adam had the law written upon his heart. With the believer it is again written upon the tablets of his heart by the Holy Spirit. And all those in heaven will walk according to the law of the Lord. The Gospel is temporary, but the law is eternal and is restored precisely through the Gospel. Freedom from the law consists, then, not in the fact that the Christian has nothing more to do with the law, but lies in the fact that the law demands nothing more from the Christian as a condition of salvation. The law can no longer judge and condemn him. Instead he delights in the law of God according to the inner man and yearns for it day and night.

Therefore, that law must always be preached to the congregation in connection with the Gospel. Law and Gospel, the whole Word, the full counsel of God, is the content of preaching. Among Reformed people, therefore, the law occupies a much larger place than in the teaching of sin, since it is also part of the teaching of gratitude. [Here Bavinck has a footnote providing

bibliographical references relating to the views of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Zanchius, Witsius, De Moor, Vitringa, Schneckenburger, Frank, and Gottschick.]

S. The Origin, Essence, and Purpose of Man

The Origin, Essence, and Purpose of Man By Herman Bavinck The account of the origin of heaven and earth converges in the first chapter of Genesis upon the creation of man. The creation of the other creatures, of heaven and earth, of sun and moon and stars, of plants and animals, is reported in brief words, and there is no mention made at all of the creation of the angels. But when Scripture comes to the creation of man it lingers long over him, describes not only the fact but also the manner of his creation, and returns to the subject for further broad consideration in the second chapter. This particular attention devoted to the origin of man serves already as evidence of the fact that man is the purpose and end, the head and crown of the whole work of creation. And there are various material details which also illuminate the superior rank and worth of man among the creatures. In the first place, there is the special counsel of God which precedes the creation of man. At the calling into being of the other creatures, we read simply that God spoke and by His speaking brought them into existence. But when God is about to create man He first confers with Himself and rouses Himself to make men in His image and likeness. This goes to indicate that especially the creation of man rests on deliberation, on Divine wisdom and goodness and omnipotence. Nothing of course came into existence by chance. But the counsel and decision of God is far more clearly manifest in the making of man than in the creation of the other creatures.

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

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

Finally, Scripture expressly mentions that this creation of man in God’s image must come to expression particularly in his dominion over all living beings and in the subjection to Him of the whole earth. Because man is the child or offspring of God, he is king of the earth. Being children of God and heirs of the world are two things already closely related to each other, and inseparably related to each other, in the creation. The account of the creation of man in the first chapter of Genesis is elaborated and amplified in the second chapter (Genesis 2:4-25). This second chapter of Genesis is sometimes mistakenly designated the second creation story. This is erroneous because the creation of heaven and earth is assumed in this chapter, and is referred to in verse 4b

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

There are three particulars which are told us in this second chapter concerning man's origin, and which serve as the elaboration of what is contained in the first chapter. In the first place there is a fairly broad treatment of the first dwelling place of man. The first chapter simply stated in general terms that man was created after God's image and that he was appointed lord over the whole earth. But it gives no hint as to where on the face of the globe man first saw the light of life and where he first lived. This we are, however, told in the second chapter. When God had made the heaven and the earth, and when He had called the sun, moon, and stars, the plants and birds, the animals of the land and those of the water, then no specific place had yet been set aside as a dwelling for man. Hence God rests before He creates man and prepares for him a garden or Paradise in the country of Eden, east of Palestine. That garden is arranged in a particular way. God lets all kinds of trees come up out of the soil there -- trees beautiful to see and serviceable for food. Two of these trees are designated by name, the tree of life planted in the middle of the garden, and also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The garden was laid out in such a way that a river which had its point of origin higher up in the territory of Eden flowed through it, and then forked out into four streams, the Pison, the Gihon, the Tiger, and the Euphrates. A great deal of toil and effort has in the course of the centuries gone into trying to determine where Eden and the garden of Eden were located. Various representations have been put forward about that one river that came up in Eden and flowed through the garden, about the four rivers into which that major stream parted, about the name of the territory of Eden, and about the garden inside it. But all of these representations have remained conjectures. None has been established by solid proof. Two interpretations would, however, seem to deserve the preference. The first is the one according to which Eden lay towards the north in Armenia; the other holds that it was farther south, in Babylonia. It is hard to decide between these two. The details given in Scripture are no longer adequate to determine just where this territory lay. But when we recall that the people who sprang from Adam and Eve, though banned from Eden, nevertheless at first lingered in that general area (Genesis 4:16), and that Noah's ark after the flood came to rest on Mount Ararat (Genesis 8:4), and that the new mankind after the flood spread out from Babel over the earth (Genesis 11:8-9), then it can hardly be doubted that the cradle of humanity stood in that area bounded by Armenia on the North and Shinar in the South. In modern times scholarship has come to reinforce this teaching of Scripture. True, in the past, historical investigation made all sorts of guesses about the original home of mankind, seeking it, in turn, in all parts of the earth, but it is more and more

retracing its steps. Ethnology, the history of civilization, philology all point to Asia as the continent where once the cradle of mankind stood. A second feature to attract attention in Genesis 2:1-25 is the probationary command given to man. Originally this first man was simply called the man (ha-adam) for he was alone for a while and there was no one beside him who was like him. It is not until Genesis 4:25 that the name Adam occurs without the definite article. There the name first becomes individual. This indicates clearly that the first man, who for a while was the only human being, was the beginning and origin and head of the human race. As such he received a double task to perform: first, to cultivate and preserve the garden of Eden, and, second, to eat freely of all the trees in the garden except of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The first task defines his relationship to the earth, the second his relationship to heaven. Adam had to subdue the earth and have dominion over it, and this he must do in a twofold sense: he must cultivate it, open it up, and so cause to come up out of it all the treasures which God has stored there for man's use; and he must also watch over it, safeguard it, protect it against all evil that may threaten it, must, in short, secure it against the service of corruption in which the whole of creation now groans. But man can fulfill this calling over against the earth only if he does not break the bond of connection which unites him with heaven, only if he continues to believe God at His word and to obey His commandment. The twofold task is essentially therefore one task. Adam must have dominion over the earth, not by idleness and passivity but through the work of his head and heart and hand. But in order to rule, he must serve; He must serve God who is his Creator and Lawgiver. Work and rest, rule and service, earthly and heavenly vocation, civilization and religion, culture and cultus, these pairs go together from the very beginning. They belong together and together they comprise in one vocation the great and holy and glorious purpose of man. All culture, that is, all work which man undertakes in order to subdue the earth, whether agriculture, stock breeding, commerce, industry, science, or the rest, is all the fulfillment of a single Divine calling. But if man is really to be and remain such he must proceed in dependence on and in obedience to the Word of God. Religion must be the principle which animates the whole of life and which sanctifies it into a service of God. A third particular of this second chapter of Genesis is the gift of the woman to the man and the institution of marriage. Adam had received much. Though formed out of the dust of the earth, he was nevertheless a bearer of the image of God. He was placed in a garden which was a place of loveliness and was richly supplied with everything good to behold and to eat. He received the pleasant task of dressing the garden and subduing the earth, and in this he had to walk in accordance with the commandment of God, to eat freely of every tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But no matter how richly favored and how grateful, that first man was not satisfied, not fulfilled. The cause is indicated to him by God Himself. It lies in his solitude. It is not good for the man that he should be alone. He is not so constituted, he was not created that way. His nature inclines to the social -- he wants company. He must be able to express himself, reveal himself, and give himself. He must be able to pour out his heart, to give form to his feelings. He must share his awarenesses with a being who can understand him and can feel and live along with him. Solitude is poverty, forsakenness, gradual pining and wasting away. How lonesome it is to be alone! And He who created man thus, with this kind of need for expression and extension can in the greatness and grace of His power only choose to supply the need. He can only create for him a helpmeet who goes along with him, is related to him, and suits him as counterpart. The account tells us in verses 19 to 21 that God made all the beasts of the field and all the fowls of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see whether among all those creatures there was not a being

who could serve Adam as a companion and a helper. The purpose of these verses is not to indicate the chronological order in which animals and man were made, but rather to indicate the material order, the rank, the grades of relationship in which the two sorts of creatures stand over against each other. This relationship of rank is first indicated in the fact that Adam named the animals.

Adam therefore understood all the creatures, he penetrated their natures, he could classify and subdivide them, and assign to each of them the place in the whole of things which was their due. If, accordingly, he discovered no being among all those creatures who was related to himself, this was not the consequence of ignorance nor of foolhardy arrogance or pride; rather, it stemmed from the fact that there existed a difference in kind between him and all other creatures, a difference not of degree merely but of essence. True, there are all kinds of correspondences between animal and man: both are physical beings, both have all kinds of need and desire for food and drink, both propagate offspring, both possess the five senses of smell, taste, feeling, sight, and hearing, and both share the lower activities of cognition, awareness, and perception. Nonetheless, man is different from the animal. He has reason, and understanding, and will and in consequence of these he has religion, morality, language, law, science, and art. True, he was formed from the dust of the earth, but he received the breath of life from above. He is a physical, but also a spiritual, rational, and moral being. And that is why Adam could not find a single creature among them all that was related to him and could be his helper. He gave them all names, but not one of them deserved the exalted, royal name of man.

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

Thereupon the first emotion to master Adam, when he wakes up and sees the woman before him, is that of marvelling and gratitude. He does not feel a stranger to her, but recognizes her immediately as sharing his own nature with him. His recognition was literally a recognition of that which he had felt he missed and needed, but which he could not himself supply. And his marvelling expresses itself in the first marriage hymn or epithalamium ever to be sounded on the face of the earth: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man." Adam therefore remains the source and head of the human race. The woman is not merely created alongside of him but out of him (1 Corinthians 11:8). Just as the stuff for making Adam’s body was taken from the earth, so the side of Adam is the basis of the life of Eve. But just as out of the dust of the earth the first man became a living being through the breath of life which came from above, so out of Adam’s side the first woman first became a human being by the creative omnipotence of God. She is out of Adam and yet is another than Adam. She is related to him and yet is different from him. She belongs to the same kind and yet in that kind she occupies her own unique position. She is dependent and yet she is

free. She is after Adam and out of Adam, but owes her existence to God alone. And so she serves to help the man, to make his vocation of subduing the earth possible. She is his helper, not as mistress and much less as slave, but as an individual, independent, and free being, who received her existence not from the man hut from God, who is responsible to God, and who was added to man as a free and unearned gift.

Thus the Scripture reports the origin of man, of both the male and the female. Such is its thought about the institution of marriage and the beginning of the human race. But in these days a very different construction is put upon these things, and this is done in the name of science and allegedly with the authority of science. And as this new construction penetrates farther and farther until it reaches even the masses of the people, and since it is of the greatest importance for a world and life view, it is necessary to devote our attention to it for a few moments, and to subject the basis on which it rests to an appraisal.

If a person repudiates the Scriptural account of the origin of the human race, it becomes necessary of course to give some other account of it. Man exists, and no one can escape asking the question where he came from. If he does not owe his origin to the creative omnipotence of God, he owes it to something else. And then no solution remains except to say that man gradually developed himself out of the antecedent lower beings and worked himself up to his present high position in the order of being. Evolution is, therefore, the magic word which in our times must somehow solve all problems about the origin and essence of creatures. Naturally, since the teaching of creation is repudiated, the evolutionist must accept that something or other existed in the beginning inasmuch as nothing can come from nothing. The evolutionist, however, in view of this fact, proceeds from the wholly arbitrary and impossible assumption that matter and energy and motion existed eternally. To this he adds that before our solar system came into being, the world consisted simply of a chaotic gaseous mass. This was the starting point of the evolution which gradually resulted in our present world and all of its creatures. It is by evolution that the solar system and the earth came into existence. By evolution the layers of the earth and the minerals came into being. By evolution the animate came into being out of the inanimate through an endless series of years. By evolution plants, and animals, and men came to be. And inside the pale of the human, it was again by evolution that sexual differentiation, marriage, family, society, state, language, religion, morality, law, science, art and all the other values of civilization in a regular order came into existence. If only one may proceed from this one assumption that matter and energy and motion existed eternally, then, it is supposed, one no longer needs to postulate a God. Then the world is self-explanatory. Science, it is then believed, constitutes God entirely unnecessary. The theory of evolution goes on to develop its idea of the origin of man in the following way. When the earth had cooled off, and thus become fit for the birth of living creatures, life arose under the circumstances then extant, very probably in such a way that at first inanimate albuminous combinations formed themselves which, affected by various influences, developed various properties, and that these albuminous entities by way of combination and mingling with each other gave rise to protoplasm, the first germ of life. Thence began the biogenetic development, the development of living beings. It was a process which may have taken a hundred million years of time. This protoplasm formed the albuminous nucleus of the cell which is now regarded as the basic constituent of all living beings, whether plants, or animals, or men. Unicellular protozoa were thus the earliest organisms. According to whether these were mobile or

immobile, they developed in time into plants or into animals. Among the animals the infusoria stand lowest in the scale, but out of these there gradually come up, by way of various intermediate and transitional stages, the higher kinds of animals, known as the vertebrate, invertebrate, mollusks and radiate animals. Thereupon the vertebrate animals are again divided into four classes: fishes, amphibians, birds, and mammals. This group, in turn, is divided into three orders: the duck-billed, the marsupials, and the placentate animals; and this last is again subdivided into the rodents, the ungulate animals, the beasts of prey, and the primates. The primates in turn are classified as semi-apes, apes, and anthropoids. When we compare the physical organism of man with that of these various animals, we discover, according to the evolutionist, that man, in an order of increasing resemblance, is closest in kind to the vertebrates, the mammals, the placentate animals, and the primates, and that he resembles most closely of all the anthropoids, represented by the orang and the gibbon in Asia, and by the gorilla and the chimpanzee in Africa. These are therefore to be regarded as the closest relatives of man. True, they differ from man in size, shape, and the like, but they are altogether like him in their basic physical structure. All the same, man did not come from one of those kinds of apes now extant, but from an anthropoid long since extinct. Apes and men are according to this theory of evolution blood relatives, belong to the same race, though they are to be regarded rather as nephews and nieces than as brothers and sisters.

Such is the idea of the theory of evolution. Such, according to it, was the course of events. But the evolutionist also felt called upon to say something about the way in which all this took place. It was easy enough to say that plants and animals and men had formed an unbroken and rising series of beings. But the evolutionist felt that he ought to do something towards demonstrating that such a development was actually possible, that an ape, for instance, could gradually come to be a man. Charles Darwin in 1859 attempted such a demonstration. He noticed that plants and animals -- roses and doves, for example -- could by artificially assisted natural selection be brought to exhibit significant modifications. Thus he hit upon the idea that in nature, too, such a natural selection might have been operative, a selection not artificially controlled by human intervention, but unconscious, arbitrary, natural. With this thought a light dawned on him. For by accepting such a theory of natural selection he supposed himself in a position to explain how plants and animals gradually undergo changes, how they can overcome defects in their organization and can achieve advantages, and that in such a way they constantly equip themselves better for successful competition with others in the struggle for existence. For, according to Darwin, life is always and everywhere in the whole creation just that: a struggle for existence. Superficially observed, it may seem that there is peace in nature, but this is a deceptive appearance. Rather, there is that constant struggle for life and the necessaries for life, for the earth is too small and too meager to supply all the beings that are born into it with the requisite foods. Hence millions of organisms perish because of need; only the strongest survive. And these strongest ones, who are superior to the others because of some property they have developed, gradually transfer their acquired, advantageous characteristics to their posterity.

Hence there is progress and ever higher development. Natural selection, the struggle for existence, and the transfer of old and newly acquired characteristics explain, according to Darwin, the appearance of new species, and also the transition from animal to man. In evaluating this theory of evolution it is necessary above all to make a sharp distinction between the facts to which it appeals and the philosophical view with which it looks at them. The facts come down to this: that

man shares all kinds of characteristics with other living beings, more particularly with the higher animals, and among these in turn especially with the apes. Naturally, these facts were for the most part known before Darwin also, for the correspondence in physical structure, in the several organs of the body and in their activities, in the five senses, in the perceptions and awarenesses, and the like, is something which all who look may see, and simply is not susceptible to denial. But the sciences of anatomy, biology, and physiology, and also that of psychology, have in recent times investigated those corresponding characteristics much more thoroughly than was done before. The characteristics of resemblance have accordingly increased in number and importance. There were other sciences too which contributed their part to confirming and extending these similarities between man and animal. The science of embryology, for instance, indicated that a human being in its beginnings in the womb resembles a fish, an amphibian, and the lower mammals. Paleontology, which busies itself with the study of conditions and circumstances in ancient times, discovered remnants of human beings -- skeletons, bones, skulls, tools, ornaments, and the like -- which pointed to the fact that centuries ago some people in some parts of the earth lived in a very simple way. And ethnology taught that there were tribes and peoples who were widely separated both spiritually and physically from the civilized nations. When these facts, brought together from various sides, became known, philosophy soon busied itself with combining them into an hypothesis, the hypothesis of the gradual evolution of all things, and specifically also of man. This hypothesis did not come up after the facts were discovered nor because of them, but existed a long time ago, was sponsored by a number of philosophers, and was now applied to the facts, some of which were newly discovered. The old hypothesis, the old theory, now came to rest, it was supposed, on the firmly founded facts. A sort of hurrah went up because of the fact that now all the riddles of the world, except that one of the eternal matter and energy, were solved and all secrets were discovered. But hardly had this proud edifice of the evolutionary philosophy been built when the attack upon it began and it started to crumble. Darwinism, says a distinguished philosopher, came up in the 1860’s, staged its triumphal procession in the 1870’s, was thereupon questioned by some few in the 1890’s, and since the turn of the century has been strongly attacked by many. The first and sharpest of the attacks was launched against the manner in which, according to Darwin, the several species had come into existence. The struggle for existence and natural selection did not suffice as an explanation. True, there is often a fierce struggle in the plant and animal worlds, and this struggle has a significant influence on their nature and existence. But it has by no means been proved that this struggle can cause new species to come into being. The struggle for existence can contribute to the strengthening of tendencies and abilities, of organs and potentialities, by way of exercise and effort. It can develop what is present already, but it cannot bring into being what does not exist. Besides, it is an exaggeration, as any one knows from his own experience, to say that always and everywhere nothing exists except struggle.

There is more than hatred and animosity in the world. There is also love and cooperation and help. The doctrine that there is nothing anywhere but warfare on the part of all against all is just as one-sided as the idyllic view of the eighteenth century that everywhere in nature there is rest and peace. There is room for many at the big table of nature, and the earth which God gave as a dwelling place for man, is inexhaustibly rich. Consequently, there are many facts and manifestations which have nothing to do with a struggle for existence. Nobody, for instance, can point out what the colors and figures of the snail’s skin, the black color of the underbelly in many vertebrate animals, the graying of the hair with increasing age, or the reddening of the leaves in

the autumn have to do with the struggle for existence. Nor is it true that in this struggle the strongest types always and exclusively win the victory, and that the weakest are always defeated. A so-called coincidence, a fortunate or unfortunate circumstance, often mocks all such calculations. Sometimes a strong person is taken away in the strength of his years, and sometimes a physically weak man or woman reaches a ripe old age.

Such considerations led a Dutch scholar to substitute another theory for that of Darwin's natural selection, that of mutation, according to which the change of species did not take place regularly and gradually, but suddenly sometimes, and by leaps or jumps. But in this matter the question is whether these changes really represent new species or simply modifications in the species already extant. And the answer to that question hinges again on just what one means by species. Not only the struggle for existence, natural selection, and the survival of the fittest have lost status in this century, but also the idea of the transfer of acquired characteristics. The transfer of natural, inherited characteristics from parents to children from the nature of the case tends rather to plead against than for Darwinism, inasmuch as it implies the constancy of species. Centuries on end men beget men and nothing else. Concerning the transfer of acquired as distinguished from inherited characteristics there is now so much difference of opinion that nothing can be said about it with certainty. This much, however, is certain, that acquired characteristics very often are not transferred by the parents to the children. Circumcision, for instance, was practised by some people for centuries, and yet left no traces in the children after all that while. Transfer by inheritance takes place only inside certain boundaries and does not effect any change of kind or species. If the modification is artificially induced, it must also be artificially maintained or else it is lost again. Darwinism, in short, cannot explain either heredity or change. Both are facts whose existence is not denied, but their connection and relationship still lie beyond the pale of our knowledge.

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

Geology, for instance, revealed that the lower and higher sorts of animals do not follow each other in sequence but as a matter of fact existed alongside of each other ages ago. Paleontology did not come up with a single piece of conclusive evidence for the existence of transitional types between the several species of organic beings. Still, according to Darwin's theory of extremely gradual evolution by way of extremely small changes, these types should have been present in quantity. Even the ardently sought after and energetically pursued intermediary type between man and the ape was not discovered. Embryology, it is true, does point to a certain external similarity between the various stages in the development of the embryo of man and that of other animal bodies. But this similarity is external for the simple reason that from an animal embryo a human being is never

born, nor an animal from a human embryo. In other words, man and animal go in different directions from conception on, even though the internal differences cannot then be perceived. Biology has up to this time offered so little support to the proposition that life generated itself that many now accept the impossibility of that and are returning to the idea of a special life force or energy. Physics and chemistry, in proportion to the extent to which they have pressed their investigations, have found more and more secrets and marvels in the world of the infinitely small, and have caused many to return to the thought that the basic constituents of things are not material entities but forces. And -- to mention no further evidences -- all the efforts that have been put forth to explain consciousness, freedom of the will, reason, conscience, language, religion, morality, and all such manifestations, as being solely the product of evolution have not been crowned with success. The origins of all these manifestations, like those of all other things, remain shrouded in darkness for science. For it is important to note finally that when man makes his appearance in history he is already man according to body and soul, and he is already in possession, everywhere and at all times, of all those human characteristics and activities whose origins science is trying to discover. Nowhere can human beings be found who do not have reason and will, rationality and conscience, thought and language, religion and morality, the institutions of marriage and the family, and the like. Now if all of these characteristics and manifestations have gradually evolved, such an evolution must have taken place in prehistoric times, that is, in times of which we know nothing directly, and about which we make surmises only on the basis of a few facts perceived in later times. Any science, therefore, which wants to burrow through to that prehistoric time and to discover the origins of things there, must from the nature of the case take recourse to guesses, surmises, and suppositions. There is no possibility here for evidence or proof in the strict sense. The doctrine of evolution generally and that of the descent of man from the animal particularly are not supported in the least by facts supplied by historic times. Of all the elements on which such theories are built nothing remains in the end but a philosophical world-view which wants to explain all things and all manifestations in terms of the things and manifestations themselves, leaving God out of account. One of the proponents of the evolutionary view admitted it bluntly: the choice is between evolutionary descent or miracle; since miracle is absolutely impossible we are compelled to take the first position. And such an admission demonstrates that the theory of the descent of man from lower animal forms does not rest on careful scientific investigation but is rather the postulate of a materialistic or pantheistic philosophy. The idea of the origin of man is very closely related to that of the essence of man. Many nowadays talk differently, saying that man and the world, irrespective of what was their origin and their development in the past, are what they are now and will remain such. This position is of course entirely correct: reality remains the same, irrespective of whether we form a true or a false idea of it. But the same holds of course concerning the origin of things. Even though we imagine that the world and mankind came into being in some particular fashion -- gradually, say, during the course of centuries, by all sorts of infinitesimally small changes through self-generation -- such a supposition does not, of course, change the actual origin. The world came into being in the way that it did, and not in the way we wish it or suppose it. But the idea we have of the origin of things is inseparably connected with the idea we have of the essence of things.

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

have a most significant influence on our conception of the essence of world and man.

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

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

Reality, however, teaches something quite different. Man can make himself believe, if he wants to, that he has done everything himself and that he is bound by nothing. But in every respect he remains a dependent creature. He cannot do as he pleases. In his physical existence, he remains bound to the laws laid down for respiration, the circulation of the blood, digestion, and procreation. And if he runs counter to these laws and pays no attention to them, he injures his health and undermines his own life. The same is true of the life of his soul and spirit. Man cannot think as he pleases, but is bound to laws which he has not himself thought out and laid down, but which are implied in the very act of thinking and come to expression in it. If he does not hold to those laws of thought, he snares himself in the net of error and falsehood. Nor can man will and act as he

pleases. His will is under the discipline of reason and conscience; if he disregards this discipline and degrades his willing and acting to the level of arbitrariness and caprice, then there is sure to be self-reproach and self-indictment, regret and remorse, the gnawing and the compunction of the conscience. The life of the soul, therefore, no less than the life of the body, is built on something other than caprice or accident. It is not a condition of lawlessness and anarchy but is from all sides and in all its activities determined by laws. It is subject to laws of truth and goodness and beauty and so it demonstrates that it has not generated itself. In short, man has from the very beginning his own nature and his own essence and these he cannot violate with impunity. And so much stronger is nature in these matters than theory that the adherents of the doctrine of evolution themselves keep talking of a human nature, of immutable human attributes, of laws of thought and ethics prescribed for man, and of an inborn religious sense. Thus the idea of the essence of man comes into conflict with the idea of his origin. In Scripture, however, there is perfect agreement between the two ideas. There the essence of man corresponds to his origin. Because man, although he was formed from the dust of the earth according to the body, received the breath of life from above, and was created by God Himself, he is a unique being, has his own nature. The essence of his being is this: he exhibits the image of God and His likeness. This image of God distinguishes man from both the animal and the angel. He has traits in common with both, but he differs from both in having his own unique nature. The animals, too, of course, were created by God. They did not come into being of their own accord but were called into existence by a particular word of the power of God. Besides, they were immediately created in various kinds, even as the plants were. All men are descended from one parental pair and thus constitute one generation or race. This is not true of the animals; they have, so to speak, various ancestors. Hence it is remarkable that zoology up to this time has not yet succeeded in tracing all animals back to one type. It begins by at once designating some seven or some four major groupings or basic types.

Presumably it is therefore true that most of the animal types are not distributed over the whole earth, but live in particular areas. The fishes live in the water, the birds in the air, and the land animals for the most part are limited to definite territories: the polar bear, for instance, is found only in the far north, and the duck-billed platypus only in Australia. And so in Genesis it is specifically stated that God created the plants (1:11) and also the animals after their kind -- that is, according to types. Naturally, this does not mean to say that the types which were originally created by God were exactly those into which science, that of Linnaeus, say, now classifies them. For one thing our classifications are always liable to error because our zoology is still defective and inclined to regard variants as types and vice versa. The artificial, scientific concept of an animal type is very difficult to establish and is always very different from the natural concept of type for which we are always still seeking. Moreover, in the course of centuries a great many animal kinds have died out or been destroyed. From the remains, whether whole or blasted, which we have of some of them, it is evident that various kinds of animals, such as the mammoth, for instance, which no longer exists, once abounded in quantity. And in the third place it should be remembered that as a result of various influences big modifications and changes have taken place in the animal world which often make it difficult or even impossible for us to trace them back to an original type.

Further, it is remarkable that in the creation of the animals even as in that of the plants these were indeed called into being by a particular act of Divine power, but that in this act nature also

performed a mediate service. Let the earth bring forth grass, we read in Genesis 1:11, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit, and it was so (Genesis 1:12). The report is the same in Genesis 1:20: Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth, and it was so (Genesis 1:21). Again in Genesis 1:24: Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind, and it was so. Thus in each instance, nature is used by God as an instrument. It is the earth which, although naturally conditioned and equipped for it by God, brings forth all those creatures in their bountiful differentiation of kind. This peculiar origin of animals sheds some light, too, on their nature. This origin demonstrates that the animals are much more closely related to the earth and to nature than man is. True, the animals are living beings, and as such they are distinguished from the inorganic, inanimate creatures. Hence, too, they are often called living souls (Genesis 1:20-21, and Genesis 1:24). In the general sense of a principle of life the animals too have a soul.1 But this living principle of the soul in the animal is still so closely bound to nature and to the metabolism of matter that it cannot arrive at any independence or freedom, and it cannot exist when separated from the metabolism or circulation of matter. At death, therefore, the soul of the animal dies. From this it follows that the animals, at least the higher animals, do have the same sense organs as man, and can sense things (hear, see, smell, taste, and feel). They can form images or pictures, and relate these images to each other. But animals do not have reason, cannot separate the image from the particular, individual, and concrete thing. They cannot metamorphose the images nor raise them into concepts, cannot relate the concepts and so form judgments, cannot make inferences from the judgments nor arrive at decisions, and cannot carry out the decisions by an act of the will. Animals have sensations, images, and combinations of images; they have instincts, desires, passions. But they lack the higher forms of desire and knowledge which are peculiar to man; they have no reason and they have no will. All this comes to expression in the fact that animals do not have language, religion, morality, and the sense of beauty; they have no ideas of God, of the invisible things, of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Thus man is raised high above the animal plane. Between the two there is not a gradual transition but a great gulf. That which constitutes the very nature of man, his peculiar essence, namely his reason and his will, his thought and language, his religion and morality, and the like, are alien to the animal. Therefore the animal cannot understand man although man can understand the animal. Nowadays the science of psychology tries to explain the soul of man in terms of the soul of the animal, but this is to reverse the right order. The soul of man is the key for getting at the soul of the animal. The animal lacks what man has, but man has all that is peculiar to the animal. This is not to say that now, too, man knows the nature of animals through and through. The whole world is for man a problem whose solution he seeks after and can seek after, and so too every animal is a living mystery. The significance of the animal by no means consists of the fact that the animal is useful to man, providing him with food and shelter, clothing and ornament. Much more is contained in the subduing and having dominion over the earth than that man should, in greed and egotism, freely turn everything to his advantage. The animal world has significance also for our science and art, our religion and morality. God has something, has much, to tell us in the animal. His thoughts and words speak to us out of the whole world, even out of the world of plants and animals. When botany and zoology trace out these thoughts, these sciences, as, indeed, the natural sciences in general, are glorious sciences, which no man, certainly no Christian, may despise. Moreover, how rich the animal world is in moral significance for man! The animal points to the boundary beneath,

above which man must raise himself, and to the level of which he must never sink. Man can become an animal and less than an animal if he dulls the light of reason, breaks the bond with heaven, and seeks to satisfy all his desire in the earth. Animals are symbols of our virtues and our vices: the dog shows us the image of loyalty, the spider of industry, the lion of courage, the sheep of innocence, the dove of integrity, the hart of the soul thirsting for God; and, just so too, the fox is the image of cunning, the worm of misery, the tiger of cruelty, the swine of baseness, the snake of devilish guile, and the ape, who most nearly resembles the form of man, declares what an impressive physical organization amounts to without spirit, the spirit that is from above. In the ape man sees his own caricature.

Just as man differs by the image of God from the animals below him, he is distinguished by it also from the angels above him. The existence of such beings as angels cannot, apart from Scripture, be proved by scientific argument. Science knows nothing about them, cannot demonstrate that they exist, and cannot demonstrate that they do not exist. But it is remarkable that a belief in the existence of beings who are above man occurs among all peoples and in all religions, and that men, when they have rejected the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the existence of angels, nevertheless, in all sort of superstitious forms, come back to a belief in the existence of supramundane beings. Our present generation abundantly proves this. Angels and devils are no longer held to exist and in their stead a belief has arisen in many circles in latent forces, mysterious natural powers, ghosts, apparitions, visitations of the deceased, animated stars, inhabited planets, Marsmen, living atoms, and the like. Interesting in connection with all these ancient and new manifestations is the position which the Holy Scripture has over against them. irrespective of whether falsehood or truth lies at the basis of them, Scripture forbids all fortune telling,2 sorcery,3 astrology,4 necromancy,5 enchantment or the consulting of oracles,6 all conjuring and wizardry,7 and the like, and so makes an end of all superstition as well as of all unbelief. Christianity and superstition are sworn foes. There is no science, enlightenment, or civilization that can safeguard against superstition; only the word of God can protect us from it. Scripture makes man most profoundly dependent upon God, but precisely in so doing emancipates him from every creature. It puts man into a right relationship with nature and so makes a true natural science possible. But the Scriptures do teach that there are angels, not the mythical creations of the human imagination, not the personifications of mysterious forces, not the deceased who have now climbed to higher levels, but spiritual beings, created by God, subject to His will, and called to His service. They are beings, therefore, of whom, in the light of Scripture, we can form a definite idea, and such as have nothing in common with the mythological figures of the Pagan religions. In knowledge they are raised high above Man 1:8 and in power,9 but they were nevertheless made by the same God and the same Word (John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16), and they have the same reason and the same moral nature, so that, for instance, it is said of the good angels that they obey God’s voice and do His pleasure (Psalms 103:20-21), and of the evil angels that they do not stand in the truth (John 8:44), that they lead astray (Ephesians 6:11), and that they sin (2 Peter 2:4).

But, in spite of this correspondence between them, there exists a big difference between angels and men. It consists, in the first place, of the fact that the angels do not have soul and body, but are pure spirits (Hebrews 1:14). True, at the time of their revelation they often appeared in physical forms, but the several forms in which they appeared10 point to the fact that these assumed forms

of manifestation were temporary and that they changed in accordance with the nature of the mission. Never are the angels called souls, living souls, as the animals are and as man is. For soul and spirit differ from each other in this respect that the soul, too, is by nature spiritual, immaterial, invisible, and, even in man is a spiritually independent entity though it is always a spiritual power or spiritual entity which is oriented to a body, suits a body, and without such a body is incomplete and imperfect. The soul is a spirit designed for a physical life. Such a soul is proper to animals and particularly to man. When man loses his body in death, he continues to exist, but in an impoverished and bereft condition, so that the resurrection on the last day is a restoration of the lack. But the angels are not souls. They were never intended for a bodily life and were not given earth but heaven as a dwelling place. They are pure spirits. This gives them great advantages over man, for they stand higher in knowledge and power, stand in a much freer relationship to time and space than men do, can move about more freely, and are therefore exceptionally well adapted to carrying out God's commands on earth. But -- and this is the second distinction between men and angels -- those advantages have their opposite side. Because the angels are pure spirits, they all stand in a relatively loose relationship with reference to each other. They were all originally created together and they all continue to live alongside each other. They do not form one organic whole, one race or generation. True, there is a natural order among them. According to Scripture there are a thousand times a thousand angels,11 and these are divided into classes: cherubims (Genesis 3:24), seraphims (Isaiah 6:1-13), and thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers (Ephesians 1:21 and Colossians 1:16; Colossians 2:10). And there is further distinction of rank within the groups: Michael and Gabriel have a special place among them.12 Nevertheless, they do not constitute one race, are not blood relatives, did not beget each other. It is possible to speak of a mankind but not of an angelkind. When Christ assumed the human nature He was immediately related to all men, related by blood, and He was their brother according to the flesh. But the angels live next to each other, each one accountable for himself and not for the others, so that a portion of them could fall and a portion remain faithful to God. The third distinction between man and angel is related' to the second. Because the angels are spirits and are not related to the earth, because they are not related by blood, and do not know such distinctions as father and mother, parents and children, brothers and sisters, therefore there is a whole world of relationships and connections, ideas and emotions, desires and duties of which the angels know nothing. They may be more powerful than men, but they are not so versatile. They stand in fewer relationships, and in riches and depth of the emotional life man is far superior to the angel. True, Jesus says in Matthew 22:30 that marriage will end with this dispensation, but nevertheless the sexual relationships on earth have to a significant extent increased the spiritual treasures of mankind, and in the resurrection, too, these treasures will not be lost but will be preserved into eternity.

If to all this we add the consideration that the richest revelation of God which He has given us is revealed to us in the name of the Father, and in the name of the Son -- who became like unto us and is our prophet, priest, and king -- and in the name of the Holy Spirit who is poured out in the church and who causes God Himself to dwell in us, then we feel that not the angel, but man, was created after the image of God. Angels experience His power, and wisdom, and goodness, but human beings share in His eternal mercies. God is their Lord, but He is not their Father; Christ is their Head, but He is not their Reconciler and Savior; the Holy Spirit is their Sender and Guide but He never testifies with their spirit that they are children and heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Hence the eyes of the angels are cast upon the earth, for there God's richest grace has

appeared, there the struggle between heaven and earth is fought out, there the church is formed into the body of the Son, and there the conclusive blow will someday be struck and the final triumph of God be achieved. Hence it is that they desire to look into the mysteries of salvation being revealed on earth and to learn to know from the church the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10 and 1 Peter 1:12).

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

Therefore we are to think of them with respect and speak of them with honor. We are to give them joy by our repentance. We are to follow their example in the service of God and in obedience to His word. We are to show them in our own hearts and lives and in the whole of the church the manifold wisdom of God. We are to remember their fellowship and together with them declare the mighty works of God. Thus there is difference between men and angels, but there is no conflict; differentiation but also unity; distinction but also fellowship. When we arrive at Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, then we come also to the many thousands of angels and rebind the tie of unity and love that was broken by sin (Hebrews 12:22). Both they and we have our own place in the rich creation of God and achieve our peculiar function there. Angels are the sons, the mighty heroes, the powerful hosts of God. Men were created in His image and are God’s generation. They are His race.

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

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

immeasurable distance and intimate relation over against God, these have been combined in an incomprehensible way in the human being. How a mean creature can at the same time be the image of God -- that goes far beyond our grasp. In the second place, we are told in Genesis 1:26 that God created men (the term is plural) in His image and after His likeness. From the very beginning the intention was that God would not create one man, but men, in his image. Therefore He immediately created man as man and woman, the two of them not in separation from each other but in relationship and fellowship with each other (verse 27). Not in the man alone, nor in the woman alone, but in both together, and in each in a special way, the image of God is expressed. The contrary is sometimes affirmed on the ground that in 1 Corinthians 11:7 Paul says that man is the image and glory of God and that woman is the glory of man. This text is frequently abused so as to deny the image of God to the woman and to debase her far below the level of the man. But Paul is there not speaking of man and woman considered apart from each other but about their relationship in marriage. And then he says that it is the man and not the woman who is the head. And he deduces this from the fact that the man is not from the woman, but the woman from the man. The man was created first, was first made in the image of God, and to him God first revealed His glory. And if the woman shares in all this, this takes place mediately, from and through the man. She received the image of God, but after man, in dependence upon him, by way of his mediation. Hence man is the image and glory of God directly and originally; the woman is the image and glory of God in a derived way in that his is the glory of man. What we read of this matter in Genesis 2:1-25 must be added to what we read of it in Genesis 1:1-31. The way in which woman is created in Genesis 2:1-25 is the way along which she receives the image of God as well as the man (Genesis 1:27). In this is contained the further truth that the image of God rests in a number of people, with differentiation of race, talent, and powers -- in short in mankind -- and further that this image will achieve its full unfolding in the new humanity which is the church of Christ. In the third place, Genesis 1:26 teaches us that God had a purpose in creating man in His image: namely, that man should have dominion over all living creatures and that he should multiply and spread out over the world, subduing it. If now we comprehend the force of this subduing under the term culture, now generally used for it, we can say that culture in the broadest sense is the purpose for which God created man after His image. So little are cultus and culture, religion and civilization, Christianity and humanity in conflict with each other that it would be truer to say God's image had been granted to man so that he might in his dominion over the whole earth bring it into manifestation. And this dominion of the earth includes not only the most ancient callings of men, such as hunting and fishing, agriculture and stock-raising, but also trade and commerce, finance and credit, the exploitation of mines and mountains, and science and art. Such culture does not have its end in man, but in man who is the image of God and who stamps the imprint of his spirit upon all that he does, it returns to God, who is the First and the Last. The content or meaning of the image of God is unfolded further in later revelation. For instance, it is remarkable that after the Fall, too, man still continued to be called the image of God. In Genesis 5:1-3 we are reminded once more that God created man, man and woman together, in His image, and that He blessed them, and that Adam thus begot a son in his own likeness, after his image. In Genesis 9:6 the shedding of man's blood is forbidden for the reason that man was made in the image of God. The poet of the beautiful eighth psalm sings of the glory and majesty of the Lord which reveals itself in heaven and earth, and most splendidly of all in insignificant man and his dominion over all the works of God's hands. When Paul spoke to the Athenians on Mars' Hill, he quoted one of their

poets approvingly: For we are also His offspring (Acts 17:28). In James 3:9 the Apostle by way of demonstrating the evil of the tongue makes use of this contrast: that with it we bless God, even the Father, and with it we curse men who are made after the similitude of God. And Scripture not only calls fallen man the image of God, but it keeps on regarding and dealing with him as such throughout. It constantly looks upon man as a reasonable, moral being who is responsible to God for all his thoughts and deeds and words and is bound to His service.

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

It is upon this teaching of Holy Scripture that the distinction usually made in Reformed theology between the image of God in the broader and the narrower sense is based. If, on the one hand, after his fall and disobedience, man continues to be called the image and offspring of God, and, on the other hand, those virtues by which he especially resembles God have been lost through sin and can only be restored again in the fellowship with Christ, then these two propositions are compatible with each other only if the image of God comprises something more than the virtues of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. The Reformed theologians recognized this, and over against the Lutheran and the Roman theologians they maintained it. The Lutherans do not make the distinction between the image of God in the broader and in the narrower sense. Or, if they do make the distinction, they do not attach much importance to it nor understand its significance. For them the image of God is nothing more or less than the original righteousness, that is, the virtues of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. They recognize the image of God only in the narrower sense and do not appreciate the need of relating this image of God to the whole human nature. Thus the religio-moral life of man is held to be a special and isolated area. It is not related to, and it exercises no influence upon, the work to which man is called in state and society, and in art and science. Once the Lutheran Christian shares in the forgiveness of sins and the fellowship with God through faith, he has enough. He rests in that, and enjoys it, and does not concern himself to relate this spiritual life, backwards, to the counsel and election of God, and, forwards, to the whole earthly calling of man. From this, in the other direction, it follows that man, when through sin he has lost the original righteousness, is bereft of the whole image of God. Nothing of it is left him, not even small remains: and so his rational and moral nature, which is still his, is underestimated and maligned. The Roman Catholics, on the contrary, do make a distinction between the image of God

in the broader and narrower sense, although they do not usually employ these words for it. And they, too, are concerned to find a relationship between the two. But for them this relationship is external, not internal; it is artificial, not real; mechanical, not organic. The Romans present the matter as though man is conceivable without the virtues of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (the image of God in the narrower sense) and can in reality also exist thus. In that event, too, man still has some religious and moral life but only in such a kind and to such a degree as can come from natural religion and natural morality. It is a religion and morality which, as it were, remains limited to this earth, and it can never pave the way for him to heavenly blessedness and the immediate vision of God. Besides, although in the abstract it is possible that such a natural person can, without possessing the image of God in the narrower sense, fulfill the duties of natural religion and of natural moral law, still, as a matter of fact, this is very difficult inasmuch as man is a material, physical, and sensuous person. After all, desire is always characteristic of this sensuous nature of man. Such lust or desire may not in itself be sin but it certainly is a tempting occasion for sin. For, by nature, this sensuous character, being physical, is opposed to the spirit, and constitutes a threat to it always. The threat is that reason and will will be overcome by the power of the flesh. For these two reasons, according to Roman Catholic thought, God in His sovereign favor has added the image of God in the narrower sense to the natural man. He could have created man without this image. But because He foresaw that man would then very easily fall prey to fleshly desire, and also because He wanted to raise man to a higher state of blessedness than is possible here on earth, that is, to the heavenly glory, and to the immediate presence of Himself, therefore God added original righteousness to the natural man and so lifted him from his natural state to a higher and supernatural vantage point. Thus a two-fold purpose was achieved. In the first place, man could now, what with the help of this supernatural addition, easily control the desire which flesh is naturally heir to; and, in the second place, by fulfilling the supernatural duties prescribed for him by the original righteousness (the image of God in the narrower sense), man could now achieve a supernatural salvation corresponding to his further endowment. Thus the supernatural addendum of original righteousness serves two purposes for the Roman Catholic: it serves as a restraint upon the flesh, and it clears the way for merits to heaven. The Reformed theologians take their own point of view between the Roman Catholic and Lutheran positions. According to Scripture, the image of God is larger and more inclusive than the original righteousness. For, although this original righteousness has been lost through sin, man continues to carry the name of the image and offspring of God. There remain in him some small remains of the image of God according to which he was originally created. That original righteousness could not, therefore, have been an endowment, separate and independent, and quite unrelated to human nature generally. It is not true that man at first existed, be it in thought only or in actuality also, as a purely natural being, to whom, then, original righteousness was later superadded from above. Rather, in thought and creation both, man was one with that original righteousness. The idea of man includes the idea of such righteousness. Without it man can neither be conceived of nor exist. The image of God in the narrower sense is integrally related with that image in the broader sense. It is not accurate to say that man bears the image of God merely: he is that image of God. The image of God is identical with man, is as inclusive as the humanity of man. To the extent that, even in the state of sin, man remained man, to that extent he has preserved remnants of the image of God; and to the extent that he has lost the image of God, to that extent he has ceased to be man, true and perfect man.

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

Such a conception of the image of God permits the whole teaching of Holy Scripture to come into its own. It is a conception which at one and the same time maintains the relationship and the distinction between nature and grace, creation and redemption. Gratefully and eloquently this conception acknowledges the grace of God which, after the fall, too, permitted man to remain man and continued to regard him and deal with him as a rational, moral, and responsible being. And at the same time, it holds that man, bereft of the image of God, is wholly corrupted and inclined to all evil. Life and history are available to confirm this. For even in its lowest, deepest fall, human nature yet remained human nature. And, no matter what acme of achievement man may accomplish, he remains small and weak, guilty and impure. Only the image of God constitutes man true and perfect man.

If, now, we try briefly to survey the content of the image of God, the first thing that comes up for attention is man's spiritual nature. He is a physical, but he is also a spiritual being. He has a soul which, in essence, is a spirit. This is evident from what the Holy Scripture teaches concerning the origin, essence, and duration of the human soul. As to that origin, we read concerning Adam that he, unlike the animals, received a breath of life from above (Genesis 2:7) and in a sense this holds for all men. For it is God who gives every man his spirit (Ecclesiastes 12:7), who forms the spirit of man within him (Zechariah 12:1), and who, therefore, in distinction from the fathers of the flesh, can be called the Father of spirits (Hebrews 12:9). This special origin of the human soul determines its essence also. True, Scripture several times ascribes a soul to animals (Genesis 2:19 and 9:4, and elsewhere) but in these instances the reference, as some translations also have it, is to a principle of life in the general sense. Man has a different and a higher soul, a soul which in very essence is spiritual in kind. This is evident from the fact that Scripture does ascribe a peculiar spirit to man but never to the animal. Animals do have a spirit in the sense that as creatures they are created and sustained by the Spirit of God (Psalms 104:30) but they do not, each of them, have their own, independent spirit. Man has.14 Because of its spiritual nature the soul of man is immortal; it does not as in the animals die when the body dies, but it returns to God who has given the spirit (Ecclesiastes 12:7). It cannot, like the body, be killed by men (Matthew 10:28). As spirit it continues to exist (Hebrews 12:9 and 1 Peter 3:19). This spirituality of the soul raises man above the plane of the animal, and gives him a point of resemblance with the angels. True, he belongs to the sensuous world, being earthly of the earth, but by virtue of his spirit he far transcends the earth, and he walks with royal freedom in the realm of spirits. By his spiritual nature

man is related to God who is Spirit (John 4:24) and who dwells in eternity (Isaiah 57:15). In the second place, the image of God is revealed in the abilities and powers with which the spirit of man has been endowed. It is true that the higher animals can by sensation form images and relate these to each other, but they can do no more. Man, on the contrary, raises himself above the level of images and enters the realm of concepts and ideas. By means of thought, which cannot be understood as a movement of the brain but must be regarded as a spiritual activity, man deduces the general from the particular, rises from the level of the visible to that of the invisible things, forms ideas of the true, the good, and the beautiful, and he learns to know God's eternal power and Godhead from God's creatures. By means of his willing, which must also be distinguished from his sinful desire, he emancipates himself from the material world and reaches out for invisible and suprasensuous realities. His emotions even are by no means set in motion merely by useful and pleasurable things inside the material world but are roused and stimulated also by ideal, spiritual goods which are quite insusceptible to arithmetical calculation. All of these abilities and activities have their point of departure and their center in the self-consciousness by which man knows himself and by means of which man bears within himself an ineradicable sense of his own existence and of the peculiarity of his rational and moral nature. Besides, all these particular abilities express themselves outwardly in language and religion, in morality and law, in science and art, -- all of them, of course, as well as many others, peculiar to man and not to be found in the animal world at all.

All these abilities and activities are characteristics of the image of God. For God, according to the revelation of nature and Scripture, is not an unconscious, blind force, but a personal, self-conscious, knowing, and willing being. Even emotions, dispositions, and passions such as wrath, jealousy, compassion, mercy, love, and the like, are without hesitancy ascribed to God in the Scriptures, not so much as emotions which He Himself passively undergoes, but as activities of His almighty, holy, and loving being. Scripture could not speak in this human way about God if in all his abilities and activities, man were not created in the image of God. The same holds true, in the third place, of the body of man. Even the body is not excluded from the image of God. True, Scripture expressly says that God is Spirit (John 4:24), and it nowhere ascribes a body to Him. Nevertheless, God is the creator also of the body and of the whole sensuous world. All things, material things too, have their origin and their existence in the Word that was with God (John 1:3 and Colossians 1:15), and therefore rest in thought, in spirit. Moreover, the body, although it is not the cause of all those activities of the spirit, is the instrument of them. It is not the ear which hears but the spirit of man which hears through the ear.

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

All this belongs to the image of God in the broader sense. But the likeness of God and man comes out much more strongly in the original righteousness with which the first man was endowed and which is called the image of God in the narrower sense. When Scripture puts the emphasis on this

original righteousness, it thereby declares that what matters most in the image of God is not that it exists but what it is. The main thing is not that we think and hate and love and will. The likeness of man and God gets its significance from what we think and will, from what the object of our hatred and love is. The powers of reason and will, of inclination and aversion, were given to man precisely for this purpose that he should use them in the right way -- that is, according to God's will and to His glory. The devils, too, have retained the powers of thought and will, but they put these solely into the service of their hatred and enmity against God. Even the belief in God's existence, which in itself is a good thing, gives the devils nothing but trembling, and the fear of His judgment (James 2:19). Concerning the Jews, who called themselves children of Abraham and named God their Father, Jesus once said that, if this were so, they would do the works of Abraham and would love Him whom God had sent. But because they were doing precisely the opposite and sought to kill Jesus, they betrayed that they were really of the father the devil and wanted to do his will (John 8:39-44). The desires which the Jews fostered, and the works which they did, constituted them despite all their keen discrimination and energy like unto the devil. And so, too, the human likeness to God comes out not chiefly in the fact that man possesses reason and understanding, heart and will. It expresses itself principally in pure knowledge and perfect righteousness and holiness, which together constitute the image of God in the narrower sense, and with which man was privileged and adorned at his creation. The knowledge which was given to the first man did not consist of the fact that he knew everything and had nothing further to learn about God, himself, and the world. Even the knowledge of the angels and of the saints is susceptible to growth. So was the knowledge of Christ on earth up to the end of His life. That original knowledge of the first man implies rather that Adam received an adequate knowledge for his circumstance and calling and that this knowledge was pure knowledge. He loved truth with his whole soul. The lie, with all of its calamitous consequences of error, doubt, unbelief, and uncertainty, had not yet found a place in his heart. He stood in the truth, and he saw and appreciated everything as it really was. The fruit of such knowledge of the truth was righteousness and holiness. Holiness means that the first man was created free of all taint of sin. His nature was unspoiled. No evil thought, deliberation, or desire came up out of his heart. He was not innocent or simple, but he knew God, and he knew the law of God that was written in his heart, and he loved that law with his whole soul. Because he stood in the truth, he stood also in love. Righteousness means that the man who thus knew the truth in his mind, and who was holy in his will and in all his desires, thereby also corresponded wholly to God's law, wholly satisfied the demands of His justice, and stood before His face without any guilt. Truth and love bring peace in their wake, peace with God, and ourselves, and the whole world. The man who himself stands in the right place, the place where he belongs, also stands in the right relationship to God and to all creatures. Of this state and circumstance in which the first man was created we can no longer form an idea. A head and a heart, a mind and a will, all of them altogether pure and without sin -- that is something which lies far beyond the pale of all our experiences. When we stop to reflect how sin has insinuated itself into all our thinking and speaking, into all our choices and actions, then even the doubt can rise in our hearts whether such a state of truth, love, and peace is possible for man. Holy Scripture, however, wins the victory and conquers every doubt. In the first place, it shows us, not only at the beginning but also in the middle of history, the figure of a man who could with full justice put the question to his opponents: Which of you convinceth me of sin? (John 8:46). Christ was very man and therefore also perfect man. He did no sin neither was guile found in His mouth (1 Peter 2:22). In the second place,

Scripture teaches that the first human couple were created after God’s image in righteousness and holiness as the fruit of known truth. Thus the Scriptures maintain that sin does not belong to the essence of human nature, and that it can therefore also be removed and separated from that human nature.

If sin cleaves to man from his earliest origin, and by virtue of the nature which is his, then from the nature of the case there is no redemption from sin possible. The redemption from sin would then be tantamount to the annihilation of human nature. But now, as it is, not only can a human being exist without sin in the abstract, but such a holy human being has actually existed. And when he fell, and became guilty and polluted, another man, the second Adam, rose up without sin, to set fallen man free from his guilt and to cleanse him of all pollution. The creation of man according to the image of God and the possibility of his fall include the possibility of his redemption and recreation. But whoever denies the first cannot affirm the second; the denial of the fall has as its other side the comfortless preaching of human irredeemability. In order to be able to fall, man must first have stood. In order to lose the image of God he must first possess it. The creation of man according to the image of God -- we read in Genesis 1:26 and 28 -- had as its nearest purpose that man should fill, subdue, and have dominion over the earth. Such dominion is not a constituent element of the image of God. Nor does it, as some have maintained, constitute the whole content of that image. Moreover, it absolutely is not an arbitrary and incidental addendum. On the contrary, the emphasis that is placed upon this dominion and its close relationship with the creation according to the image of God indicate conclusively that the image comes to expression in the dominion and by means of it must more and more explain and unfold itself. Further, in the description of this dominion, it is plainly stated that to a certain extent it was, indeed, immediately given to man as an endowment, but that to a very great extent it would be achieved only in the future. After all, God does not say merely that He will make "men" in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26), but when He has made the first human couple, man and woman, He blessed them and said to them: Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it (Genesis 1:28), and He further gave Adam the particular task of dressing and keeping the garden (Genesis 2:15).

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

has been reached. To work, simply to work, without deliberation, plan, or purpose, is to work hopelessly and is unworthy of rational man. A development which continues indefinitely is not a development. Development implies intention, course of action, final purpose, destination. If, then, man at his creation was called to work, that implies that he himself and the people who should issue from him should enter into a rest after the work. The institution of the seven-day week comes to confirm and reinforce this conviction. In his work of creating God rested on the seventh day from all His work. Man, made in the image of God, immediately at the time of the creation gets the right and the privilege to follow in the Divine example in this respect also. The work which is laid upon him, namely, the replenishing and subduing of the earth, is a weak imitation of the creative activity of God. Man's work, too, is a work which is entered upon after deliberation, which follows a definite course of action, and which is aimed at a specific objective. Man is not a machine which unconsciously moves on; he does not turn about in a treadmill with an unchangeable monotony. In his work too man is man, the image of God, a thinking, willing, acting being who seeks to create something, and who in the end looks back upon the work of his hands with approbation. As it does for God Himself, man's work ends in resting, enjoyment, pleasure. The six-day week crowned by the Sabbath dignifies man's work, raises him above the monotonous movement of spiritless nature, and presses the stamp of a Divine calling upon it. Whoever, therefore, on the Sabbath day enters into the rest of God in accordance with His purpose, that person rests from his works in the same glad way as God rests from His (Hebrews 4:10). This holds true of the individual and it also holds true of the church and of mankind generally. The world, too, has its world's work to perform, a work which is followed and concluded by a Sabbath. There remains a rest for the people of God. Each Sabbath Day is but an example and foretaste of it and at the same time also a prophecy and a guarantee of that rest (Hebrews 4:9). That is why the Heidelberg Catechism rightly says that God created man good and according to His own image in order that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love Him, and live with Him in eternal blessedness to praise and glorify Him. The final purpose of man lay in the eternal blessedness, in the glorification of God in heaven and on earth. But in order to arrive at this end man first had to fulfill his task on earth. In order to enter into the rest of God he first had to finish God's work. The way to heaven goes through the earth and over the earth. The entrance to the Sabbath is opened by the six days of work. One comes to eternal life by way of work. This teaching of the purpose of man so far rests entirely upon thoughts which are expressed in Genesis 1:26-31; Genesis 2:1-25; Genesis 3:1-3. But the rest of the second chapter has another important constituent element to add to it. When God places man in paradise, He gives him the right to eat freely of all the trees in the garden except one. That one He singles out as an exception, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Man is told that he may not eat of that tree, and that on the day he eats of it he will die the death (Genesis 2:16-17). To all that is commanded is now added one thing that is forbidden. The commandments were known to Adam partly from a reading of his own heart, partly from God's spoken word. Adam did not invent them. God created them in him and communicated them to him. Man is not religiously and morally autonomous. He is not his own lawgiver, and he may not do as he pleases. Rather, God is his only Lawgiver and Judge (Isaiah 33:22). All those commandments which Adam received now resolved themselves into this one requirement that he who was created as the image of God should in all his thinking and doing, and throughout his life and work, remain the image of God. Man had to remain such personally in his own life, but also in his marriage relationship, in his family, in his six-day working week, in his rest on the seventh day, in his replenishing and multiplying, in his

subduing and having dominion over the earth, and in his dressing and keeping of the garden. Adam was not to go his own way but had to walk in the way that God appointed for him. But all those commandments, which, so to speak, gave Adam ample freedom of movement and the whole earth as his field of operation are augmented, or, better, are limited, by one proscription. This proscription, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, does not belong to the image of God, is not a constituent element of it, but, quite to the contrary, fixes its boundary. If Adam transgresses this proscriptive command, he loses the image of God, places himself outside the fellowship of God, and dies the death. By this command therefore the obedience of man is tested. This command will prove whether man will follow God's way or his own way, whether he will keep to the right path or go astra4y, whether he will remain a son of God in the house of the Father or want to take the portion of goods that is given him and go to a distant country. Hence, too, this proscriptive command is usually given the name of the probationary command. Hence, too, it has in a certain sense an arbitrary content. Adam and Eve could find no reason why just now the eating of this one particular tree was forbidden. In other words, they had to keep the command not because they fathomed it in its reasonable content and understood it, but solely because God had said it, on the basis of His authority, prompted by sheer obedience, out of a pure regard to their duty. That is why, further, the tree whose fruit they might not eat was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was the tree which would demonstrate whether man should arbitrarily and self-sufficiently want to determine what was good and what evil, or whether he would in this matter permit himself to be wholly led by the command which God had given concerning it and keep to that. The first man, therefore, was given something, indeed, was given much to do; he was also given something, though this was little, which he was not to do. Generally the last requirement is the more difficult of the two. There are quantities of people who are willing to do incredibly much for the sake, say, of their health, but who are willing to give up nothing for it, or at least very little. They regard the slightest self-denial as an unbearable burden. That which is forbidden gives off a kind of mysterious lure. It raises questions about why and what and how. It prompts doubt and excites the imagination. This temptation which emanated from the proscriptive command the first man had to resist. This was the struggle of faith which was given him to fight. But, in the image of God according to which he was created, he also received the strength by which he could have remained standing and have conquered.

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

Adam was dependent upon the change of night and day, waking and sleeping, but we read of the heavenly Jerusalem that there shall be no night there (Revelation 21:25 and Revelation 22:5) and that the redeemed by the blood of the Lamb stand before the throne of God and serve Him night and day in His temple (Revelation 7:15). The first man was bound to the apportionment of the week into six work days and one day of rest, but for the people of God there remains hereafter an

eternal, unintermittent rest (Hebrews 4:9 and Revelation 14:13). In the state of innocence man daily required food and drink, but in the future God shall destroy both the belly and meats (1 Corinthians 6:13). The first human couple consisted of man and woman and was accompanied by the blessing: be fruitful and multiply. But in the resurrection men do not marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven (Matthew 22:30). The first man, Adam, was of the earth, earthy, had a natural body and so became a living soul, but the believers in the resurrection receive a spiritual body and will then bear the image of heavenly man, the image of Christ the Lord from heaven (1 Corinthians 15:45-49). Adam was created in such a way that he could stray, could sin, could fall and die; but the believers even on earth are in principle raised above this possibility. They can no longer sin, for whosoever is born of God does not commit sin, for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God (1 John 3:9). They cannot fall even to the very end for they are kept through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:5). And they cannot die, for those who believe in Christ have, already here on earth, the eternal incorruptible life; they shall not die in all eternity, and though they were dead they should yet live (John 11:25-26). In looking at the first man, therefore, we must be on guard against two extremes. On the one hand, we must, on the basis of Holy Scripture, maintain that he was immediately created in the image of God in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness: he was not at first a small, innocent child that had to develop into maturity; he was not a being who, mature in body, was spiritually without any content, taking a neutral position between truth and falsehood, good and evil; and still less was he originally an animal being, gradually evolved out of animal existence, who now at long last by virtue of struggle and effort had become man.

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

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

made dependent upon his own choice and upon his own will.

Notes 1 Genesis 2:19; Genesis 9:4, Genesis 9:10, Genesis 9:12, Genesis 9:16; Leviticus 11:10; Leviticus 17:11; and elsewhere.

2 Leviticus 19:31; Leviticus 20:27; and Deuteronomy 18:10-14.

3 Deuteronomy 18:10; Jeremiah 27:10; and Revelation 21:8.

4 Leviticus 19:26; Isaiah 47:13; and Micah 5:11.

5 Deuteronomy 18:11.

6 Leviticus 19:26 and Deuteronomy 18:10.

7 Deuteronomy 18:11 and Isaiah 47:9.

8 Matthew 18:10 and Matthew 24:36.

9 Psalms 103:20 and Colossians 1:16.

10 Genesis 18:2; Judges 18:3; and Revelation 19:14.

11 Deuteronomy 33:2; Daniel 7:10; and Revelation 5:11.

12 Daniel 8:16; Daniel 9:21; Daniel 10:13, Daniel 10:21; and Luke 1:19, Luke 1:26.

13 Deuteronomy 6:13; Matthew 4:10; and Revelation 2:9.

14 Deuteronomy 2:30; Judges 15:19; Ezekiel 3:14; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59; 1 Corinthians 2:11 and 1 Corinthians 5:3-4.

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