

Monergism

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

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The Being of God

I. The Existence of God

A. Place of the Doctrine of God in Dogmatics.

WORKS on dogmatic or systematic theology generally begin with the doctrine of God. The prevailing opinion has always recognized this as the most logical procedure and still points in the same direction. In many instances even they whose fundamental principles would seem to require another arrangement, continue the traditional practice. There are good reasons for starting with the doctrine of God, if we proceed on the assumption that theology is the systematized knowledge of God, of whom, through whom, and unto whom, are all things. Instead of being surprised that Dogmatics should begin with the doctrine of God, we might well expect it to be a study of God *throughout* in all its ramifications, from the beginning to the end. As a matter of fact, that is exactly what it is intended to be, though only the first locus deals with God directly, while the succeeding ones treat of Him more indirectly. We start the study of theology with two presuppositions, namely (1) that God exists, and (2) that He has revealed Himself in His divine Word. And for that reason it is not impossible for us to start with the study of God. We can turn to His revelation, in order to learn what He has revealed concerning Himself and concerning His relation to His creatures. Attempts have been made in the course of time to distribute the material of Dogmatics in such a way as to exhibit clearly that it is, not merely in one locus, but in its entirety, a study of God. This was done by the application of the trinitarian method, which arranges the subject-

matter of Dogmatics under the three headings of (1) the Father (2) the Son, and (3) the Holy Spirit. That method was applied in some of the earlier systematic works, was restored to favor by Hegel, and can still be seen in Martensen's *Christian Dogmatics*. A similar attempt was made by Breckenridge, when he divided the subject-matter of Dogmatics into (1) The Knowledge of God Objectively Considered, and (2) The Knowledge of God Subjectively Considered. Neither one of these can be called very successful.

Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century the practice was all but general to begin the study of Dogmatics with the doctrine of God; but a change came about under the influence of Schleiermacher, who sought to safeguard the scientific character of theology by the introduction of a new method. The religious consciousness of man was substituted for the Word of God as the source of theology. Faith in Scripture as an authoritative revelation of God was discredited, and human insight based on man's own emotional or rational apprehension became the standard of religious thought. Religion gradually took the place of God as the object of theology. Man ceased to recognize the knowledge of God as something that was *given* in Scripture, and began to pride himself on being a seeker after God. In course of time it became rather common to speak of man's discovering God, as if man ever discovered Him; and every discovery that was made in the process was dignified with the name of "revelation." God came in at the end of a syllogism, or as the last link in a chain of reasoning, or as the cap-stone of a structure of human thought. Under such circumstances it was but natural that some should regard it as incongruous to begin Dogmatics with the study of God. It is rather surprising that so many, in spite of their subjectivism, continued the traditional arrangement.

Some, however, sensed the incongruity and struck out in a different way. Schleiermacher's dogmatic work is devoted to a study and analysis of the religious consciousness and of the doctrines therein implied. He does not deal with the doctrine of God connectedly, but only in fragments, and concludes his work with a discussion of the

Trinity. His starting point is anthropological rather than theological. Some of the mediating theologians were influenced to such an extent by Schleiermacher that they logically began their dogmatic treatises with the study of man. Even in the present day this arrangement is occasionally followed. A striking example of it is found in the work of O. A. Curtis on *The Christian Faith*. This begins with the doctrine of man and concludes with the doctrine of God. Ritschlian theology might seem to call for still another starting point, since it finds the objective revelation of God, not in the Bible as the divinely inspired Word, but in Christ as the Founder of the Kingdom of God, and considers the idea of the Kingdom as the central and all-controlling concept of theology. However, Ritschlian dogmatists, such as Herrmann, Haering, and Kaftan follow, at least formally, the usual order. At the same time there are several theologians who in their works begin the discussion of dogmatics proper with the doctrine of Christ or of His redemptive work. T. B. Strong distinguishes between *theology* and *Christian theology*, defines the latter as “the expression and analysis of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ,” and makes the incarnation the dominating concept throughout his *Manual of Theology*.

B. Scripture Proof for the Existence of God.

For us the existence of God is the great presupposition of theology. There is no sense in speaking of the knowledge of God, unless it may be assumed that God exists. The presupposition of Christian theology is of a very definite type. The assumption is not merely that there is something, some idea or ideal, some power or purposeful tendency, to which the name of God may be applied, but that there is a self-existent, self-conscious, personal Being, which is the origin of all things, and which transcends the entire creation, but is at the same time immanent in every part of it. The question may be raised, whether this is a reasonable assumption, and this question may be

answered in the affirmative. This does not mean, however, that the existence of God is capable of a logical demonstration that leaves no room whatever for doubt; but it does mean that, while the truth of God's existence is accepted by faith, this faith is based on reliable information. While Reformed theology regards the existence of God as an entirely reasonable assumption, it does not claim the ability to demonstrate this by rational argumentation. Dr. Kuyper speaks as follows of the attempt to do this: "The attempt to prove God's existence is either useless or unsuccessful. It is useless if the searcher believes that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him. And it is unsuccessful if it is an attempt to force a person who does not have this *pistis* by means of argumentation to an acknowledgment in a logical sense." [Dict. Dogm., De Deo I, p. 77 (translation mine — L. B.).]

The Christian accepts the truth of the existence of God by faith. But this faith is not a blind faith, but a faith that is based on evidence, and the evidence is found primarily in Scripture as the inspired Word of God, and secondarily in God's revelation in nature. Scripture proof on this point does not come to us in the form of an explicit declaration, and much less in the form of a logical argument. In that sense the Bible does not prove the existence of God. The closest it comes to a declaration is perhaps in Heb. 11:6 . . . "for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." It presupposes the existence of God in its very opening statement, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Not only does it describe God as the Creator of all things, but also as the Upholder of all His creatures, and as the Ruler of the destinies of individuals and nations. It testifies to the fact that God works all things according to the counsel of His will, and reveals the gradual realization of His great purpose of redemption. The preparation for this work, especially in the choice and guidance of the old covenant people of Israel, is clearly seen in the Old Testament, and the initial culmination of it in the Person and work of Christ stands out with great clarity on the pages of the New Testament. God is seen on almost every page of Holy Writ as He

reveals Himself in words and actions. This revelation of God is the basis of our faith in the existence of God, and makes this an entirely reasonable faith. It should be remarked, however, that it is only by faith that we accept the revelation of God, and that we obtain a real insight into its contents. Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself," John 7:17. It is this intensive knowledge, resulting from intimate communion with God, which Hosea has in mind when he says, "And let us know, let us follow on to know the Lord," Hos. 6:3. The unbeliever has no real understanding of the Word of God. The words of Paul are very much to the point in this connection: "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this age (world)? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For, seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe," I Cor. 1:20,21.

C. Denial of the existence of God in its various forms.

Students of Comparative Religion and missionaries often testify to the fact that the idea of God is practically universal in the human race. It is found even among the most uncivilized nations and tribes of the world. This does not mean, however, that there are no individuals who deny the existence of God altogether, nor even that there is not a goodly number in Christian lands who deny the existence of God as He is revealed in Scripture, a self-existent and self-conscious Person of infinite perfections, who works all things according to a pre-determined plan. It is the latter denial that we have in mind particularly here. This may and has assumed various forms in the course of history.

1. ABSOLUTE DENIAL OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD. As stated above, there is strong evidence for the universal presence of the idea of God in the human mind, even among tribes which are

uncivilized and have not felt the impact of special revelation. In view of this fact some go so far as to deny that there are people who deny the existence of God, real atheists; but this denial is contradicted by the facts. It is customary to distinguish two kinds, namely, practical and theoretical atheists. The former are simply godless persons, who in their practical life do not reckon with God, but live as if there were no God. The latter are, as a rule, of a more intellectual kind, and base their denial on a process of reasoning. They seek to prove by what seem to them conclusive rational arguments, that there is no God. In view of the *semen religionis* implanted in every man by his creation in the image of God, it is safe to assume that no one is born an atheist. In the last analysis atheism results from the perverted moral state of man and from his desire to escape from God. It is deliberately blind to and suppresses the most fundamental instinct of man, the deepest needs of the soul, the highest aspirations of the human spirit, and the longings of a heart that gropes after some higher Being. This practical or intellectual suppression of the operation of the *semen religionis* often involves prolonged and painful struggles.

There can be no doubt about the existence of practical atheists, since both Scripture and experience testify to it. Psalm 10:4b declares of the wicked, "All his thoughts are, There is no God." According to Ps. 14:1 "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." And Paul reminds the Ephesians that they were formerly "without God in the world," Eph. 2:12. Experience also testifies abundantly to their presence in the world. They are not necessarily notoriously wicked in the eyes of men, but may belong to the so-called "decent men of the world," though respectably indifferent to spiritual things. Such people are often quite conscious of the fact that they are out of harmony with God, dread to think of meeting Him, and try to forget about Him. They seem to take a secret delight in parading their atheism when they have smooth sailing, but have been known to get down on their knees for prayer when their life was suddenly endangered. At the present time thousands of these practical atheists

belong to the *American Association for the Advancement of Atheism*.

Theoretical atheists are of a different kind. They are usually of a more intellectual type and attempt to justify the assertion that there is no God by rational argumentation. Prof. Flint distinguishes three kinds of theoretical atheism, namely, (1) *dogmatic atheism*, which flatly denies that there is a Divine Being; (2) *sceptical atheism*, which doubts the ability of the human mind to determine, whether or not there is a God; and (3) *critical atheism*, which maintains that there is no valid proof for the existence of God. These often go hand in hand, but even the most modest of them really pronounces all belief in God a delusion. [*Anti-Theistic Theories*, p. 4 f.] In this division, it will be noticed, agnosticism also appears as a sort of atheism, a classification which many agnostics resent. But it should be borne in mind that agnosticism respecting the existence of God, while allowing the possibility of His reality, leaves us without an object of worship and adoration just as much as dogmatic atheism does. However the real atheist is the *dogmatic atheist*, the man who makes the positive assertion that there is no God. Such an assertion may mean one of two things: either that he recognizes no god of any kind, sets up no idol for himself, or that he does not recognize the God of Scripture. Now there are very few atheists who do not in practical life fashion some sort of god for themselves. There is a far greater number who theoretically set aside any and every god; and there is a still greater number that has broken with the God of Scripture. Theoretical atheism is generally rooted in some scientific or philosophical theory. Materialistic Monism in its various forms and atheism usually go hand in hand. Absolute subjective Idealism may still leave us the idea of God, but denies that there is any corresponding reality. To the modern Humanist "God" simply means "the Spirit of humanity," "the Sense of wholeness," "the Racial Goal" and other abstractions of that kind. Other theories not only leave room for God, but also pretend to maintain His existence, but certainly exclude the God of theism, a supreme personal Being, Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe, distinct from His

creation, and yet everywhere present in it. Pantheism merges the natural and supernatural, the finite and infinite, into one substance. It often speaks of God as the hidden ground of the phenomenal world, but does not conceive of Him as personal, and therefore as endowed with intelligence and will. It boldly declares that all is God, and thus engages in what Brightman calls "the expansion of God," so that we get "too much of God," seeing that He also includes all the evil of the world. It excludes the God of Scripture, and in so far is clearly atheistic. Spinoza may be called "the God-intoxicated man," but his God is certainly not the God whom Christians worship and adore. Surely, there can be no doubt about the presence of theoretical atheists in the world. When David Hume expressed doubt as to the existence of a dogmatic atheist, Baron d'Holbach replied, "My dear sir, you are at this moment sitting at table with seventeen such persons." They who are agnostic respecting the existence of God may differ somewhat from the dogmatic atheist, but they, as well as the latter, leave us without a God.

2. PRESENT DAY FALSE CONCEPTIONS OF GOD INVOLVING A DENIAL OF THE TRUE GOD. There are several false conceptions of God current in our day, which involve a denial of the theistic conception of God. A brief indication of the most important of these must suffice in this connection.

a. *An immanent and impersonal God.* Theism has always believed in a God who is both transcendent and immanent. Deism removed God from the world, and stressed His transcendence at the expense of His immanence. Under the influence of Pantheism, however, the pendulum swung in the other direction. It identified God and the world, and did not recognize a Divine Being, distinct from, and infinitely exalted above, His creation. Through Schleiermacher the tendency to make God continuous with the world gained a footing in theology. He completely ignores the transcendent God, and recognizes only a God that can be known by human experience and manifests Himself in Christian consciousness as Absolute Causality, to which a feeling of absolute dependence corresponds. The

attributes we ascribe to God are in this view merely symbolical expressions of the various modes of this feeling of dependence, subjective ideas without any corresponding reality. His earlier and his later representations of God seem to differ somewhat, and interpreters of Schleiermacher differ as to the way in which his statements must be harmonized. Brunner would seem to be quite correct, however, when he says that with him the universe takes the place of God, though the latter name is used; and that he conceives of God both as identical with the universe and as the unity lying behind it. It often seems as if his distinction between God and the world is only an ideal one, namely, the distinction between the world as a unity and the world in its manifold manifestations. He frequently speaks of God as the "Universum" or the "Welt-All," and argues against the personality of God; though, inconsistently, also speaking as if we could have communion with Him in Christ. These views of Schleiermacher, making God continuous with the world, largely dominated the theology of the past century, and it is this view that Barth is combatting with his strong emphasis on God as "the Wholly Other."

b. *A finite and personal God.* The idea of a finite god or gods is not new, but as old as Polytheism and Henotheism. The idea fits in with Pluralism, but not with philosophical Monism or theological Monotheism. Theism has always regarded God as an absolute personal Being of infinite perfections. During the nineteenth century, when monistic philosophy was in the ascendant, it became rather common to identify the God of theology with the Absolute of philosophy. Toward the end of the century, however, the term "Absolute," as a designation of God, fell into disfavor, partly because of its agnostic and pantheistic implications, and partly as the result of the opposition to the idea of the "Absolute" in philosophy, and of the desire to exclude all metaphysics from theology. Bradley regarded the God of the Christian religion as a part of the Absolute, and James pleaded for a conception of God that was more in harmony with human experience than the idea of an infinite God. He eliminates from God the metaphysical attributes of self-existence,

infinity, and immutability, and makes the moral attributes supreme. God has an environment, exists in time, and works out a history just like ourselves. Because of the evil that is in the world, He must be thought of as limited in knowledge or power, or in both. The condition of the world makes it impossible to believe in a good God infinite in knowledge and power. The existence of a larger power which is friendly to man and with which he can commune meets all the practical needs and experiences of religion. James conceived of this power as personal, but was not willing to express himself as to whether he believed in one finite God or a number of them. Bergson added to this conception of James the idea of a struggling and growing God, constantly drawing upon his environment. Others who defended the idea of a finite God, though in different ways, are Hobhouse, Schiller, James Ward, Rashdall, and H. G. Wells.

c. God as the personification of a mere abstract idea. It has become quite the vogue in modern liberal theology to regard the name "God" as a mere symbol, standing for some cosmic process, some universal will or power, or some lofty and comprehensive ideal. The statement is repeatedly made that, if God once created man in His image, man is now returning the compliment by creating God in his (man's) image. It is said of Harry Elmer Barnes that he once said in one of his laboratory classes: "Gentlemen, we shall now proceed to create God." That was a very blunt expression of a rather common idea. Most of those who reject the theistic view of God still profess faith in God, but He is a God of their own imagination. The form which He assumes at any particular time depends, according to Shailer Mathews, on the thought patterns of that day. If in pre-war times the controlling pattern was that of an autocratic sovereign, demanding absolute obedience, now it is that of a democratic ruler eager to serve all his subjects. Since the days of Comte there has been a tendency to personify the social order of humanity as a whole and to worship this personification. The so-called Meliorists or Social Theologians reveal a tendency to identify God in some way with the social order. And the New Psychologists inform us that the idea of God is a projection of the human mind, which in its early stages is inclined to make images

of its experiences and to clothe them with quasi-personality. Leuba is of the opinion that this illusion of God has served a useful purpose, but that the time is coming when the idea of God will be no more needed. A few definitions will serve to show the present day trend. "God is the immanent spirit of the community" (Royce). He is "that quality in human society which supports and enriches humanity in its spiritual quest" (Gerald Birney Smith). "God is the totality of relations constituting the whole social order of growing humanity" (E. S. Ames). "The word 'god' is a symbol to designate the universe in its ideal forming capacity" (G. B. Foster). "God is our conception, born of social experience, of the personality-evolving and personally responsive elements of our cosmic environment with which we are organically related" (Shailer Mathews). It need hardly be said that the God so defined is not a personal God and does not answer to the deepest needs of the human heart.

D. The So-called Rational Proofs for the Existence of God.

In course of time certain rational arguments for the existence of God were developed, and found a foothold in theology especially through the influence of Wolff. Some of these were in essence already suggested by Plato and Aristotle, and others were added in modern times by students of the Philosophy of Religion. Only the most common of these arguments can be mentioned here.

1. THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT. This has been presented in various forms by Anselm, Descartes, Samuel Clarke, and others. It has been stated in its most perfect form by Anselm. He argues that man has the idea of an absolutely perfect being; that existence is an attribute of perfection; and that therefore an absolutely perfect being must exist. But it is quite evident that we cannot conclude from abstract thought to real existence. The fact that we have an idea of God does not yet prove His objective existence. Moreover, this argument tacitly assumes, as already existing in the human mind, the

very knowledge of God's existence which it would derive from logical demonstration. Kant stressed the untenableness of this argument, but Hegel hailed it as the one great argument for the existence of God. Some modern Idealists suggested that it might better be cast into a somewhat different form, which Hocking called "the report of experience." By virtue of it we can say, "I have an idea of God, therefore I have an experience of God."

2. THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT. This has also appeared in several forms. In general it runs as follows: Every existing thing in the world must have an adequate cause; and if this is so, the universe must also have an adequate cause, that is a cause which is indefinitely great. However, the argument did not carry general conviction. Hume called the law of causation itself in question, and Kant pointed out that, if every existing thing has an adequate cause, this also applies to God, and that we are thus led to an endless chain. Moreover, the argument does not necessitate the assumption that the cosmos had a single cause, a personal and absolute cause, — and therefore falls short of proving the existence of God. This difficulty led to a slightly different construction of the argument, as, for instance, by B. P. Bowne. The material universe appears as an interacting system, and therefore as a unit, consisting of several parts. Hence there must be a unitary Agent that mediates the interaction of the various parts or is the dynamic ground of their being.

3. THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT. This is also a causal argument, and is really but an extension of the preceding one. It may be stated in the following form: The world everywhere reveals intelligence, order, harmony, and purpose, and thus implies the existence of an intelligent and purposeful being, adequate to the production of such a world. Kant regards this argument as the best of the three which were named, but claims that it does not prove the existence of God, nor of a Creator, but only of a great architect who fashioned the world. It is superior to the cosmological argument in that it makes explicit what is not stated in the latter, namely, that the

world contains evidences of intelligence and purpose, and thus leads on to the existence of a conscious, and intelligent, and purposeful being. That this being was the Creator of the world does not necessarily follow. "The teleological evidence," says Wright, [*A Student's Philosophy of Religion*, p. 341.] "merely indicates the probable existence of a Mind that is, at least in considerable measure, in control of the world process, — enough to account for the amount of teleology apparent in it." Hegel treated this argument as a valid but subordinate one. The Social Theologians of our day reject it along with all the other arguments as so much rubbish, but the New Theists retain it.

4. THE MORAL ARGUMENT. Just as the other arguments, this too assumed different forms. Kant took his startingpoint in the categorical imperative, and from it inferred the existence of someone who, as lawgiver and judge, has the absolute right to command man. In his estimation this argument is far superior to any of the others. It is the one on which he mainly relies in his attempt to prove the existence of God. This may be one of the reasons why it is more generally recognized than any other, though it is not always cast into the same form. Some argue from the disparity often observed between the moral conduct of men and the prosperity which they enjoy in the present life, and feel that this calls for an adjustment in the future which, in turn, requires a righteous arbiter. Modern theology also uses it extensively, especially in the form that man's recognition of a Highest Good and his quest for a moral ideal demand and necessitate the existence of a God to give reality to that ideal. While this argument does point to the existence of a holy and just being, it does not compel belief in a God, a Creator, or a being of infinite perfections.

5. THE HISTORICAL OR ETHNOLOGICAL ARGUMENT. In the main this takes the following form: Among all the peoples and tribes of the earth there is a sense of the divine, which reveals itself in an external cultus. Since the phenomenon is universal, it must belong to the very nature of man. And if the nature of man naturally

leads to religious worship, this can only find its explanation in a higher Being who has constituted man a religious being. In answer to this argument, however, it may be said that this universal phenomenon may have originated in an error or misunderstanding of one of the early progenitors of the human race, and that the religious cultus referred to appears strongest among primitive races, and disappears in the measure in which they become civilized.

In evaluating these rational arguments it should be pointed out first of all that believers do not need them. Their conviction respecting the existence of God does not depend on them, but on a believing acceptance of God's self-revelation in Scripture. If many in our day are willing to stake their faith in the existence of God on such rational arguments, it is to a great extent due to the fact that they refuse to accept the testimony of the Word of God. Moreover, in using these arguments in an attempt to convince unbelievers, it will be well to bear in mind that none of them can be said to carry absolute conviction. No one did more to discredit them than Kant. Since his day many philosophers and theologians have discarded them as utterly worthless, but to-day they are once more gaining favor and their number is increasing. And the fact that in our day so many find in them rather satisfying indications of the existence of God, would seem to indicate that they are not entirely devoid of value. They have some value for believers themselves, but should be called *testimonia* rather than arguments. They are important as interpretations of God's general revelation and as exhibiting the reasonableness of belief in a divine Being. Moreover, they can render some service in meeting the adversary. While they do not prove the existence of God beyond the possibility of doubt, so as to compel assent, they can be so construed as to establish a strong probability and thereby silence many unbelievers.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY. Why is modern theology inclined to give the study of man rather than the study of God precedence in theology? Does the Bible prove the existence of God or does it not? If it does, how does it prove it? What accounts for the

general *sensus divinitatis* in man? Are there nations or tribes that are entirely devoid of it? Can the position be maintained that there are no atheists? Should present day Humanists be classed as atheists? What objections are there to the identification of God with the Absolute of philosophy? Does a finite God meet the needs of the Christian life? Is the doctrine of a finite God limited to Pragmatists? Why is a personified idea of God a poor substitute for the living God? What was Kant's criticism on the arguments of speculative reason for the existence of God? How should we judge of this criticism?

LITERATURE: Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* II, pp. 52-74; Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm. De Deo* I, pp. 77-123; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* I, pp. 202-243; Shedd, *Dogm. Theol.* I, pp. 221-248; Dabney, *Syst. and Polem. Theol.*, pp. 5-26; Macintosh, *Theol. as an Empirical Science*, pp. 90-99; Knudson, *The Doctrine of God*, pp. 203-241; Beattie, *Apologetics*, pp. 250-444; Brightman, *The Problem of God*, pp. 139-165; Wright, *A Student's Phil. of Rel.*, pp. 339-390; Edward, *The Philosophy of Rel.*, pp. 218-305; Beckwith, *The Idea of God*, pp. 64-115; Thomson, *The Christian Idea of God*, pp. 160-189; Robinson, *The God of the Liberal Christian*, pp. 114-149; Galloway, *The Phil. of Rel.*, pp. 381-394.

II. The Knowability of God

A. God Incomprehensible but yet Knowable.

The Christian Church confesses on the one hand that God is the Incomprehensible One, but also on the other hand, that He can be known and that knowledge of Him is an absolute requisite unto salvation. It recognizes the force of Zophar's question, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto

perfection?" Job 11:7. And it feels that it has no answer to the question of Isaiah, "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?" Isa. 40:18. But at the same time it is also mindful of Jesus' statement, "And this is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ," John 17:3. It rejoices in the fact that "the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." I John 5:20. The two ideas reflected in these passages were always held side by side in the Christian Church. The early Church Fathers spoke of the invisible God as an unbegotten, nameless, eternal, incomprehensible, unchangeable Being. They had advanced very little beyond the old Greek idea that the Divine Being is absolute attributeless existence. At the same time they also confessed that God revealed Himself in the Logos, and can therefore be known unto salvation. In the fourth century Eunomius, an Arian, argued from the simplicity of God, that there is nothing in God that is not perfectly known and comprehended by the human intellect, but his view was rejected by all the recognized leaders of the Church. The Scholastics distinguished between the *quid* and the *qualis* of God, and maintained that we do not know what God is in His essential Being, but can know something of His nature, of what He is to us, as He reveals Himself in His divine attributes. The same general ideas were expressed by the Reformers, though they did not agree with the Scholastics as to the possibility of acquiring real knowledge of God, by unaided human reason, from general revelation. Luther speaks repeatedly of God as the *Deus Absconditus* (hidden God), in distinction from Him as the *Deus Revelatus* (revealed God). In some passages he even speaks of the *revealed* God as still a *hidden* God in view of the fact that we cannot fully know Him even through His special revelation. To Calvin, God in the depths of His being is past finding out. "His essence," he says, "is incomprehensible; so that His divinity wholly escapes all human senses." The Reformers do not deny that man can learn something of the nature of God from His creation, but maintain that he can acquire true knowledge of Him only from special revelation, under

the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit. Under the influence of the pantheizing theology of immanence, inspired by Hegel and Schleiermacher, a change came about. The transcendence of God is soft-pedaled, ignored, or explicitly denied. God is brought down to the level of the world, is made continuous with it, and is therefore regarded as less incomprehensible, though still shrouded in mystery. Special revelation in the sense of a direct communication of God to man is denied. Sufficient knowledge of God can be obtained without it, since man can discover God for himself in the depths of his own being, in the material universe, and above all in Jesus Christ, since these are all but outward manifestations of the immanent God. It is over against this trend in theology that Barth now raises his voice and points out that God is not to be found in nature, in history, or in human experience of any kind, but only in the special revelation that has reached us in the Bible. In his strong statements respecting the hidden God he uses the language of Luther rather than of Calvin.

Reformed theology holds that God can be known, but that it is impossible for man to have a knowledge of Him that is exhaustive and perfect in every way. To have such a knowledge of God would be equivalent to comprehending Him, and this is entirely out of the question: "*Finitum non possit capere infinitum.*" Furthermore, man cannot give a definition of God in the proper sense of the word, but only a partial description. A logical definition is impossible, because God cannot be subsumed under some higher genus. At the same time it is maintained that man can obtain a knowledge of God that is perfectly adequate for the realization of the divine purpose in the life of man. However, true knowledge of God can be acquired only from the divine self-revelation, and only by the man who accepts this with childlike faith. Religion necessarily presupposes such a knowledge. It is the most sacred relation between man and his God, a relation in which man is conscious of the absolute greatness and majesty of God as the supreme Being, and of his own utter insignificance and subjection to the High and Holy One. And if this is true, it follows that religion presupposes the knowledge of God in man. If man were left absolutely in the dark respecting the being of God, it would be

impossible for him to assume a religious attitude. There could be no reverence, no piety, no fear of God, no worshipful service.

B. Denial of the Knowability of God.

The possibility of knowing God has been denied on various grounds. This denial is generally based on the supposed limits of the human faculty of cognition, though it has been presented in several different forms. The fundamental position is that the human mind is incapable of knowing anything of that which lies beyond and behind natural phenomena, and is therefore necessarily ignorant of supersensible and divine things. Huxley was the first to apply to those who assume this position, himself included, the name "agnostics." They are entirely in line with the sceptics of former centuries and of Greek philosophy. As a rule agnostics do not like to be branded as atheists, since they do not deny absolutely that there is a God, but declare that they do not know whether He exists or not, and even if He exists, are not certain that they have any true knowledge of Him, and in many cases even deny that they can have any real knowledge of Him.

Hume has been called the father of modern agnosticism. He did not deny the existence of God, but asserted that we have no true knowledge of His attributes. All our ideas of Him are, and can only be, anthropomorphic. We cannot be sure that there is any reality corresponding to the attributes we ascribe to Him. His agnosticism resulted from the general principle that all knowledge is based on experience. It was especially Kant, however, who stimulated agnostic thought by his searching inquiry into the limits of the human understanding and reason. He affirmed that the theoretical reason knows only phenomena and is necessarily ignorant of that which underlies these phenomena, — the thing in itself. From this it followed, of course, that it is impossible for us to have any theoretical knowledge of God. But Lotze already pointed out that phenomena, whether physical or mental, are always connected with some

substance lying back of them, and that in knowing the phenomena we also know the underlying substance, of which they are manifestations. The Scotch philosopher, Sir William Hamilton, while not in entire agreement with Kant, yet shared the intellectual agnosticism of the latter. He asserts that the human mind knows only that which is conditioned and exists in various relations, and that, since the Absolute and Infinite is entirely unrelated, that is exists in no relations, we can obtain no knowledge of it. But while he denies that the Infinite can be known by us, he does not deny its existence. Says he, "Through faith we apprehend what is beyond our knowledge." His views were shared in substance by Mansel, and were popularized by him. To him also it seemed utterly impossible to conceive of an infinite Being, though he also professed faith in its existence. The reasoning of these two men did not carry conviction, since it was felt that the Absolute or Infinite does not *necessarily* exist outside of all relations, but can enter into various relations; and that the fact that we know things only in their relations does not mean that the knowledge so acquired is merely a relative or unreal knowledge.

Comte, the father of Positivism, was also agnostic in religion. According to him man can know nothing but physical phenomena and their laws. His senses are the sources of all true thinking, and he can know nothing except the phenomena which they apprehend and the relations in which these stand to each other. Mental phenomena can be reduced to material phenomena, and in science man cannot get beyond these. Even the phenomena of immediate consciousness are excluded, and further, everything that lies behind the phenomena. Theological speculation represents thought in its infancy. No positive affirmation can be made respecting the existence of God, and therefore both theism and atheism stand condemned. In later life Comte felt the need of some religion and introduced the so-called "religion of Humanity." Even more than Comte, Herbert Spencer is recognized as the great exponent of modern scientific agnosticism. He was influenced very much by Hamilton's doctrine of the relativity of knowledge and by Mansel's

conception of the Absolute, and in the light of these worked out his doctrine of the Unknowable, which was his designation of whatever may be absolute, first or ultimate in the order of the universe, including God. He proceeds on the assumption that there is some reality lying back of phenomena, but maintains that all reflection on it lands us in contradictions. This ultimate reality is utterly inscrutable. While we must accept the existence of some ultimate Power, either personal or impersonal, we can form no conception of it. Inconsistently he devotes a great part of his *First Principles* to the development of the positive content of the Unknowable, as if it were well known indeed. Other agnostics, who were influenced by him, are such men as Huxley, Fiske, and Clifford. We meet with agnosticism also repeatedly in modern Humanism. Harry Elmer Barnes says: "To the writer it seems quite obvious that the agnostic position is the only one which can be supported by any scientifically-minded and critically-inclined person in the present state of knowledge." [*The Twilight of Christianity*, p. 260.]

Besides the forms indicated in the preceding the agnostic argument has assumed several others, of which the following are some of the most important. (1) *Man knows only by analogy*. We know only that which bears some analogy to our own nature or experience: "*Similia similibus percipiuntur*." But while it is true that we learn a great deal by analogy, we also learn by contrast. In many cases the differences are the very things that arrest our attention. The Scholastics spoke of the *via negationis* by which they in thought eliminated from God the imperfections of the creature. Moreover, we should not forget that man is made in the image of God, and that there are important analogies between the divine nature and the nature of man. (2) *Man really knows only what he can grasp in its entirety*. Briefly stated the position is that man cannot comprehend God, who is infinite, cannot have an exhaustive knowledge of Him, and therefore cannot know Him. But this position proceeds on the unwarranted assumption that partial knowledge cannot be real knowledge, an assumption which would really invalidate all our knowledge, since it always falls far short of completeness. Our knowledge of God, though

not exhaustive, may yet be very real and perfectly adequate for our present needs. (3) *All predicates of God are negative and therefore furnish no real knowledge.* Hamilton says that the Absolute and the Infinite can only be conceived as a negation of the thinkable; which really means that we can have no conception of them at all. But though it is true that much of what we predicate to God is negative in form, this does not mean that it may not at the same time convey some positive idea. The aseity of God includes the positive idea of his self-existence and self-sufficiency. Moreover, such ideas as love, spirituality, and holiness, are positive. (4) *All our knowledge is relative to the knowing subject.* It is said that we know the objects of knowledge, not as they are objectively, but only as they are related to our senses and faculties. In the process of knowledge we distort and colour them. In a sense it is perfectly true that all our knowledge is subjectively conditioned, but the import of the assertion under consideration seems to be that, because we know things only through the mediation of our senses and faculties, we do not know them as they are. But this is not true; in so far as we have any real knowledge of things, that knowledge corresponds to the objective reality. The laws of perception and thought are not arbitrary, but correspond to the nature of things. Without such correspondence, not only the knowledge of God, but all true knowledge would be utterly impossible.

Some are inclined to look upon the position of Barth as a species of agnosticism. Zerbe says that practical agnosticism dominates Barth's thinking and renders him a victim of the Kantian unknowableness of the Thing-in-Itself, and quotes him as follows: "*Romans* is a revelation of the unknown God; God comes to man, not man to God. *Even after the revelation man cannot know God*, for He is always the unknown God. In manifesting Himself to us He is farther away than ever before. (Rbr. p. 53)".[*The Karl Barth Theology*, p. 82.] At the same time he finds Barth's agnosticism, like that of Herbert Spencer, inconsistent. Says he: "It was said of Herbert Spencer that he knew a great deal about the 'Unknowable'; so of Barth, one wonders how he came to know so much of the 'Unknown God'." [*Ibid*,

p. 84.] Dickie speaks in a similar vein: “In speaking of a transcendent God, Barth seems sometimes to be speaking of a God of Whom we can never know anything.”[*Revelation and Response*, p. 187.] He finds, however, that in this respect too there has been a change of emphasis in Barth. While it is perfectly clear that Barth does not mean to be an agnostic, it cannot be denied that some of his statements can readily be interpreted as having an agnostic flavor. He strongly stresses the fact that God is the hidden God, who cannot be known from nature, history, or experience, but only by His self-revelation in Christ, when it meets with the response of faith. But even in this revelation God appears only as the hidden God. God reveals Himself exactly as the hidden God, and through His revelation makes us more conscious of the distance which separates Him from man than we ever were before. This can easily be interpreted to mean that we learn by revelation merely that God cannot be known, so that after all we are face to face with an unknown God. But in view of all that Barth has written this is clearly not what he wants to say. His assertion, that in the light of revelation we see God as the hidden God, does not exclude the idea that by revelation we also acquire a great deal of useful knowledge of God as He enters into relations with His people. When He says that even in His revelation God still remains for us *the unknown God*, he really means, *the incomprehensible God*. The revealing God is God in action. By His revelation we learn to know Him in His operations, but acquire no real knowledge of His inner being. The following passage in *The Doctrine of the Word of God*,[p. 426.] is rather illuminating: “On this freedom (freedom of God) rests the *inconceivability* of God, the inadequacy of all knowledge of the revealed God. Even the three-in-oneness of God is revealed to us only in God’s operations. Therefore the three-in-oneness of God is also inconceivable to us. Hence, too, the inadequacy of all our knowledge of the three-in-oneness. The conceivability with which it has appeared to us, primarily in Scripture, secondarily in the Church doctrine of the Trinity, is a creaturely conceivability. To the conceivability in which God exists for Himself it is not only relative: it is absolutely separate from it. Only upon the free grace of

revelation does it depend that the former conceivability, in its absolute separation from its object, is yet not without truth. In this sense the three-in-oneness of God, as we know it from the operation of God, is truth.”

C. Self-revelation the Prerequisite of all Knowledge of God.

1. GOD COMMUNICATES KNOWLEDGE OF HIMSELF TO MAN. Kuyper calls attention to the fact that theology as the knowledge of God differs in an important point from all other knowledge. In the study of all other sciences man places himself *above* the object of his investigation and *actively* elicits from it his knowledge by whatever method may seem most appropriate, but in theology he does not stand above but rather *under* the object of his knowledge. In other words, man can know God only in so far as the latter actively makes Himself known. God is first of all the subject communicating knowledge to man, and can only become an object of study for man in so far as the latter appropriates and reflects on the knowledge conveyed to him by revelation. Without revelation man would never have been able to acquire any knowledge of God. And even after God has revealed Himself objectively, it is not human reason that discovers God, but it is God who discloses Himself to the eye of faith. However, by the application of sanctified human reason to the study of God’s Word man can, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, gain an ever-increasing knowledge of God. Barth also stresses the fact that man can know God only when God comes to him in an act of revelation. He asserts that there is no way from man to God, but only from God to man, and says repeatedly that God is always the subject, and never an object. Revelation is always something purely subjective, and can never turn into something objective like the written Word of Scripture, and as such become an object of study. It is given once for all in Jesus Christ, and in Christ comes to men in the existential moment of their lives. While there are elements of

truth in what Barth says, his construction of the doctrine of revelation is foreign to Reformed theology.

The position must be maintained, however, that theology would be utterly impossible without a self-revelation of God. And when we speak of revelation, we use the term in the strict sense of the word. It is not something in which God is passive, a mere “becoming manifest,” but something in which He is actively making Himself known. It is not, as many moderns would have it, a deepened spiritual insight which leads to an ever-increasing discovery of God on the part of man; but a supernatural act of self-communication, a purposeful act on the part of the Living God. There is nothing surprising in the fact that God can be known only if, and in so far as, He reveals Himself. In a measure this is also true of man. Even after Psychology has made a rather exhaustive study of man, Alexis Carrell is still able to write a very convincing book on *Man the Unknown*. “For who among men,” says Paul, “knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God.” I Cor. 2:11. The Holy Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God, and reveals them unto man. God has made Himself known. Alongside of the archetypal knowledge of God, found in God Himself, there is also an ectypal knowledge of Him, given to man by revelation. The latter is related to the former as a copy is to the original, and therefore does not possess the same measure of clearness and perfection. All our knowledge of God is derived from His self-revelation in nature and in Scripture. Consequently, our knowledge of God is on the one hand ectypal and analogical, but on the other hand also true and accurate, since it is a copy of the archetypal knowledge which God has of Himself.

2. INNATE AND ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (COGNITIO INSITA AND ACQUISTA). A distinction is usually made between innate and acquired knowledge of God. This is not a strictly logical distinction, because in the last analysis all human knowledge is acquired. The doctrine of innate ideas is philosophical

rather than theological. The seeds of it are already found in Plato's doctrine of ideas, while it occurs in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* in a more developed form. In modern philosophy it was taught first of all by Descartes, who regarded the idea of God as innate. He did not deem it necessary to consider this as innate in the sense that it was consciously present in the human mind from the start, but only in the sense that man has a natural tendency to form the idea when the mind reaches maturity. The doctrine finally assumed the form that there are certain ideas, of which the idea of God is the most prominent, which are inborn and are therefore present in human consciousness from birth. It was in this form that Locke rightly attacked the doctrine of innate ideas, though he went to another extreme in his philosophical empiricism. Reformed theology also rejected the doctrine in that particular form. And while some of its representatives retained the name "innate ideas," but gave it another connotation, others preferred to speak of a *cognitio Dei insita* (ingrafted or implanted knowledge of God). On the one hand this *cognitio Dei insita* does not consist in any ideas or formed notions which are present in man at the time of his birth; but on the other hand it is more than a mere capacity which enables man to know God. It denotes a knowledge that necessarily results from the constitution of the human mind, that is inborn only in the sense that it is acquired spontaneously, under the influence of the *semen religionis* implanted in man by his creation in the image of God, and that is not acquired by the laborious process of reasoning and argumentation. It is a knowledge which man, constituted as he is, acquires *of necessity*, and as such is distinguished from all knowledge that is conditioned by the will of man. Acquired knowledge, on the other hand, is obtained by the study of God's revelation. It does not arise spontaneously in the human mind, but results from the conscious and sustained pursuit of knowledge. It can be acquired only by the wearisome process of perception and reflection, reasoning and argumentation. Under the influence of the Hegelian Idealism and of the modern view of evolution the innate knowledge of God has been over-emphasized; Barth on the other hand denies the existence of any such knowledge.

3. GENERAL AND SPECIAL REVELATION. The Bible testifies to a twofold revelation of God: a revelation in nature round about us, in human consciousness, and in the providential government of the world; and a revelation embodied in the Bible as the Word of God. It testifies to the former in such passages as the following: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge,” Ps. 19:1,2. “And yet He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness,” Acts 14:17. “Because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity,” Rom. 1:19, 20. Of the latter it gives abundant evidence in both the Old and the New Testament. “Yet Jehovah testified unto Israel, and unto Judah, by every prophet, and every seer, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets,” I Kings 17:13. “He hath made known His ways unto Moses, His doings unto the children of Israel,” Ps. 103:7. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him,” John 1:18. “God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken to us in His Son,” Heb. 1:1,2.

On the basis of these scriptural data it became customary to speak of natural and supernatural revelation. The distinction thus applied to the idea of revelation is primarily a distinction based on the manner in which it is communicated to man; but in the course of history it has also been based in part on the nature of its subject-matter. The mode of revelation is natural when it is communicated through nature, that is, through the visible creation with its ordinary laws and powers. It is supernatural when it is communicated to man in a higher, supernatural manner, as when God speaks to him, either

directly, or through supernaturally endowed messengers. The substance of revelation was regarded as natural, if it could be acquired by human reason from the study of nature; and was considered to be supernatural when it could not be known from nature, nor by unaided human reason. Hence it became quite common in the Middle Ages to contrast reason and revelation. In Protestant theology natural revelation was often called a *revelatio realis*, and supernatural revelation a *revelatio verbalis*, because the former is embodied in things, and the latter in words. In course of time, however, the distinction between natural and supernatural revelation was found to be rather ambiguous, since all revelation is supernatural in origin and, as a revelation of God, also in content. Ewald in his work on *Revelation: its Nature and Record*[p. 5 f.] speaks of the revelation in nature as *immediate* revelation, and of the revelation in Scripture, which he regards as the only one deserving the name “revelation” in the fullest sense, as *mediate revelation*. A more common distinction, however, which gradually gained currency, is that of *general* and *special* revelation. Dr. Warfield distinguishes the two as follows: “The one is addressed generally to all intelligent creatures, and is therefore accessible to all men; the other is addressed to a special class of sinners, to whom God would make known His salvation. The one has in view to meet and supply the natural need of creatures for knowledge of their God; the other to rescue broken and deformed sinners from their sin and its consequences.”[*Revelation and Inspiration*, p. 6.] General revelation is rooted in creation, is addressed to man as man, and more particularly to human reason, and finds its purpose in the realization of the end of his creation, to know God and thus enjoy communion with Him. Special revelation is rooted in the redemptive plan of God, is addressed to man as sinner, can be properly understood and appropriated only by faith, and serves the purpose of securing the end for which man was created in spite of the disturbance wrought by sin. In view of the eternal plan of redemption it should be said that this special revelation did not come in as an after-thought, but was in the mind of God from the very beginning.

There was considerable difference of opinion respecting the relation of these two to each other. According to Scholasticism natural revelation provided the necessary data for the construction of a scientific natural theology by human reason. But while it enabled man to attain to a scientific knowledge of God as the ultimate cause of all things, it did not provide for the knowledge of the mysteries, such as the Trinity, the incarnation, and redemption. This knowledge is supplied by special revelation. It is a knowledge that is not rationally demonstrable but must be accepted by faith. Some of the earlier Scholastics were guided by the slogan "Credo ut intelligam," and, after accepting the truths of special revelation by faith, considered it necessary to raise faith to understanding by a rational demonstration of those truths, or at least to prove their rationality. Thomas Aquinas, however, considered this impossible, except in so far as special revelation contained truths which also formed a part of natural revelation. In his opinion the mysteries, which formed the real contents of supernatural revelation, did not admit of any logical demonstration. He held, however, that there could be no conflict between the truths of natural and those of supernatural revelation. If there appears to be a conflict, there is something wrong with one's philosophy. The fact remains, however, that he recognized, besides the structure reared by faith on the basis of supernatural revelation, a system of scientific theology on the foundation of natural revelation. In the former one assents to something because it is revealed, in the latter because it is perceived as true in the light of natural reason. The logical demonstration, which is out of the question in the one, is the natural method of proof in the other.

The Reformers rejected the dualism of the Scholastics and aimed at a synthesis of God's twofold revelation. They did not believe in the ability of human reason to construct a scientific system of theology on the basis of natural revelation pure and simple. Their view of the matter may be represented as follows: As a result of the entrance of sin into the world, the handwriting of God in nature is greatly obscured, and is in some of the most important matters rather dim and illegible. Moreover, man is stricken with spiritual blindness, and

is thus deprived of the ability to read aright what God had originally plainly written in the works of creation. In order to remedy the matter and to prevent the frustration of His purpose, God did two things. In His supernatural revelation He republished the truths of natural revelation, cleared them of misconception, interpreted them with a view to the present needs of man, and thus incorporated them in His supernatural revelation of redemption. And in addition to that He provided a cure for the spiritual blindness of man in the work of regeneration and sanctification, including spiritual illumination, and thus enabled man once more to obtain true knowledge of God, the knowledge that carries with it the assurance of eternal life.

When the chill winds of Rationalism swept over Europe, natural revelation was exalted at the expense of supernatural revelation. Man became intoxicated with a sense of his own ability and goodness, refused to listen and submit to the voice of authority that spoke to him in Scripture, and reposed complete trust in the ability of human reason to lead him out of the labyrinth of ignorance and error into the clear atmosphere of true knowledge. Some who maintained that natural revelation was quite sufficient to teach men all necessary truths, still admitted that they might learn them sooner with the aid of supernatural revelation. Others denied that the authority of supernatural revelation was complete, until its contents had been demonstrated by reason. And finally Deism in some of its forms denied, not only the necessity, but also the possibility and reality of supernatural revelation. In Schleiermacher the emphasis shifts from the objective to the subjective, from revelation to religion, and that without any distinction between natural and revealed religion. The term "revelation" is still retained, but is reserved as a designation of the deeper spiritual insight of man, an insight which does not come to him, however, without his own diligent search. What is called revelation from one point of view, may be called human discovery from another. This view has become quite characteristic of modern theology. Says Knudson: "But this distinction between natural and revealed theology has now largely fallen into disuse. The present tendency is to draw no sharp line of

distinction between revelation and the natural reason, but to look upon the highest insights of reason as themselves divine revelations. In any case there is no fixed body of revealed truth, accepted on authority, that stands opposed to the truths of reason. All truth today rests on its power of appeal to the human mind.”[*The Doctrine of God*, p. 173.]

It is this view of revelation that is denounced in the strongest terms by Barth. He is particularly interested in the subject of revelation, and wants to lead the Church back from the subjective to the objective, from religion to revelation. In the former he sees primarily man’s efforts to find God, and in the latter “God’s search for man” in Jesus Christ. Barth does not recognize any revelation in nature. Revelation never exists on any horizontal line, but always comes down perpendicularly from above. Revelation is always God in action, God speaking, bringing something entirely new to man, something of which he could have no previous knowledge, and which becomes a real revelation only for him who accepts the object of revelation by a God-given faith. Jesus Christ is the revelation of God, and only he who knows Jesus Christ knows anything about revelation at all. Revelation is an act of grace, by which man becomes conscious of his sinful condition, but also of God’s free, unmerited, and forgiving condescension in Jesus Christ. Barth even calls it *the reconciliation*. Since God is always sovereign and free in His revelation, it can never assume a factually present, objective form with definite limitations, to which man can turn at any time for instruction. Hence it is a mistake to regard the Bible as God’s revelation in any other than a secondary sense. It is a witness to, and a token of, God’s revelation. The same may be said, though in a subordinate sense, of the preaching of the gospel. But through whatever mediation the word of God may come to man in the existential moment of his life, it is always recognized by man as a word directly spoken to him, and coming perpendicularly from above. This recognition is effected by a special operation of the Holy Spirit, by what may be called an individual *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*. The revelation of God was given *once for all* in Jesus Christ:

not in His historical appearance, but in the superhistorical in which the powers of the eternal world become evident, such as His incarnation and His death and resurrection. And if His revelation is also continuous — as it is —, it is such only in the sense that God continues to speak to individual sinners, in the existential moment of their lives, through the revelation in Christ, mediated by the Bible and by preaching. Thus we are left with mere flashes of revelation coming to individuals, of which only those individuals have absolute assurance; and fallible witnesses to, or tokens of, the revelation in Jesus Christ, — a rather precarious foundation for theology. It is no wonder that Barth is in doubt as to the possibility of constructing a doctrine of God. Mankind is not in possession of any infallible revelation of God, and of His unique revelation in Christ and its extension in the special revelations that come to certain men it has knowledge only through the testimony of fallible witnesses.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: In what sense can we speak of the hidden or unknown God in spite of the fact that He has revealed Himself? How did the Scholastics and the Reformers differ on this point? What is the position of modern theology? Why is revelation essential to religion? How does agnosticism differ theoretically from atheism? Is the one more favorable to religion than the other? How did Kant promote agnosticism? What was Sir William Hamilton's doctrine of the relativity of knowledge? What form did agnosticism take in Positivism? What other forms did it take? Why do some speak of Barth as an agnostic? How should this charge be met? Is "revelation" an active or a passive concept? Is theology possible without revelation? If not, why not? Can the doctrine of innate ideas be defended? What is meant by "cognitio Dei insita?" How do natural and supernatural revelation differ? Is the distinction between general and special revelation an exact parallel of the preceding one? What different views were held as to the relation between the two? How does revelation differ from human discovery? Does Barth believe in general revelation? How does he conceive of special revelation?

LITERATURE: Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* II, pp. 1:74; Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm., De Deo* I, pp. 1-76; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* I, pp. 191-240; 335-365; Shedd, *Dogm. Theol.* I, pp. 195-220; Thornwell, *Collected Works* I, pp. 74-142; Dorner, *System of Chr. Doct.*, I, pp. 79-159; Adeney, *The Christian Conception of God*, pp. 19-57; Steenstra, *The Being of God as Unity and Trinity*, pp. 1-25; Hendry, *God the Creator*; Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*; Baillie and Martin, *Revelation (a Symposium of Aulen, Barth, Bulgakoff, D'Arcy, Eliot, Horton, and Temple*; Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, pp. 3-48; Orr, *Revelation and Inspiration*, pp.1-66; Camfield, *Revelation and the Holy Spirit*, pp. 11-127; Dickie, *Revelation and Response*, Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism (Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God)*.

III. Relation of the Being and Attributes of God

Some dogmaticians devote a separate chapter or chapters to the Being of God, before taking up the discussion of His attributes. This is done, for instance, in the works of Mastricht, Ebrard, Kuyper, and Shedd. Others prefer to consider the Being of God in connection with His attributes in view of the fact that it is in these that He has revealed Himself. This is the more common method, which is followed in the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, and in the works of Turretin, à Marck, Brakel, Bavinck, Hodge, and Honig. This difference of treatment is not indicative of any serious fundamental disagreement between them. They are all agreed that the attributes are not mere names to which no reality corresponds, nor separate parts of a composite God, but essential qualities in which the Being of God is revealed and with which it can be identified. The only difference would seem to be that some seek to distinguish between the Being and the attributes of God more than others do.

A. The Being of God.

It is quite evident that the Being of God does not admit of any scientific definition. In order to give a logical definition of God, we would have to begin by going in search of some higher concept, under which God could be co-ordinated with other concepts; and would then have to point out the characteristics that would be applicable to God only. Such a *genetic-synthetic* definition cannot be given of God, since God is not one of several species of gods, which can be subsumed under a single genus. At most only an *analytical-descriptive* definition is possible. This merely names the characteristics of a person or thing, but leaves the essential being unexplained. And even such a definition cannot be complete but only partial, because it is impossible to give an exhaustive positive (as opposed to negative) description of God. It would consist in an enumeration of all the known attributes of God, and these are to a great extent negative in character.

The Bible never operates with an abstract concept of God, but always describes Him as the Living God, who enters into various relations with His creatures, relations which are indicative of several different attributes. In Kuyper's *Dictaten Dogmatiek*[*De Deo* I, p. 28.] we are told that God, personified as Wisdom, speaks of His *essence* in Prov. 8:14, when He ascribes to Himself *tushiyach*, a Hebrew word rendered "wezen" in the Holland translation. But this rendering is very doubtful, and the English rendering "counsel" deserves preference. It has also been pointed out that the Bible speaks of the *nature* of God in II Pet. 1:4, but this can hardly refer to the essential Being of God, for we are not made partakers of the divine essence. An indication of the very essence of God has been found in the name Jehovah, as interpreted by God Himself, "I am that I am." On the basis of this passage the essence of God was found in being itself, abstract being. And this has been interpreted to mean self-existence or self-contained permanence or absolute independence. Another passage is repeatedly quoted as containing an indication of the

essence of God, and as the closest approach to a definition that is found in the Bible, namely, John 4:24, "God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." This statement of Christ is clearly indicative of the spirituality of God. The two ideas derived from these passages occur repeatedly in theology as designations of the very Being of God. On the whole it may be said that Scripture does not exalt one attribute of God at the expense of the others, but represents them as existing in perfect harmony in the Divine Being. It may be true that now one, and then another attribute is stressed, but Scripture clearly intends to give due emphasis to every one of them. The Being of God is characterized by a depth, a fullness, a variety, and a glory far beyond our comprehension, and the Bible represents it as a glorious harmonious whole, without any inherent contradictions. And this fullness of life finds expression in no other way than in the perfections of God.

Some of the early Church Fathers were clearly under the influence of Greek philosophy in their doctrine of God and, as Seeberg expresses it, did not advance "beyond the mere abstract conception that the Divine Being is absolute attributeless Existence." For some time theologians were rather generally inclined to emphasize the transcendence of God, and to assume the impossibility of any adequate knowledge or definition of the divine essence. During the trinitarian controversy the distinction between the one essence and the three persons in the Godhead was strongly emphasized, but the essence was generally felt to be beyond human comprehension. Gregory of Nazianze, however, ventures to say: "So far as we can discern, *ho on* and *ho theos* are somehow more than other terms the names of the (divine) essence, and of these *ho on* is the preferable." He regards this as a description of absolute being. Augustine's conception of the essence of God was closely akin to that of Gregory. In the Middle Ages too there was a tendency, either to deny that man has any knowledge of the essence of God, or to reduce such knowledge to a minimum. In some cases one attribute was singled out as most expressive of the essence of God. Thus Thomas Aquinas spoke of His aseity or self-existence, and Duns Scotus, of His infinity.

It became quite common also to speak of God as *actus purus* in view of His simplicity. The Reformers and their successors also spoke of the essence of God as incomprehensible, but they did not exclude all knowledge of it, though Luther used very strong language on this point. They stressed the unity, simplicity, and spirituality of God. The words of the Belgic Confession are quite characteristic: “We all believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, that there is one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God.”[Art. I.] Later on philosophers and theologians found the essence of God in abstract being, in universal substance, in pure thought, in absolute causality, in love, in personality, and in majestic holiness or the numinous.

B. The Possibility of Knowing the Being of God.

From the preceding it already appears that the question as to the possibility of knowing God in His essential Being engaged the best minds of the Church from the earliest centuries. And the consensus of opinion in the early Church, during the Middle Ages, and at the time of the Reformation, was that God in His inmost Being is the Incomprehensible One. And in some cases the language used is so strong that it seemingly allows of no knowledge of the Being of God whatsoever. At the same time they who use it, at least in some cases, seem to have considerable knowledge of the Being of God. Misunderstanding can easily result from a failure to understand the exact question under consideration, and from neglecting to discriminate between “knowing” and “comprehending.” The Scholastics spoke of three questions to which all the speculations respecting the Divine Being could be reduced, namely: *An sit Deus?* *Quid sit Deus?* and *Qualis sit Deus?* The first question concerns the existence of God, the second, His nature or essence, and the third, His attributes. In this paragraph it is particularly the second question that calls for attention. The question then is, What is God? What is the nature of His inner constitution? What makes Him to be what He

is? In order to answer that question adequately, we would have to be able to comprehend God and to offer a satisfactory explanation of His Divine Being, and this is utterly impossible. The finite cannot comprehend the Infinite. The question of Zophar, “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” (Job 11:7) has the force of a strong negative. And if we consider the second question entirely apart from the third, our negative answer becomes even more inclusive. Apart from the revelation of God in His attributes, we have no knowledge of the Being of God whatsoever. But in so far as God reveals Himself in His attributes, we also have some knowledge of His Divine Being, though even so our knowledge is subject to human limitations.

Luther uses some very strong expressions respecting our inability to know something of the Being or essence of God. On the one hand he distinguishes between the *Deus absconditus* (hidden God) and the *Deus revelatus* (revealed God); but on the other hand he also asserts that in knowing the *Deus revelatus*, we only know Him in his hiddenness. By this he means that even in His revelation God has not manifested Himself entirely *as He is essentially*, but as to His essence still remains shrouded in impenetrable darkness. We know God only in so far as He enters into relations with us. Calvin too speaks of the Divine essence as incomprehensible. He holds that God in the depths of His Being is past finding out. Speaking of the knowledge of the *quid* and of the *qualis* of God, he says that it is rather useless to speculate about the former, while our practical interest lies in the latter. Says he: “They are merely toying with frigid speculations whose mind is set on the question of what God is (*quid sit Deus*), when what it really concerns us to know is rather what kind of a person He is (*qualis sit*) and what is appropriate to His nature.”[*Inst.* I. 2.2.] While he feels that God cannot be known to perfection, he does not deny that we can know something of His Being or nature. But this knowledge cannot be obtained by *a priori* methods, but only in an *a posteriori* manner through the attributes, which he regards as real determinations of the nature of God. They

convey to us at least some knowledge of what God is, but especially of what He is in relation to us.

In dealing with our knowledge of the Being of God we must certainly avoid the position of Cousin, rather rare in the history of philosophy, that God even in the depths of His Being is not at all incomprehensible but essentially intelligible; but we must also steer clear of the agnosticism of Hamilton and Mansel, according to which we can have no knowledge whatsoever of the Being of God. We cannot comprehend God, cannot have an absolute and exhaustive knowledge of Him, but we can undoubtedly have a relative or partial knowledge of the Divine Being. It is perfectly true that this knowledge of God is possible only, because He has placed Himself in certain relations to His moral creatures and has revealed Himself to them, and that even this knowledge is humanly conditioned; but it is nevertheless real and true knowledge, and is at least a partial knowledge of the absolute nature of God. There is a difference between an absolute knowledge, and a relative or partial knowledge of an absolute being. It will not do at all to say that man knows only the relations in which God stands to His creatures. It would not even be possible to have a proper conception of these relations without knowing something of both God and man. To say that we can know nothing of the Being of God, but can know only relations, is equivalent to saying that we cannot know Him at all and cannot make Him the object of our religion. Dr. Orr says: "We may not know God in the depths of His absolute being. But we can at least know Him in so far as He reveals Himself in His relation to us. The question, therefore, is not as to the possibility of a knowledge of God in the unfathomableness of His being, but is: Can we know God *as He enters into relations* with the world and with ourselves? God has entered into relations with us in His revelations of Himself, and supremely in Jesus Christ; and we Christians humbly claim that through this Self-revelation we do know God to be the true God, and have real acquaintance with His character and will. Neither is it correct to say that this knowledge which we have of God is only a *relative knowledge*. It is in part a knowledge of the *absolute* nature

of God as well.”[*Side-Lights on Christian Doctrine*, p. 11.] The last statements are probably intended to ward off the idea that all our knowledge of God is merely relative to the human mind, so that we have no assurance that it corresponds with the reality as it exists in God.

C. The Being of God Revealed in His Attributes.

From the simplicity of God it follows that God and His attributes are one. The attributes cannot be considered as so many parts that enter into the composition of God, for God is not, like men, composed of different parts. Neither can they be regarded as something added to the Being of God, though the name, derived from *ad* and *tribuere*, might seem to point in that direction, for no addition was ever made to the Being of God, who is eternally perfect. It is commonly said in theology that God’s attributes are God Himself, as He has revealed Himself to us. The Scholastics stressed the fact that God is all that He has. He *has* life, light, wisdom, love, righteousness, and it may be said on the basis of Scripture that He *is* life, light, wisdom, love, and righteousness. It was further asserted by the Scholastics that the whole essence of God is identical with each one of the attributes, so that God’s knowing is God, God’s willing is God, and so on. Some of them even went so far as to say that each attribute is identical with every other attribute, and that there are no logical distinctions in God. This is a very dangerous extreme. While it may be said that there is an interpenetration of the attributes in God, and that they form a harmonious whole, we are moving in the direction of Pantheism, when we rule out all distinctions in God, and say that His self-existence is His infinity, His knowing is His willing, His love is His righteousness, and vice versa. It was characteristic of the Nominalists that they obliterated all real distinctions in God. They were afraid that by assuming real distinctions in Him, corresponding to the attributes ascribed to God, they would endanger the unity and

simplicity of God, and were therefore motivated by a laudable purpose. According to them the perfections of the Divine Being exist only in our thoughts, without any corresponding reality in the Divine Being. The Realists, on the other hand, asserted the reality of the divine perfections. They realized that the theory of the Nominalists, consistently carried out, would lead in the direction of a pantheistic denial of a personal God, and therefore considered it of the utmost importance to maintain the objective reality of the attributes in God. At the same time they sought to safeguard the unity and simplicity of God by maintaining that the whole essence is in each attribute: God is All in all, All in each. Thomas Aquinas had the same purpose in mind, when he asserted that the attributes do not reveal what God is in Himself, in the depths of His Being, but only what He is in relation to His creatures.

Naturally, we should guard against separating the divine essence and the divine attributes or perfections, and also against a false conception of the relation in which they stand to each other. The attributes are real determinations of the Divine Being or, in other words, qualities that inhere in the Being of God. Shedd speaks of them as “an analytical and closer description of the essence.” [*Dogm. Theol.* I, p. 334.] In a sense they are identical, so that it can be said that God’s perfections are God Himself as He has revealed Himself to us. It is possible to go even farther and say with Shedd, “The whole essence is in each attribute, and the attribute in the essence.” [*Ibid.* p. 334.] And because of the close relation in which the two stand to each other, it can be said that knowledge of the attributes carries with it knowledge of the Divine Essence. It would be a mistake to conceive of the essence of God as existing by itself and prior to the attributes, and of the attributes as additive and accidental characteristics of the Divine Being. They are essential qualities of God, which inhere in His very Being and are co-existent with it. These qualities cannot be altered without altering the essential Being of God. And since they are essential qualities, each one of them reveals to us some aspect of the Being of God.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: How can we distinguish between the being, the nature, and the essence of God? How do the philosophical views of the essential Being of God generally differ from the theological views? How about the tendency to find the essence of God in the absolute, in love, or in personality? What does Otto mean when he characterizes it as “the Holy” or “the Numinous”? Why is it impossible for man to comprehend God? Has sin in any way affected man’s ability to know God? Is there any difference between Luther’s and Barth’s conception of the “hidden God”? Does Calvin differ from them on this point? Did Luther share the Nominalist views of Occam, by whom he was influenced in other respects? How did the Reformers, in distinction from the Scholastics, consider the problem of the existence of God? Could we have any knowledge of God, if He were pure attributeless being? What erroneous views of the attributes should be avoided? What is the proper view?

LITERATURE: Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* I, pp. 91-113; Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm., De Deo* I, pp. 124-158; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* I, pp. 335-374; Shedd, *Dogm. Theol.* I, pp. 152-194; Thornwell, *Collected Works*, I, pp. 104-172; Dorner, *Syst. of Chr. Doct.* I, pp. 187-212; Orr, *Chr. View of God and the World*, pp. 75-93; Otten, *Manual of the Hist. of Dogmas* I, pp. 254-260; Clarke, *The Chr. Doct. of God*, pp. 56-70; Steenstra, *The Being of God as Unity and Trinity*, pp. 1-88; Thomson, *The Christian Idea of God*, pp. 117-159; Hendry, *God the Creator* (from the Barthian standpoint); Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, pp. 131-185 (Calvin’s *Doctrine of God*).

IV. The Names of God

A. The Names of God in General.

While the Bible records several names of God, it also speaks of *the name* of God in the singular as, for instance in the following statements: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,” Ex. 20:7; “How excellent is thy name in all the earth,” Ps. 8:1; “As is thy name, O God, so is thy praise,” Ps. 48:10; “His name is great in Israel,” Ps. 76:2; “The name of Jehovah is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe,” Prov. 18:10. In such cases “the name” stands for the whole manifestation of God in His relation to His people, or simply for the person, so that it becomes synonymous with God. This usage is due to the fact that in oriental thought a name was never regarded as a mere vocable, but as an expression of the nature of the thing designated. To know the name of a person was to have power over him, and the names of the various gods were used in incantations to exercise power over them. In the most general sense of the word, then, the name of God is His self-revelation. It is a designation of Him, not as He exists in the depths of His divine Being, but as He reveals Himself especially in His relations to man. For us the one general name of God is split up into many names, expressive of the many-sided Being of God. It is only because God has revealed Himself in His name (*nomen editum*), that we can now designate Him by that name in various forms (*nomina indita*). The names of God are not of human invention, but of divine origin, though they are all borrowed from human language, and derived from human and earthly relations. They are anthropomorphic and mark a condescending approach of God to man.

The names of God constitute a difficulty for human thought. God is the *Incomprehensible One*, infinitely exalted above all that is temporal; but in His names He descends to all that is finite and becomes like unto man. On the one hand we cannot name Him, and on the other hand He has many names. How can this be explained? On what grounds are these names applied to the infinite and incomprehensible God? It should be borne in mind that they are not of man’s invention, and do not testify to his insight into the very Being of God. They are given by God Himself with the assurance that

they contain in a measure a revelation of the Divine Being. This was made possible by the fact that the world and all its relations is and was meant to be a revelation of God. Because the Incomprehensible One revealed Himself in His creatures, it is possible for man to name Him after the fashion of a creature. In order to make Himself known to man, God had to condescend to the level of man, to accommodate Himself to the limited and finite human consciousness, and to speak in human language. If the naming of God with anthropomorphic names involves a limitation of God, as some say, then this must be true to an even greater degree of the revelation of God in creation. Then the world does not reveal, but rather conceals, God; then man is not related to God, but simply forms an antithesis to Him; and then we are shut up to a hopeless agnosticism.

From what was said about the name of God in general it follows that we can include under the names of God not only the appellatives by which He is indicated as an independent personal Being and by which He is addressed, but also the attributes of God; and then not merely the attributes of the Divine Being in general, but also those that qualify the separate Persons of the Trinity. Dr. Bavinck bases his division of the names of God on that broad conception of them, and distinguishes between *nomina propria* (proper names), *nomina essentialia* (essential names, or attributes), and *nomina personalia* (personal names, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). In the present chapter we limit ourselves to the discussion of the first class.

B. The Old Testament Names and their Meaning.

1. 'EL, 'ELOHIM, and 'ELYON. The most simple name by which God is designated in the Old Testament, is the name *'El*, which is possibly derived from *'ul*, either in the sense of being first, being lord, or in that of being strong and mighty. The name *'Elohim* (sing. *'Eloah*) is probably derived from the same root, or from *'alah*, to be smitten with fear; and therefore points to God as the strong and

mighty One, or as the object of fear. The name seldom occurs in the singular, except in poetry. The plural is to be regarded as intensive, and therefore serves to indicate a fulness of power. The name *'Elyon* is derived from *'alah*, to go up, to be elevated, and designates God as the high and exalted One, Gen. 14:19,20; Num. 24:16; Isa. 14:14. It is found especially in poetry. These names are not yet *nomina propria* in the strict sense of the word, for they are also used of idols, Ps. 95:3; 96:5, of men, Gen. 33:10; Ex. 7:1, and of rulers, Judg. 5:8; Ex. 21:6; 22:8-10; Ps. 82:1.

2. 'ADONAI. This name is related in meaning to the preceding ones. It is derived from either *dun* (*din*) or *'adan*, both of which mean to judge, to rule, and thus points to God as the almighty Ruler, to whom everything is subject, and to whom man is related as a servant. In earlier times it was the usual name by which the people of Israel addressed God. Later on it was largely supplanted by the name Jehovah (*Yahweh*). All the names so far mentioned describe God as the high and exalted One, the transcendent God. The following names point to the fact that this exalted Being condescended to enter into relations with His creatures.

3. SHADDAI and 'EL-SHADDAI. The name *Shaddai* is derived from *shadad*, to be powerful, and points to God as possessing all power in heaven and on earth. Others, however, derive it from *shad*, lord. It differs in an important point from *'Elohim*, the God of creation and nature, in that it contemplates God as subjecting all the powers of nature and making them subservient to the work of divine grace. While it stresses the greatness of God, it does not represent Him as an object of fear and terror, but as a source of blessing and comfort. It is the name with which God appeared unto Abraham, the father of the faithful, Ex. 6:2.

4. YAHWEH and YAHWEH TSEBHAOTH. It is especially in the name *Yahweh*, which gradually supplanted earlier names, that God reveals Himself as the God of grace. It has always been regarded as the most sacred and the most distinctive name of God, the

incommunicable name. The Jews had a superstitious dread of using it, since they read Lev. 24:16 as follows: "He that nameth the name of *Yahweh* shall surely be put to death." And therefore in reading the Scriptures they substituted for it either '*Adonai* or '*Elohim*'; and the Massorettes, while leaving the consonants intact, attached to them the vowels of one of these names, usually those of '*Adonai*. The real derivation of the name and its original pronunciation and meaning are more or less lost in obscurity. The Pentateuch connects the name with the Hebrew verb *hayah*, to be, Ex. 3:13,14. On the strength of that passage we may assume that the name is in all probability derived from an archaic form of that verb, namely, *hawah*. As far as the form is concerned, it may be regarded as a third person imperfect *qal* or *hiphil*. Most likely, however, it is the former. The meaning is explained in Ex. 3:14, which is rendered "I am that I am," or "I shall be what I shall be." Thus interpreted, the name points to the unchangeableness of God. Yet it is not so much the unchangeableness of His essential Being that is in view, as the unchangeableness of His relation to His people. The name contains the assurance that God will be for the people of Moses' day what He was for their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It stresses the covenant faithfulness of God, is His proper name *par excellence*, Ex. 15:3; Ps. 83:19; Hos. 12:6; Isa. 42:8, and is therefore used of no one but Israel's God. The exclusive character of the name appears from the fact that it never occurs in the plural or with a suffix. Abbreviated forms of it, found especially in composite names, are *Yah* and *Yahu*.

The name *Yahweh* is often strengthened by the addition of *tsebhaoth*. Origen and Jerome regard this as an apposition, because *Yahweh* does not admit of a construct state. But this interpretation is not sufficiently warranted and hardly yields an intelligible sense. It is rather hard to determine to what the word *tsebhaoth* refers. There are especially three opinions:

a. *The armies of Israel*. But the correctness of this view may well be doubted. Most of the passages quoted to support this idea do not prove the point; only three of them contain a semblance of proof,

namely, I Sam. 4:4; 17:45; II Sam. 6:2, while one of them, II Kings 19:31, is rather unfavorable to this view. While the plural *tsebhaoth* is used for the hosts of the people of Israel, the army is regularly indicated by the singular. This militates against the notion, inherent in this view, that in the name under consideration the term refers to the army of Israel. Moreover, it is clear that in the Prophets at least the name “Jehovah of hosts” does not refer to Jehovah as the God of war. And if the meaning of the name changed, what caused the change?

b. *The stars*. But in speaking of the host of heaven Scripture always uses the singular, and never the plural. Moreover, while the stars are called the host of heaven, they are never designated the host of God.

c. *The angels*. This interpretation deserves preference. The name *Yahweh tsebhaoth* is often found in connections in which angels are mentioned: I Sam. 4:4; II Sam. 6:2; Isa. 37:16; Hos. 12:4,5, Ps. 80:1,4 f.; Ps. 89; 6-8. The angels are repeatedly represented as a host that surrounds the throne of God, Gen. 28:12; 32:2; Jos. 5:14; I Kings 22:19; Ps. 68:17; 103:21; 148:2; Isa. 6:2. It is true that in this case also the singular is generally used, but this is no serious objection, since the Bible also indicates that there were several divisions of angels, Gen. 32:2; Deut. 33:2; Ps. 68:17. Moreover, this interpretation is in harmony with the meaning of the name, which has no martial flavor, but is expressive of the glory of God as King, Deut. 33:2; I Kings 22:19; Ps. 24:10; Isa. 6:3; 24:23; Zech. 14:16. Jehovah of hosts, then, is God as the King of glory, who is surrounded by angelic hosts, who rules heaven and earth in the interest of His people, and who receives glory from all His creatures.

C. The New Testament Names and their Interpretation.

1. THEOS. The New Testament has the Greek equivalents of the Old Testament names. For 'El, 'Elohim, and 'Elyon it has *Theos*, which is

the most common name applied to God. Like *'Elohim*, it may by accommodation be used of heathen gods, though strictly speaking it expresses essential deity. *'Elyon* is rendered *Hupsistos Theos*, Mark 5:7; Luke 1:32,35,75; Acts 7:48; 16:17; Heb. 7:1. The names *Shaddai* and *'El-Shaddai* are rendered *Pantokrator* and *Theos Pantokrator*, II Cor. 6:18; Rev. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7,14. More generally, however, *Theos* is found with a genitive of possession, such as *mou, sou, hemon, humon*, because in Christ God may be regarded as the God of all and of each one of His children. The national idea of the Old Testament has made place for the individual in religion.

2. KURIOS. The name *Yahweh* is explicated a few times by variations of a descriptive kind, such as “the Alpha and the Omega,” “who is and who was and who is to come,” “the beginning and the end,” “the first and the last,” Rev. 1:4,8,17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13. For the rest, however the New Testament follows the Septuagint, which substituted *'Adonai* for it, and rendered this by *Kurios*, derived from *kuros*, power. This name does not have exactly the same connotation as *Yahweh*, but designates God as the Mighty One, the Lord, the Possessor, the Ruler who has legal power and authority. It is used not only of God, but also of Christ.

3. PATER. It is often said that the New Testament introduced a new name of God, namely, *Pater* (Father). But this is hardly correct. The name Father is used of the Godhead even in heathen religions. It is used repeatedly in the Old Testament to designate the relation of God to Israel, Deut. 32:6; Ps. 103:13; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4,19; 31:9; Mal. 1:6; 2:10, while Israel is called the son of God, Ex. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 32:19; Isa. 1:2; Jer. 31:20; Hos. 1:10; 11:1. In such cases the name is expressive of the special theocratic relation in which God stands to Israel. In the general sense of originator or creator it is used in the following New Testament passages: I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:15; Heb. 12:9; James 1:18. In all other places it serves to express either the special relation in which the first Person of the Trinity stands to Christ, as the Son of God either in a metaphysical or a mediatorial

sense, or the ethical relation in which God stands to all believers as His spiritual children.

V. The Attributes of God in General

A. Evaluation of the Terms Used.

The name “attributes” is not ideal, since it conveys the notion of adding or assigning something to one, and is therefore apt to create the impression that something is added to the divine Being. Undoubtedly the term “properties” is better, as pointing to something that is proper to God and to God only. Naturally, in so far as some of the attributes are communicable, the absolute character of the proprium is weakened, for to that extent some of the attributes are not proper to God in the absolute sense of the word. But even this term contains the suggestion of a distinction between the essence or nature of God and that which is proper to it. On the whole it is preferable to speak of the “perfections” or “virtues” of God, with the distinct understanding, however, that in this case the term “virtues” is not used in a purely ethical sense. By so doing we (a) follow the usage of the Bible, which uses the term *arete*, rendered *virtues* or *excellencies*, in I Pet. 2:9; and (b) avoid the suggestion that something is added to the Being of God. His virtues are not added to His Being, but His Being is the *pleroma* of His virtues and reveals itself in them. They may be defined as *the perfections which are predicated of the Divine Being in Scripture, or are visibly exercised by Him in His works of creation, providence, and redemption*. If we still continue to use the name “attributes,” it is because it is commonly used and with the distinct understanding that the notion of something added to the Being of God must be rigidly excluded.

B. Method of determining the attributes of God.

The Scholastics in their attempt to construct a system of natural theology posited three ways in which to determine the attributes of God, which they designated as the *via causalitatis*, *via negationis*, and *via eminentiae*. By the *way of causality* we rise from the effects which we see in the world round about us to the idea of a first Cause, from the contemplation of creation, to the idea of an almighty Creator, and from the observation of the moral government of the world, to the idea of a powerful and wise Ruler. *By way of negation* we remove from our idea of God all the imperfections seen in His creatures, as inconsistent with the idea of a Perfect Being, and ascribe to Him the opposite perfection. In reliance on that principle we speak of God as independent, infinite, incorporeal, immense, immortal, and incomprehensible. And finally, *by way of eminence* we ascribe to God *in the most eminent manner* the relative perfections which we discover in man, according to the principle that what exists in an effect, pre-exists in its cause, and even in the most absolute sense in God as the most perfect Being. This method may appeal to some, because it proceeds from the known to the unknown, but is not the proper method of dogmatic theology. It takes its startingpoint in man, and concludes from what it finds in man to what is found in God. And in so far as it does this it makes man the measure of God. This is certainly not a theological method of procedure. Moreover, it bases its knowledge of God on human conclusions rather than on the self-revelation of God in His divine Word. And yet this is the only adequate source of the knowledge of God. While that method might be followed in a so-called natural theology, it does not fit in a theology of revelation.

The same may be said of the methods suggested by modern representatives of experimental theology. A typical example of this may be found in Macintosh's *Theology as an Empirical Science*. [p. 159 ff.] He also speaks of three methods of procedure. We may begin

with our intuitions of the reality of God, those unreasoned certitudes which are firmly rooted in immediate experience. One of these is that the Object of our religious dependence is absolutely sufficient for our imperative needs. Especially may deductions be drawn from the life of Jesus and the “Christlike” everywhere. We may also take our starting point, not in man’s certainties, but in his needs. The practically necessary postulate is that God is absolutely sufficient and absolutely dependable with reference to the religious needs of man. On that basis man can build up his doctrine of the attributes of God. And, finally, it is also possible to follow a more pragmatic method, which rests on the principle that we can learn to a certain extent what things and persons are, beyond what they are immediately perceived to be, by observing what they do. Macintosh finds it necessary to make use of all three methods.

Ritschl wants us to start with the idea that God is love, and would have us ask what is involved in this most characteristic thought of God. Since love is personal, it implies the personality of God, and thus affords us a principle for the interpretation of the world and of the life of man. The thought that God is love also carries with it the conviction that He can achieve His purpose of love, that is, that His will is supremely effective in the world. This yields the idea of an almighty Creator. And by virtue of this basic thought we also affirm God’s eternity, since, in controlling all things for the realization of His Kingdom, He sees the end from the beginning. In a somewhat similar vein Dr. W. A. Brown says: “We gain our knowledge of the attributes by analyzing the idea of God which we already won from the revelation in Christ; and we arrange them in such a way as to bring the distinctive features of that idea to clearest expression.”[*Chr. Theol. in Outline*, p. 101.]

All these methods take their startingpoint in human experience rather than in the Word of God. They deliberately ignore the clear self-revelation of God in Scripture and exalt the idea of the human discovery of God. They who rely on such methods have an exaggerated idea of their own ability to find out God and to

determine the nature of God inductively by approved “scientific methods.” At the same time they close their eyes to the only avenue through which they might obtain real knowledge of God, that is, His special revelation, apparently oblivious of the fact that only the Spirit of God can search and reveal the deep things of God and reveal them unto us. Their very method compels them to drag God down to the level of man, to stress His immanence at the expense of His transcendence, and to make Him continuous with the world. And as the final result of their philosophy we have a God made in the image of man. James condemns all intellectualism in religion, and maintains that philosophy in the form of scholastic theology fails as completely to define God’s attributes in a scientific way as it does to establish His existence. After an appeal to the book of Job he says: “Ratiocination is a relatively superficial and unreal path to the deity.” He concludes his discussion with these significant words: “In all sincerity I think we must conclude that the attempt to demonstrate by purely intellectual processes the truth of the deliverances of direct religious experiences is absolutely hopeless.”[*Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 455] He has more confidence in the pragmatic method which seeks for a God that meets the practical needs of man. In his estimation it is sufficient to believe that “beyond each man and in a fashion continuous with him there exists a larger power which is friendly to him and to his ideals. All that the facts require is that the power should be other and larger than our conscious selves. Anything larger will do, if it only be large enough to trust for the next step. It need not be infinite, it need not be solitary. It might conceivably even be only a larger and more godlike self, of which the present self would then be the mutilated expression, and the universe might conceivably be a collection of such selves, of different degree and inclusiveness, with no absolute unity realized in it at all.”[*Ibid.*, p. 525.] Thus we are left with the idea of a finite God.[Cf. Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God*, p. 251 ff. on this matter.]

The only proper way to obtain perfectly reliable knowledge of the divine attributes is by the study of God’s self-revelation in Scripture. It is true that we can acquire some knowledge of the greatness and

power, the wisdom and goodness of God through the study of nature, but for an adequate conception of even these attributes it will be necessary to turn to the Word of God. In the theology of revelation we seek to learn from the Word of God which are the attributes of the Divine Being. Man does not elicit knowledge from God as he does from other objects of study, but God conveys knowledge of Himself to man, a knowledge which man can only accept and appropriate. For the appropriation and understanding of this revealed knowledge it is, of course, of the greatest importance that man is created in the image of God, and therefore finds helpful analogies in his own life. In distinction from the *a priori* method of the Scholastics, who deduced the attributes from the idea of a perfect Being, this method may be called *a posteriori*, since it takes its startingpoint, not in an abstract perfect Being, but in the fulness of the divine self-revelation, and in the light of this seeks to know the Divine Being. C. Suggested Divisions of the Attributes.

The question of the classification of the divine attributes has engaged the attention of theologians for a long time. Several classifications have been suggested, most of which distinguish two general classes. These classes are designated by different names and represent different points of view, but are substantially the same in the various classifications. The following are the most important of these:

1. Some speak of *natural and moral attributes*. The former, such as self-existence, simplicity, infinity, etc., belong to the constitutional nature of God, as distinguished from His will. The latter, as truth, goodness, mercy, justice, holiness, etc., qualify Him as a moral Being. The objection to this classification is that the so-called moral attributes are just as truly natural (i.e. original) in God as the others. Dabney prefers this division, but admits, in view of the objection raised, that the terms are not felicitous. He would rather speak of moral and non-moral attributes.

2. Others distinguish between *absolute and relative attributes*. The former belong to the essence of God as considered

in itself, while the latter belong to the divine essence considered in relation to His creation. The one class includes such attributes as self-existence, immensity, eternity; and the other, such attributes as omnipresence and omniscience. This division seems to proceed on the assumption that we can have some knowledge of God as He is in Himself, entirely apart from the relations in which He stands to His creatures. But this is not so, and therefore, properly speaking, all the perfections of God are relative, indicating what He is in relation to the world. Strong evidently does not recognize the objection, and gives preference to this division.

3. Still others divide the divine perfections into *immanent or intransitive and emanent or transitive attributes.* Strong combines this division with the preceding one, when he speaks of *absolute or immanent* and *relative or transitive* attributes. The former are those which do not go forth and operate outside of the divine essence, but remain immanent, such as immensity, simplicity, eternity, etc.; and the latter are such as issue forth and produce effects external to God, as omnipotence, benevolence, justice, etc. But if some of the divine attributes are purely immanent, all knowledge of them would seem to be excluded. H. B. Smith remarks that every one of them must be both immanent and transeunt.

4. The most common distinction is that between *incommunicable and communicable attributes.* The former are those to which there is nothing analogous in the creature, as aseity, simplicity, immensity, etc.; the latter those to which the properties of the human spirit bear some analogy, as power, goodness, mercy, righteousness, etc. This distinction found no favor with the Lutherans, but has always been rather popular in Reformed circles, and is found in such representative works as those of the Leyden Professors, [*Synopsis Purioris Theologiae.*] Mastricht and Turretin. It was felt from the very beginning, however, that the distinction was untenable without further qualification, since from one point of view every attribute may be called communicable. None of the divine perfections are communicable in the infinite perfection

in which they exist in God, and at the same time there are faint traces in man even of the so-called incommunicable attributes of God. Among more recent Reformed theologians there is a tendency to discard this distinction in favor of some other divisions. Dick, Shedd, and Vos retain the old division. Kuyper expresses himself as dissatisfied with it, and yet reproduces it in his *virtutes per antithesin* and *virtutes per synthesin*; and Bavinck, after following another order in the first edition of his Dogmatics, returns to it in the second edition. Honig prefers to follow the division given by Bavinck in his first edition. And, finally, the Hodges, H. B. Smith, and Thornwell follow a division suggested by the Westminster Catechism. However, the classification of the attributes under two main heads, as found in the distinction under consideration, is really inherent in all the other divisions, so that they are all subject to the objection that they apparently divide the Being of God into two parts, that first God as He is in Himself, God as the absolute Being, is discussed, and then God as He is related to His creatures, God as a personal Being. It may be said that such a treatment does not result in a unitary and harmonious conception of the divine attributes. This difficulty may be obviated, however, by having it clearly understood that the two classes of attributes named are not strictly co-ordinate, but that the attributes belonging to the first class qualify all those belonging to the second class, so that it can be said that God is one, absolute, unchangeable and infinite in His knowledge and wisdom, His goodness and love, His grace and mercy, His righteousness and holiness. If we bear this in mind, and also remember that none of the attributes of God are incommunicable in the sense that there is no trace of them in man, and that none of them are communicable in the sense that they are found in man as they are found in God, we see no reason why we should depart from the old division which has become so familiar in Reformed theology. For practical reasons it seems more desirable to retain it.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: What objections are there to the use of the term attributes as applied to God? Do the same objections apply to the German “Eigenschaften” and the Holland

“eigenschaften”? What name does Calvin use for them? What objection is there to the conception of the attributes as parts of God or as additions to the Divine Being? What faulty conceptions of the attributes were current in the Middle Ages? Did the Scholastics in their search for the attributes follow an *a priori* or an *a posteriori*, a deductive or an inductive method? Why is their method inherently foreign to the theology of revelation? What classifications of the attributes were suggested in addition to those mentioned in the text? Why is it virtually out of the question to give a faultless division? What division is suggested by the Westminster Catechism?

LITERATURE: Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* II, pp. 100-123; Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm., De Deo* I, pp. 268-287; Honig, *Geref. Dogm.*, pp. 182-185; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* I, pp. 368-376; Shedd, *Dogm. Theol.* I, pp. 334-338; Thornwell, *Collected Works*, I, pp. 158-172; Dabney, *Lectures on Theol.*, pp. 147-151; Pieper, *Christl. Dogm.* I, pp. 524-536; Kaftan, *Dogm.*, pp. 168-181; Pope, *Chr. Theol.* I, pp. 287-291; Steenstra, *The Being of God as Unity and Trinity*, pp. 89-111.

VI. The Incommunicable Attributes

(God as the Absolute Being)

It has been quite common in theology to speak of God as the absolute Being. At the same time the term “absolute” is more characteristic of philosophy than it is of theology. In metaphysics the term “the Absolute” is a designation of the ultimate ground of all existence; and because the theist also speaks of God as the ultimate ground of all existence, it is sometimes thought that the Absolute of philosophy and the God of theism are one and the same. But that is not necessarily so. In fact the usual conception of the Absolute renders it impossible to equate it with the God of the Bible and of Christian theology. The term “Absolute” is derived from the Latin *absolutus*, a

compound of *ab* (from) and *solvere* (to loosen), and thus means free as to condition, or free from limitation or restraint. This fundamental thought was worked out in various ways, so that the Absolute was regarded as that which is free from all conditions (the Unconditioned or Self-Existent), from all relations (the (Unrelated)), from all imperfections (the Perfect), or free from all phenomenal differences or distinctions, such as matter and spirit, being and attributes, subject and object, appearance and reality (the Real, or Ultimate Reality).

The answer to the question, whether the Absolute of philosophy can be identified with the God of theology, depends on the conception one has of the Absolute. If Spinoza conceives of the Absolute as the one Self-subsistent Being of which all particular things are but transient modes, thus identifying God and the world, we cannot share his view of this Absolute as God. When Hegel views the Absolute as the unity of thought and being, as the totality of all things, which includes all relations, and in which all the discords of the present are resolved in perfect unity, we again find it impossible to follow him in regarding this Absolute as God. And when Bradley says that his Absolute is related to nothing, and that there cannot be any practical relation between it and the finite will, we agree with him that his Absolute cannot be the God of the Christian religion, for this God does enter into relations with finite creatures. Bradley cannot conceive of the God of religion as other than a finite God. But when the Absolute is defined as the First Cause of all existing things, or as the ultimate ground of all reality, or as the one self-existent Being, it can be considered as identical with the God of theology. He is the Infinite One, who does not exist in any *necessary* relations, because He is self-sufficient, but at the same time can *freely* enter into various relations with His creation as a whole and with His creatures. While the incommunicable attributes emphasize the absolute Being of God, the communicable attributes stress the fact that He enters into various relations with His creatures. In the present chapter the following perfections of God come into consideration.

A. The Self-Existence of God.

God is self-existent, that is, He has the ground of His existence in Himself. This idea is sometimes expressed by saying that He is *causa sui* (His own cause), but this expression is hardly accurate, since God is the uncaused, who exists by the necessity of His own Being, and therefore necessarily. Man, on the other hand, does not exist necessarily, and has the cause of his existence outside of himself. The idea of God's self-existence was generally expressed by the term *aseitas*, meaning *self-originated*, but Reformed theologians quite generally substituted for it the word *independentia* (independence), as expressing, not merely that God is independent in His Being, but also that He is independent in everything else: in His virtues, decrees, works, and so on. It may be said that there is a faint trace of this perfection in the creature, but this can only mean that the creature, though absolutely dependent, yet has its own distinct existence. But, of course, this falls far short of being self-existent. This attribute of God is generally recognized, and is implied in heathen religions and in the Absolute of philosophy. When the Absolute is conceived of as the self-existent and as the ultimate ground of all things, which voluntarily enters into various relations with other beings, it can be identified with the God of theology. As the self-existent God, He is not only independent in Himself, but also causes everything to depend on Him. This self-existence of God finds expression in the name Jehovah. It is only as the self-existent and independent One that God can give the assurance that He will remain eternally the same in relation to His people. Additional indications of it are found in the assertion in John 5:26, "For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself"; in the declaration that He is independent of all things and that all things exist only through Him, Ps. 94:8 ff.; Isa. 40:18 ff.; Acts 7:25; and in statements implying that He is independent in His thought, Rom. 11:33,34, and in His will, Dan. 4:35; Rom. 9:19; Eph. 1:5; Rev. 4:11. in His power, Ps. 115:3, and in His counsel, Ps. 33:11.

B. The Immutability of God.

The Immutability of God is a necessary concomitant of His aseity. It is that perfection of God by which He is devoid of all change, not only in His Being, but also in His perfections, and in His purposes and promises. In virtue of this attribute He is exalted above all becoming, and is free from all accession or diminution and from all growth or decay in His Being or perfections. His knowledge and plans, His moral principles and volitions remain forever the same. Even reason teaches us that no change is possible in God, since a change is either for better or for worse. But in God, as the absolute Perfection, improvement and deterioration are both equally impossible. This immutability of God is clearly taught in such passages of Scripture as Ex. 3:14; Ps. 102:26-28; Isa. 41:4; 48:12; Mal. 3:6; Rom. 1:23; Heb. 1:11,12; Jas. 1:17. At the same time there are many passages of Scripture which seem to ascribe change to God. Did not He who dwelleth in eternity pass on to the creation of the world, become incarnate in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit take up His abode in the Church? Is He not represented as revealing and hiding Himself, as coming and going, as repenting and changing His intention, and as dealing differently with man before and after conversion? Cf. Ex. 32:10-14; Jonah 3:10; Prov. 11:20; 12:22; Ps. 18:26,27. The objection here implied is based to a certain extent on misunderstanding. The divine immutability should not be understood as implying *immobility*, as if there were no movement in God. It is even customary in theology to speak of God as *actus purus*, a God who is always in action. The Bible teaches us that God enters into manifold relations with man and, as it were, lives their life with them. There is change round about Him, change in the relations of men to Him, but there is no change in His Being, His attributes, His purpose, His motives of action, or His promises. The purpose to create was eternal with Him, and there was no change in Him when this purpose was realized by a single eternal act of His will. The incarnation brought no change in the Being or perfections of God, nor in His purpose, for it was His eternal good pleasure to send the Son of His love into the

world. And if Scripture speaks of His repenting, changing His intention, and altering His relation to sinners when they repent, we should remember that this is only an anthropopathic way of speaking. In reality the change is not in God, but in man and in man's relations to God. It is important to maintain the immutability of God over against the Pelagian and Arminian doctrine that God is subject to change, not indeed in His Being, but in His knowledge and will, so that His decisions are to a great extent dependent on the actions of man; over against the pantheistic notion that God is an eternal becoming rather than an absolute Being, and that the unconscious Absolute is gradually developing into conscious personality in man; and over against the present tendency of some to speak of a finite, struggling, and gradually growing God.

C. The Infinity of God .

The infinity of God is that perfection of God by which He is free from all limitations. In ascribing it to God we deny that there are or can be any limitations to the divine Being or attributes. It implies that He is in no way limited by the universe, by this time-space world, or confined to the universe. It does not involve His identity with the sum-total of existing things, nor does it exclude the co-existence of derived and finite things, to which He bears relation. The infinity of God must be conceived as intensive rather than extensive, and should not be confused with boundless extension, as if God were spread out through the entire universe, one part being here and another there, for God has no body and therefore no extension. Neither should it be regarded as a merely negative concept, though it is perfectly true that we cannot form a positive idea of it. It is a reality in God fully comprehended only by Him. We distinguish various aspects of God's infinity.

1. HIS ABSOLUTE PERFECTION. This is the infinity of the Divine Being considered in itself. It should not be understood in a quantitative, but in a qualitative sense; it qualifies all the

communicable attributes of God. Infinite power is not an absolute quantum, but an exhaustless potency of power; and infinite holiness is not a boundless quantum of holiness, but a holiness which is, qualitatively free from all limitation or defect. The same may be said of infinite knowledge and wisdom, and of infinite love and righteousness. Says Dr. Orr: "Perhaps we can say that infinity in God is ultimately: (a) internally and qualitatively, absence of all limitation and defect; (b) boundless potentiality." [*Side-Lights on Christian Doctrine*, p. 26.] In this sense of the word the infinity of God is simply identical with the perfection of His Divine Being. Scripture proof for it is found in Job 11:7-10; Ps. 145:3; Matt. 5:48.

2. HIS ETERNITY. The infinity of God in relation to time is called His eternity. The form in which the Bible represents God's eternity is simply that of duration through endless ages, Ps. 90:2; 102:12; Eph. 3:21. We should remember, however, that in speaking as it does the Bible uses popular language, and not the language of philosophy. We generally think of God's eternity in the same way, namely, as duration infinitely prolonged both backwards and forwards. But this is only a popular and symbolical way of representing that which in reality transcends time and differs from it essentially. Eternity in the strict sense of the word is ascribed to that which transcends all temporal limitations. That it applies to God in that sense is at least intimated in II Pet. 3:8. "Time," says Dr. Orr, "strictly has relation to the world of objects existing in succession. God fills time; is in every part of it; but His eternity still is not really this being in time. It is rather that to which time forms a contrast." [*Ibid.*, p. 26.] Our existence is marked off by days and weeks and months and years; not so the existence of God. Our life is divided into a past, present and future, but there is no such division in the life of God. He is the eternal "I am." His eternity may be defined as *that perfection of God whereby He is elevated above all temporal limits and all succession of moments, and possesses the whole of His existence in one indivisible present.* The relation of eternity to time constitutes one of the most difficult problems in philosophy and theology, perhaps incapable of solution in our present condition.

3. HIS IMMENSITY. The infinity of God may also be viewed with reference to space, and is then called His immensity. It may be defined as *that perfection of the Divine Being by which He transcends all spatial limitations, and yet is present in every point of space with His whole Being.* It has a negative and a positive side, denying all limitations of space to the Divine Being, and asserting that God is above space and fills every part of it *with His whole Being.* The last words are added, in order to ward off the idea that God is diffused through space, so that one part of His Being is present in one place, and another part in some other place. We distinguish three modes of presence in space. Bodies are in space circumscriptively, because they are bounded by it; finite spirits are in space definitively, since they are not everywhere, but only in a certain definite place; and in distinction from both of these God is in space repletively, because He fills all space. He is not absent from any part of it, nor more present in one part than in another.

In a certain sense the terms “immensity” and “omnipresence,” as applied to God, denote the same thing, and can therefore be regarded as synonymous. Yet there is a point of difference that should be carefully noted. “Immensity” points to the fact that God transcends all space and is not subject to its limitations, while “omnipresence” denotes that He nevertheless fills every part of space with His entire Being. The former emphasizes the transcendence, and the latter, the immanence of God. God is immanent in all His creatures, in His entire creation, but is in no way bounded by it. In connection with God’s relation to the world we must avoid, on the one hand, the error of Pantheism, so characteristic of a great deal of present day thinking, with its denial of the transcendence of God and its assumption that the Being of God is really the substance of all things; and, on the other hand, the Deistic conception that God is indeed present in creation *per potentiam* (with His power), but not *per essentiam et naturam* (with His very Being and nature), and acts upon the world from a distance. Though God is distinct from the world and may not be identified with it, He is yet present in every part of His creation, not only *per potentiam*, but also *per essentiam*.

This does not mean, however, that He is equally present and present in the same sense in all His creatures. The nature of His indwelling is in harmony with that of His creatures. He does not dwell on earth as He does in heaven, in animals as He does in man, in the inorganic as He does in the organic creation, in the wicked as He does in the pious, nor in the Church as He does in Christ. There is an endless variety in the manner in which He is immanent in His creatures, and in the measure in which they reveal God to those who have eyes to see. The omnipresence of God is clearly revealed in Scripture. Heaven and earth cannot contain Him, I Kings 8:27; Isa. 66:1; Acts 7:48,49; and at the same time He fills both and is a God at hand, Ps. 139:7-10; Jer. 23:23,24; Acts 17:27,28.

D. The Unity of God.

A distinction is made between the *unitas singularitatis* and the *unitas simplicitatis*.

1. THE UNITAS SINGULARITATIS. This attribute stresses both the oneness and the unicity of God, the fact that He is numerically one and that as such He is unique. It implies that there is but one Divine Being, that from the nature of the case there can be but one, and that all other beings exist of and through and unto Him. The Bible teaches us in several passages that there is but one true God. Solomon pleaded with God to maintain the cause of His people, “that all the peoples of the earth may know that Jehovah, He is God; there is none else,” I Kings 8:60. And Paul writes to the Corinthians, “But to us there is but 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 in Him,” I Cor. 8:6. Similarly he writes to Timothy, “For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,” I Tim. 2:5. Other passages do not stress the numerical unity of God as much as they do His uniqueness. This is the case in the well known words of Deut. 6:4, “Hear, O Israel; Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.” The Hebrew word *'echad*, translated by “one” may

also be rendered “an only,” the equivalent of the German “einig” and the Dutch “eenig.” And this would seem to be a better translation. Keil stresses that fact that this passage does not teach the numerical unity of God, but rather that Jehovah is the only God that is entitled to the name Jehovah. This is also the meaning of the term in Zech. 14:9. The same idea is beautifully expressed in the rhetorical question of Ex. 15:11, “Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” This excludes all polytheistic conceptions of God.

2. THE UNITAS SIMPLICITATIS. While the unity discussed in the preceding sets God apart from other beings, the perfection now under consideration is expressive of the inner and qualitative unity of the Divine Being. When we speak of the simplicity of God, we use the term to describe the state or quality of being simple, the condition of being free from division into parts, and therefore from compositeness. It means that God is not composite and is not susceptible of division in any sense of the word. This implies among other things that the three Persons in the Godhead are not so many parts of which the Divine essence is composed, that God’s essence and perfections are not distinct, and that the attributes are not superadded to His essence. Since the two are one, the Bible can speak of God as light and life, as righteousness and love, thus identifying Him with His perfections. The simplicity of God follows from some of His other perfections; from His Self-existence, which excludes the idea that something preceded Him, as in the case of compounds; and from His immutability, which could not be predicated of His nature, if it were made up of parts. This perfection was disputed during the Middle Ages, and was denied by Socinians and Arminians. Scripture does not explicitly assert it, but implies it where it speaks of God as righteousness, truth, wisdom, light, life, love, and so on, and thus indicates that each of these properties, because of their absolute perfection, is identical with His Being. In recent works on theology the simplicity of God is seldom mentioned. Many theologians positively deny it, either because it is regarded as a purely metaphysical abstraction, or because, in their estimation, it

conflicts with the doctrine of the Trinity. Dabney believes that there is no composition in the substance of God, but denies that in Him substance and attributes are one and the same. He claims that God is no more simple in that respect than finite spirits.[*Syst. and Polem. Theol.*, p. 43f.]

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY. What different conceptions of the Absolute do we meet with in philosophy? Can the Absolute of philosophy always be identified with the God of theology? How does Bradley distinguish between the two? How is the finite God of James, Schiller, Ward, Wells and others, related to the Absolute? How do the incommunicable attributes of God link up with the Absolute? Does the immutability of God exclude all movement in God? In how far does it exclude changes of action and relations? Should the absolute perfection of God be regarded as an attribute? Why does the Bible represent God's eternity as endless duration? Is it possible to harmonize the transcendence and the immanence of God? How is transcendence frequently interpreted in modern theology? What is implied in the simplicity of God?

LITERATURE: Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* II, pp. 137-171; Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm.*, Deo I, pp. 287-318; Hodge, *Syst. Theol. I*, pp. 380-393; Shedd, *Dogm. Theol. I*, pp. 338-353; Dabney, *Syst. and Polem. Theol.*, pp. 151-154; Thornwell, *Collected Works I*, pp. 189-205; Strong, *Syst. Theol.*, pp. 254-260, 275-279; Pieper, *Christl. Dogm. I*, pp. 536-543, 547-549; Knudson, *The Doct. of God*, pp. 242-284; Steenstra, *God as Unity and Trinity*, pp. 112-139; Charnock, *Existence and Attributes of God*. pp. 276-405.

VII. The Communicable Attributes

(God as a Personal Spirit)

If the attributes discussed in the previous chapter stressed the absolute Being of God, those that remain to be considered emphasize His personal nature. It is in the communicable attributes that God stands out as a conscious, intelligent, free, and moral Being, as a Being that is personal in the highest sense of the word. The question has long engaged the attention of philosophers, and is still a subject of debate, whether personal existence is consistent with the idea of absoluteness. The answer to that question depends to a great extent on the meaning one ascribes to the word "absolute." The word has been used in three different senses in philosophy, which may be denominated as the agnostic, the logical, and the causal sense. For the agnostic the Absolute is the unrelated, of which nothing can be known, since things are known only in their relations. And if nothing can be known of it, personality cannot be ascribed to it. Moreover, since personality is unthinkable apart from relations, it cannot be identified with an Absolute which is in its very essence the unrelated. In the logical Absolute the individual is subordinated to the universal, and the highest universal is ultimate reality. Such is the absolute substance of Spinoza, and the absolute spirit of Hegel. It may express itself in and through the finite, but nothing that is finite can express its essential nature. To ascribe personality to it would be to limit it to one mode of being, and would destroy its absoluteness. In fact, such an absolute or ultimate is a mere abstract and empty concept, that is barren of all content. The causal view of the Absolute represents it as the ultimate ground of all things. It is not dependent on anything outside of itself, but causes all things to depend on it. Moreover, it is not necessarily completely unrelated, but can enter into various relations with finite creatures. Such a conception of the Absolute is not inconsistent with the idea of personality. Moreover, we should bear in mind that in their argumentation philosophers were always operating with the idea of personality as it is realized in man, and lost sight of the fact that personality in God might be something infinitely more perfect. As a matter of fact, perfect personality is found only in God, and what we see in man is only a finite copy of the original. Still more, there is a tripersonality in God, of which no analogy is found in human beings.

Several natural proofs, quite similar to those adduced for the existence of God, have been urged to prove the personality of God. (1) Human personality demands a personal God for its explanation. Man is not a self-existent and eternal, but a finite being that has a beginning and an end. The cause assumed must be sufficient to account for the whole of the effect. Since man is a personal product, the power originating him must also be personal. Otherwise there is something in the effect which is superior to anything that is found in the cause; and this would be quite impossible. (2) The world in general bears witness to the personality of God. In its whole fabric and constitution it reveals the clearest traces of an infinite intelligence, of the deepest, highest and tenderest emotions, and of a will that is all-powerful. Consequently, we are constrained to mount from the world to the world's Maker as a Being of intelligence, sensibility, and will, that is, as a person. (3) The moral and religious nature of man also points to the personality of God. His moral nature imposes on him a sense of obligation to do that which is right, and this necessarily implies the existence of a supreme Lawgiver. Moreover, his religious nature constantly prompts him to seek personal communion with some higher Being; and all the elements and activities of religion demand a personal God as their object and final end. Even so-called pantheistic religions often testify unconsciously to belief in a personal God. The fact is that all such things as penitence, faith and obedience, fellowship and love, loyalty in service and sacrifice, trust in life and death, are meaningless unless they find their appropriate object in a personal God.

But while all these considerations are true and have some value as *testimonia*, they are not the proofs on which theology depends in its doctrine of the personality of God. It turns for proof to God's Self-revelation in Scripture. The term "person" is not applied to God in the Bible, though there are words, such as the Hebrew *panim* and the Greek *prosopon*, that come very close to expressing the idea. At the same time Scripture testifies to the personality of God in more than one way. The presence of God, as described by Old and New Testament writers, is clearly a personal presence. And the

anthropomorphic and anthropopathic representations of God in Scripture, while they must be interpreted so as not to militate against the pure spirituality and holiness of God, can hardly be justified, except on the assumption that the Being to whom they apply is a real person, with personal attributes, even though it be without human limitations. God is represented throughout as a personal God, with whom men can and may converse, whom they can trust, who sustains them in their trials, and fills their hearts with the joy of deliverance and victory. And, finally, the highest revelation of God to which the Bible testifies is a personal revelation. Jesus Christ reveals the Father in such a perfect way that He could say to Philip, "He who hath seen me hath seen the Father," John 14:9. More detailed proofs will appear in the discussion of the communicable attributes.

A. The Spirituality of God.

The Bible does not give us a definition of God. The nearest approach to anything like it is found in the word of Christ to the Samaritan woman, "God is Spirit," John 4:24. This is at least a statement purporting to tell us in a single word what God is. The Lord does not merely say that God is a spirit, but that He is Spirit. And because of this clear statement it is but fitting that we should discuss first of all the spirituality of God. By teaching the spirituality of God theology stresses the fact that God has a substantial Being all His own and distinct from the world, and that this substantial Being is immaterial, invisible, and without composition or extension. It includes the thought that all the essential qualities which belong to the perfect idea of Spirit are found in Him: that He is a self-conscious and self-determining Being. Since He is Spirit in the most absolute, and in the purest sense of the word, there is in Him no composition of parts. The idea of spirituality of necessity excludes the ascription of anything like corporeity to God, and thus condemns the fancies of some of the early Gnostics and medieval Mystics, and of all those sectarians of our own day who ascribe a body to God. It is true that the Bible speaks of the hands and feet, the eyes and ears, the mouth

and nose of God, but in doing this it is speaking anthropomorphically or figuratively of Him who far transcends our human knowledge, and of whom we can only speak in a stammering fashion after the manner of men. By ascribing spirituality to God we also affirm that He has none of the properties belonging to matter, and that He cannot be discerned by the bodily senses. Paul speaks of Him as “the King eternal, immortal, invisible” (I Tim. 1:17), and again as “the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal,” I Tim. 6:15,16.

B. Intellectual Attributes.

God is represented in Scripture as Light, and therefore as perfect in His intellectual life. This category comprises two of the divine perfections, namely, the knowledge and the wisdom of God.

1. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. The knowledge of God may be defined as *that perfection of God whereby He, in an entirely unique manner, knows Himself and all things possible and actual in one eternal and most simple act.* The Bible testifies to the knowledge of God abundantly, as, for instance, in I Sam. 2:3; Job 12:13; Ps. 94:9; 147:4; Isa. 29:15; 40:27,28. In connection with the knowledge of God several points call for consideration.

a. *Its nature.* The knowledge of God differs in some important points from that of men. It is *archetypal*, which means that He knows the universe as it exists in His own eternal idea previous to its existence as a finite reality in time and space; and that His knowledge is not, like ours, obtained from without. It is a knowledge that is characterized by *absolute perfection*. As such it is *intuitive* rather than demonstrative or discursive. It is *innate and immediate*, and does not result from observation or from a process of reasoning. Being perfect, it is also *simultaneous* and not successive, so that He sees things at once in their totality, and not piecemeal one after

another. Furthermore, it is *complete and fully conscious*, while man's knowledge is always partial, frequently indistinct, and often fails to rise into the clear light of consciousness. A distinction is made between the *necessary* and *free* knowledge of God. The former is the knowledge which God has of Himself and of all things possible, a knowledge resting on the consciousness of His omnipotence. It is called *necessary knowledge*, because it is not determined by an action of the divine will. It is also known as *the knowledge of simple intelligence*, in view of the fact that it is purely an act of the divine intellect, without any concurrent action of the divine will. *The free knowledge of God* is the knowledge which He has of all things actual, that is, of things that existed in the past, that exist in the present, or that will exist in the future. It is founded on God's infinite knowledge of His own all-comprehensive and unchangeable eternal purpose, and is called free knowledge, because it is determined by a concurrent act of the will. It is also called *scientia visionis*, knowledge of vision.

b. *Its extent.* The knowledge of God is not only perfect in kind, but also in its inclusiveness. It is called *omniscience*, because it is all-comprehensive. In order to promote a proper estimate of it, we may particularize as follows: God knows Himself and in Himself all things that come from Him (internal knowledge). He knows all things as they actually come to pass, past, present, and future, and knows them in their real relations. He knows the hidden essence of things, to which the knowledge of man cannot penetrate. He sees not as man sees, who observes only the outward manifestations of life, but penetrates to the depths of the human heart. Moreover, He knows what is possible as well as what is actual; all things that might occur under certain circumstances are present to His mind. The omniscience of God is clearly taught in several passages of Scripture. He is perfect in knowledge, Job 37:16, looketh not on outward appearance but on the heart, I Sam. 16:7; I Chron. 28:9,17; Ps. 139:1-4; Jer. 17:10, observes the ways of men, Deut. 2:7; Job 23:10; 24:23; 31:4; Ps. 1:6; 119:168, knows the place of their habitation, Ps. 33:13, and the days of their life, Ps. 37:18. This doctrine of the knowledge of

God must be maintained over against all pantheistic tendencies to represent God as the unconscious ground of the phenomenal world, and of those who, like Marcion, Socinus and all who believe in a finite God, ascribe to Him only a limited knowledge.

There is one question, however, that calls for special discussion. It concerns God's foreknowledge of the free actions of men, and therefore of conditional events. We can understand how God can foreknow where necessity rules, but find it difficult to conceive of a previous knowledge of actions which man freely originates. The difficulty of this problem led some to deny the foreknowledge of free actions, and others to deny human freedom. It is perfectly evident that Scripture teaches the divine foreknowledge of contingent events, I Sam. 23:10-13; II Kings 13:19; Ps. 81:14,15; Isa. 42:9; 48:18; Jer. 2:2,3; 38:17-20; Ezek. 3:6; Matt. 11:21. Moreover, it does not leave us in doubt as to the freedom of man. It certainly does not permit the denial of either one of the terms of the problem. We are up against a problem here, which we cannot fully solve, though it is possible to make an approach to a solution. God has decreed all things, and has decreed them with their causes and conditions in the exact order in which they come to pass; and His foreknowledge of future things and also of contingent events rests on His decree. This solves the problem as far as the foreknowledge of God is concerned.

But now the question arises, Is the predetermination of things consistent with the free will of man? And the answer is that it certainly is not, if the freedom of the will be regarded as *indifferentia* (arbitrariness), but this is an unwarranted conception of the freedom of man. The will of man is not something altogether indeterminate, something hanging in the air that can be swung arbitrarily in either direction. It is rather something rooted in our very nature, connected with our deepest instincts and emotions, and determined by our intellectual considerations and by our very character. And if we conceive of our human freedom as *lubentia rationalis* (reasonable self-determination), then we have no sufficient warrant for saying that it is inconsistent with divine foreknowledge. Says Dr. Orr: "A

solution of this problem there is, though our minds fail to grasp it. In part it probably lies, not in denying freedom, but in a revised conception of freedom. For freedom, after all, is not arbitrariness. There is in all rational action a *why* for acting — a reason which decides action. The truly free man is not the uncertain, incalculable man, but the man who is *reliable*. In short, freedom has its laws — spiritual laws — and the omniscient Mind knows what these are. But an element of mystery, it must be acknowledged, still remains.”[*Side-Lights on Chr. Doct.*, p. 30.]

Jesuit, Lutheran, and Arminian theologians suggested the so-called *scientia media* as a solution of the problem. The name is indicative of the fact that it occupies a middle ground between the necessary and the free knowledge of God. It differs from the former in that its *object* is not all possible things, *but a special class of things actually future*; and from the latter in that its *ground* is not the eternal purpose of God, *but the free action of the creature as simply foreseen*. [A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theol.*, p. 147.] It is called *mediate*, says Dabney, “because they suppose God arrives at it, not directly by knowing His own purpose to effect it, but indirectly by His infinite insight into the manner in which the contingent second cause will act, under given outward circumstances, foreseen or produced by God.”[*Syst. and Polem. Theol.*, p. 156.] But this is no solution of the problem at all. It is an attempt to reconcile two things which logically exclude each other, namely, freedom of action in the Pelagian sense and a *certain* foreknowledge of that action. Actions that are in no way determined by God, directly or indirectly, but are wholly dependent on the arbitrary will of man, can hardly be the object of divine foreknowledge. Moreover, it is objectionable, because it makes the divine knowledge dependent on the choice of man, virtually annuls the certainty of the knowledge of future events, and thus implicitly denies the omniscience of God. It is also contrary to such passages of Scripture as Acts 2:23; Rom. 9:16; Eph. 1:11; Phil. 2:13.

2. THE WISDOM OF GOD. The wisdom of God may be regarded as a particular aspect of His knowledge. It is quite evident that

knowledge and wisdom are not the same, though they are closely related. They do not always accompany each other. An uneducated man may be superior to a scholar in wisdom. Knowledge is acquired by study, but wisdom results from an intuitive insight into things. The former is theoretical, while the latter is practical, making knowledge subservient to some specific purpose. Both are imperfect in man, but in God they are characterized by absolute perfection. God's wisdom is His intelligence as manifested in the adaptation of means to ends. It points to the fact that He always strives for the best possible ends, and chooses the best means for the realization of His purposes. H. B. Smith defines the divine wisdom as "that attribute of God whereby He produces the best possible results with the best possible means." We may be a little more specific and call it *that perfection of God whereby He applies His knowledge to the attainment of His ends in a way which glorifies Him most*. It implies a final end to which all secondary ends are subordinate; and according to Scripture this final end is the glory of God, Rom. 11:33; 14:7,8; Eph. 1:11,12; Col. 1:16. Scripture refers to the wisdom of God in many passages, and even represents it as personified in Proverbs 8. This wisdom of God is seen particularly in creation, Ps. 19:1-7; 104:1-34; in providence, Ps. 33:10, 11; Rom. 8:28; and in redemption, Rom. 11:33; I Cor. 2:7; Eph. 3:10.

3. THE VERACITY OF GOD. Scripture uses several words to express the veracity of God: in the Old Testament *'emeth*, *'amunah*, and *'amen*, and in the New Testament *alethes (aletheia)*, *alethinos*, and *pistis*. This already points to the fact that it includes several ideas, such as truth, truthfulness, and faithfulness. When God is called the truth, this is to be understood in its most comprehensive sense. He is the truth first of all in a metaphysical sense, that is, in Him the idea of the Godhead is perfectly realized; He is all that He as God should be, and as such is distinguished from all so-called gods, which are called vanity and lies, Ps. 96:5; 97:7; 115:4-8; Isa. 44:9,10. He is also the truth in an *ethical* sense, and as such reveals Himself as He really is, so that His revelation is absolutely reliable, Num. 23:19; Rom. 3:4; Heb. 6:18. Finally, He is also the truth in a *logical*

sense, and in virtue of this He knows things as they really are, and has so constituted the mind of man that the latter can know, not merely the appearance, but also the reality, of things. Thus the truth of God is the foundation of all knowledge. It should be borne in mind, moreover, that these three are but different aspects of the truth, which is one in God. In view of the preceding we may define the veracity or truth of God as *that perfection of His Being by virtue of which He fully answers to the idea of the Godhead, is perfectly reliable in His revelation, and sees things as they really are.* It is because of this perfection that He is the source of all truth, not only in the sphere of morals and religion, but also in every field of scientific endeavor. Scripture is very emphatic in its references to God as the truth, Ex. 34:6; Num. 23:19; Deut. 32:4; Ps. 25:10; 31:6; Isa. 65:16; Jer. 10:8, 10, 11; John 14:6; 17:3; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18; I John 5:20, 21. There is still another aspect of this divine perfection, and one that is always regarded as of the greatest importance. It is generally called His *faithfulness*, in virtue of which He is ever mindful of His covenant and fulfils all the promises which He has made to His people. This faithfulness of God is of the utmost practical significance to the people of God. It is the ground of their confidence, the foundation of their hope, and the cause of their rejoicing. It saves them from the despair to which their own unfaithfulness might easily lead, gives them courage to carry on in spite of their failures, and fills their hearts with joyful anticipations, even when they are deeply conscious of the fact that they have forfeited all the blessings of God. Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:9; Ps. 89:33; Isa. 49:7; I Cor. 1:9; II Tim. 2:13; Heb. 6:17, 18; 10:23.

C. Moral Attributes.

The moral attributes of God are generally regarded as the most glorious of the divine perfections. Not that one attribute of God is in itself more perfect and glorious than another, but relatively to man the moral perfections of God shine with a splendor all their own.

They are generally discussed under three heads: (1) the goodness of God; (2) the holiness of God; and (3) the righteousness of God.

1. THE GOODNESS OF GOD. This is generally treated as a generic conception, including several varieties, which are distinguished according to their objects. The goodness of God should not be confused with His kindness, which is a more restricted concept. We speak of something as good, when it answers in all parts to the ideal. Hence in our ascription of goodness to God the fundamental idea is that He is in every way all that He as God should be, and therefore answers perfectly to the ideal expressed in the word "God." He is good in the metaphysical sense of the word, absolute perfection and perfect bliss in Himself. It is in this sense that Jesus said to the young ruler: "None is good save one, even God," Mark 10:18. But since God is good in Himself, He is also good for His creatures, and may therefore be called the *fons omnium bonorum*. He is the fountain of all good, and is so represented in a variety of ways throughout the Bible. The poet sings: "For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light," Ps. 36:9. All the good things which the creatures enjoy in the present and expect in the future, flow to them out of this inexhaustible fountain. And not only that, but God is also the *summum bonum*, the highest good, for all His creatures, though in different degrees and according to the measure in which they answer to the purpose of their existence. In the present connection we naturally stress the ethical goodness of God and the different aspects of it, as these are determined by the nature of its objects.

a. *The goodness of God towards His creatures in general.* This may be defined as *that perfection of God which prompts Him to deal bountifully and kindly with all His creatures.* It is the affection which the Creator feels towards His sentient creatures as such. The Psalmist sings of it in the well known words: "Jehovah is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works. . . . The eyes of all wait for thee; and thou givest them their food in due season. Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing," Ps.

145:9,15,16. This benevolent interest of God is revealed in His care for the creature's welfare, and is suited to the nature and the circumstances of the creature. It naturally varies in degree according to the capacity of the objects to receive it. And while it is not restricted to believers, they only manifest a proper appreciation of its blessings, desire to use them in the service of their God, and thus enjoy them in a richer and fuller measure. The Bible refers to this goodness of God in many passages, such as Ps. 36:6; 104:21; Matt. 5:45; 6:26; Luke 6:35; Acts 14:17.

b. *The love of God.* When the goodness of God is exercised towards His rational creatures, it assumes the higher character of love, and this love may again be distinguished according to the objects on which it terminates. In distinction from the goodness of God in general, it may be defined as *that perfection of God by which He is eternally moved to self-communication.* Since God is absolutely good in Himself, His love cannot find complete satisfaction in any object that falls short of absolute perfection. He loves His rational creatures for His own sake, or, to express it otherwise, He loves in them Himself, His virtues, His work, and His gifts. He does not even withdraw His love completely from the sinner in his present sinful state, though the latter's sin is an abomination to Him, since He recognizes even in the sinner His image-bearer. John 3:16; Matt. 5:44,45. At the same time He loves believers with a special love, since He contemplates them as His spiritual children in Christ. It is to them that He communicates Himself in the fullest and richest sense, with all the fulness of His grace and mercy. John 16:27; Rom. 5:8; I John 3:1.

c. *The grace of God.* The significant word "grace" is a translation of the Hebrew *chanan* and of the Greek *charis*. According to Scripture it is manifested not only by God, but also by men, and then denotes the favor which one man shows another, Gen. 33:8,10,18; 39:4; 47:25; Ruth 2:2; I Sam. 1:18; 16:22. In such cases it is not necessarily implied that the favor is undeserved. In general it can be said, however, that grace is the free bestowal of kindness on one who has

no claim to it. This is particularly the case where the grace referred to is the grace of God. His love to man is always unmerited, and when shown to sinners, is even forfeited. The Bible generally uses the word to denote *the unmerited goodness or love of God to those who have forfeited it, and are by nature under a sentence of condemnation*. The grace of God is the source of all spiritual blessings that are bestowed upon sinners. As such we read of it in Eph. 1:6,7; 2:7-9; Tit. 2:11; 3:4-7. While the Bible often speaks of the grace of God as saving grace, it also makes mention of it in a broader sense, as in Isa. 26:10; Jer. 16:13. The grace of God is of the greatest practical significance for sinful men. It was by grace that the way of redemption was opened for them, Rom. 3:24; II Cor. 8:9, and that the message of redemption went out into the world, Acts 14:3. By grace sinners receive the gift of God in Jesus Christ, Acts 18:27; Eph. 2:8. By grace they are justified, Rom. 3:24; 4:16; Tit. 3:7, they are enriched with spiritual blessings, John 1:16; II Cor. 8:9; II Thess. 2:16, and they finally inherit salvation, Eph. 2:8; Tit. 2:11. Seeing they have absolutely no merits of their own, they are altogether dependent on the grace of God in Christ. In modern theology, with its belief in the inherent goodness of man and his ability to help himself, the doctrine of salvation by grace has practically become a "lost chord," and even the word "grace" was emptied of all spiritual meaning and vanished from religious discourses. It was retained only in the sense of "graciousness," something that is quite external. Happily, there are some evidences of a renewed emphasis on sin, and of a newly awakened consciousness of the need of divine grace.

d. *The mercy of God*. Another important aspect of the goodness and love of God is His mercy or tender compassion. The Hebrew word most generally used for this is *chesed*. There is another word, however, which expresses a deep and tender compassion, namely, the word *racham*, which is beautifully rendered by "tender mercy" in our English Bible. The Septuagint and the New Testament employ the Greek word *eleos* to designate the mercy of God. If the grace of God contemplates man as guilty before God, and therefore in need of forgiveness, the mercy of God contemplates him as one who is

bearing the consequences of sin, who is in a pitiable condition, and who therefore needs divine help. It may be defined as *the goodness or love of God shown to those who are in misery or distress, irrespective of their deserts*. In His mercy God reveals Himself as a compassionate God, who pities those who are in misery and is ever ready to relieve their distress. This mercy is bountiful, Deut. 5:10; Ps. 57:10; 86:5, and the poets of Israel delighted to sing of it as enduring forever, I Chron. 16:34; II Chron. 7:6; Ps. 136; Ezra 3:11. In the New Testament it is often mentioned alongside of the grace of God, especially in salutations, I Tim. 1:2; II Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:4. We are told repeatedly that it is shown to them that fear God, Ex. 20:2; Deut. 7:9; Ps. 86:5; Luke 1:50. This does not mean, however, that it is limited to them, though they enjoy it in a special measure. God's tender mercies are over all His works, Ps. 145:9, and even those who do not fear Him share in them, Ezek. 18:23,32; 33:11; Luke 6:35,36. The mercy of God may not be represented as opposed to His justice. It is exercised only in harmony with the strictest justice of God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ. Other terms used for it in the Bible are "pity," "compassion," and "lovingkindness."

e. *The longsuffering of God*. The longsuffering of God is still another aspect of His great goodness or love. The Hebrew uses the expression *'erek 'aph*, which means literally "long of face," and then also "slow to anger," while the Greek expresses the same idea by the word *makrothumia*. It is *that aspect of the goodness or love of God in virtue of which He bears with the froward and evil in spite of their long continued disobedience*. In the exercise of this attribute the sinner is contemplated as continuing in sin, notwithstanding the admonitions and warnings that come to him. It reveals itself in the postponement of the merited judgment. Scripture speaks of it in Ex. 34:6; Ps. 86:15; Rom. 2:4; 9:22; I Pet. 3:20; II Pet. 3:15. A synonymous term of a slightly different connotation is the word "forbearance."

2. THE HOLINESS OF GOD. The Hebrew word for "to be holy," *quadash*, is derived from the root *qad*, which means to cut or to

separate. It is one of the most prominent religious words of the Old Testament, and is applied primarily to God. The same idea is conveyed by the New Testament words *hagiazō* and *hagios*. From this it already appears that it is not correct to think of holiness primarily as a moral or religious quality, as is generally done. Its fundamental idea is that of a *position* or *relationship* existing between God and some person or thing.

a. *Its nature.* The Scriptural idea of the holiness of God is twofold. In its original sense it denotes that He is absolutely distinct from all His creatures, and is exalted above them in infinite majesty. So understood, the holiness of God is one of His transcendental attributes, and is sometimes spoken of as His central and supreme perfection. It does not seem proper to speak of one attribute of God as being more central and fundamental than another; but if this were permissible, the Scriptural emphasis on the holiness of God would seem to justify its selection. It is quite evident, however, that holiness in this sense of the word is not really a *moral* attribute, which can be co-ordinated with the others, such as love, grace and mercy, but is rather something that is co-extensive with, and applicable to, everything that can be predicated of God. He is holy in everything that reveals Him, in His goodness and grace as well as in His justice and wrath. It may be called the “majesty-holiness” of God, and is referred to in such passages as Ex. 15:11; I Sam. 2:2; Isa. 57:15; Hos. 11:9. It is this holiness of God which Otto, in his important work on *Das Heilige*, [Eng. tr. *The Idea of the Holy*.] regards as that which is most essential in God, and which he designates as “the *numinous*.” He regards it as part of the non-rational in God, which cannot be thought of conceptually, and which includes such ideas as “absolute unapproachability” and “absolute overpoweringness” or “aweful majesty.” It awakens in man a sense of absolute nothingness, a “creature-consciousness” or “creature-feeling,” leading to absolute self-abasement.

But the holiness of God also has a specifically ethical aspect in Scripture, and it is with this aspect of it that we are more directly

concerned in this connection. The ethical idea of the divine holiness may not be dissociated from the idea of God's majestic-holiness. The former developed out of the latter. The fundamental idea of the ethical holiness of God is also that of separation, but in this case it is a separation from moral evil or sin. In virtue of His holiness God can have no communion with sin, Job 34:10; Hab. 1:13. Used in this sense, the word "holiness" points to God's majestic purity, or ethical majesty. But the idea of ethical holiness is not merely negative (separation from sin); it also has a positive content, namely, that of moral excellence, or ethical perfection. If man reacts to God's majestic-holiness with a feeling of utter insignificance and awe, his reaction to the ethical holiness reveals itself in a sense of impurity, a consciousness of sin, Isa. 6:5. Otto also recognizes this element in the holiness of God, though he stresses the other, and says of the response to it: "Mere awe, mere need of shelter from the 'tremendum', has here been elevated to the feeling that man in his 'profaneness' is not *worthy* to stand in the presence of the Holy One, and that his entire personal unworthiness might defile even holiness itself." [*The Idea of the Holy*, p. 56.] This ethical holiness of God may be defined as *that perfection of God, in virtue of which He eternally wills and maintains His own moral excellence, abhors sin, and demands purity in his moral creatures.*

b. *Its manifestation.* The holiness of God is revealed in the moral law, implanted in man's heart, and speaking through the conscience, and more particularly in God's special revelation. It stood out prominently in the law given to Israel. That law in all its aspects was calculated to impress upon Israel the idea of the holiness of God, and to urge upon the people the necessity of leading a holy life. This was the purpose served by such symbols and types as the holy nation, the holy land, the holy city, the holy place, and the holy priesthood. Moreover, it was revealed in the manner in which God rewarded the keeping of the law, and visited transgressors with dire punishments. The highest revelation of it was given in Jesus Christ, who is called "the Holy and Righteous One," Acts 3:14. He reflected in His life the perfect holiness of God. Finally, the holiness of God is also revealed

in the Church as the body of Christ. It is a striking fact, to which attention is often called, that holiness is ascribed to God with far greater frequency in the Old Testament than in the New, though it is done occasionally in the New Testament, John 17:11; I Pet. 1:16; Rev. 4:8; 6:10. This is probably due to the fact that the New Testament appropriates the term more particularly to qualify the third Person of the Holy Trinity as the One whose special task it is, in the economy of redemption, to communicate holiness to His people.

3. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. This attribute is closely related to the holiness of God. Shedd speaks of the justice of God as “a mode of His holiness”; and Strong calls it simply “transitive holiness.” However, these terms apply only to what is generally called the *relative*, in distinction from the *absolute*, justice of God.

a. *The fundamental idea of righteousness.* The fundamental idea of righteousness is that of strict adherence to the law. Among men it presupposes that there is a law to which they must conform. It is sometimes said that we cannot speak of righteousness in God, because there is no law to which He is subject. But though there is no law above God, there is certainly a law in the very nature of God, and this is the highest possible standard, by which all other laws are judged. A distinction is generally made between the absolute and the relative justice of God. The former is *that rectitude of the divine nature, in virtue of which God is infinitely righteous in Himself*, while the latter is *that perfection of God by which He maintains Himself over against every violation of His holiness, and shows in every respect that He is the Holy One*. It is to this righteousness that the term “justice” more particularly applies. Justice manifests itself especially in giving every man his due, in treating him according to his deserts. The inherent righteousness of God is naturally basic to the righteousness which He reveals in dealing with His creatures, but it is especially the latter, also called the justice of God, that calls for special consideration here. The Hebrew terms for “righteous” and “righteousness” are *tsaddik*, *tsedhek*, and *tsedhakah*, and the corresponding Greek terms, *dikaio*s and *dikaio*sune, all of which

contain the idea of conformity to a standard. This perfection is repeatedly ascribed to God in Scripture, Ezra 9:15; Neh. 9:8; Ps. 119:137; 145:17; Jer. 12:1; Lam. 1:18; Dan. 9:14; John 17:25; II Tim. 4:8; I John 2:29; 3:7; Rev. 16:5.

b. *Distinctions applied to the justice of God.* There is first of all a *rectoral justice* of God. This justice, as the very name implies, is the rectitude which God manifests as the Ruler of both the good and the evil. In virtue of it He has instituted a moral government in the world, and imposed a just law upon man, with promises of reward for the obedient, and threats of punishment for the transgressor. God stands out prominently in the Old Testament as the Lawgiver of Israel, Isa. 33:22, and of people in general, Jas. 4:12, and His laws are righteous laws, Deut. 4:8. The Bible refers to this rectoral work of God also in Ps. 99:4, and Rom. 1:32.

Closely connected with the rectoral is the *distributive justice* of God. This term usually serves to designate God's rectitude in the execution of the law, and relates to the distribution of rewards and punishments, Isa. 3:10,11; Rom. 2:6; I Pet. 1:17. It is of two kinds: (1) *Remunerative justice*, which manifests itself in the distribution of rewards to both men and angels, Deut. 7:9,12,13; II Chron. 6:15; Ps. 58:11; Micah 7:20; Matt. 25:21,34; Rom. 2:7; Heb. 11:26. It is really an expression of the divine love, dealing out its bounties, not on the basis of strict merit, for the creature can establish no absolute merit before the Creator, but according to promise and agreement, Luke 17:10; I Cor. 4:7. God's rewards are gracious and spring from a covenant relation which He has established. (2) *Retributive justice*, which relates to the infliction of penalties. It is an expression of the divine wrath. While in a sinless world there would be no place for its exercise, it necessarily holds a very prominent place in a world full of sin. On the whole the Bible stresses the reward of the righteous more than the punishment of the wicked; but even the latter is sufficiently prominent. Rom. 1:32; 2:9; 12:19; II Thess. 1:8, and many other passages. It should be noted that, while man does not merit the reward which he receives, he does merit the punishment which is

meted out to him. Divine justice is originally and necessarily obliged to punish evil, but not to reward good, Luke 17:10; I Cor. 4:7; Job 41:11. Many deny the strict punitive justice of God and claim that God punishes the sinner to reform him, or to deter others from sin; but these positions are not tenable. The primary purpose of the punishment of sin is the maintenance of right and justice. Of course, it may incidentally serve, and may even, secondarily, be intended, to reform the sinner and to deter others from sin.

D. Attributes of Sovereignty.

The sovereignty of God is strongly emphasized in Scripture. He is represented as the Creator, and His will as the cause of all things. In virtue of His creative work heaven and earth and all that they contain belong to Him. He is clothed with absolute authority over the hosts of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. He upholds all things with His almighty power, and determines the ends which they are destined to serve. He rules as King in the most absolute sense of the word, and all things are dependent on Him and subservient to Him. There is a wealth of Scripture evidence for the sovereignty of God, but we limit our references here to a few of the most significant passages: Gen. 14:19; Ex. 18:11; Deut. 10:14,17; I Chron. 29:11,12; II Chron. 20:6; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 22:28; 47:2,3,7,8; Ps. 50:10-12; 95:3-5; 115:3; 135:5,6; 145:11-13; Jer. 27:5; Luke 1:53; Acts 17:24-26; Rev. 19:6. Two attributes call for discussion under this head, namely (1) the sovereign will of God, and (2) the sovereign power of God.

1. THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD.

a. *The will of God in general.* The Bible employs several words to denote the will of God, namely the Hebrew words *chaphets*, *tsebhu* and *ratson* and the Greek words *boule* and *thelema*. The importance of the divine will appears in many ways in Scripture. It is represented as the final cause of all things. Everything is derived from it; creation and preservation, Ps. 135:6; Jer. 18:6; Rev. 4:11, government, Prov.

21:1; Dan. 4:35, election and reprobation, Rom. 9:15,16; Eph. 1:11, the sufferings of Christ, Luke 22:42; Acts 2:23, regeneration, Jas. 1:18, sanctification, Phil. 2:13, the sufferings of believers, I Pet. 3:17, man's life and destiny, Acts 18:21; Rom. 15:32; Jas. 4:15, and even the smallest things of life, Matt. 10:29. Hence Christian theology has always recognized the will of God as the ultimate cause of all things, though philosophy has sometimes shown an inclination to seek a deeper cause in the very Being of the Absolute. However, the attempt to ground everything in the very Being of God generally results in Pantheism.

The word "will" as applied to God does not always have the same connotation in Scripture. It may denote (1) the whole moral nature of God, including such attributes as love, holiness, righteousness, etc.; (2) the faculty of self-determination, i.e. the power to determine self to a course of action or to form a plan; (3) the product of this activity, that is, the predetermined plan or purpose; (4) the power to execute this plan and to realize this purpose (the will in action or omnipotence); and (5) the rule of life laid down for rational creatures. It is primarily the will of God as the faculty of self-determination with which we are concerned at present. It may be defined as *that perfection of His Being whereby He, in a most simple act, goes out towards Himself as the highest good (i.e. delights in Himself as such) and towards His creatures for His own name's sake, and is thus the ground of their being and continued existence.* With reference to the universe and all the creatures which it contains this naturally includes the idea of causation.

b. *Distinctions applied to the will of God.* Several distinctions have been applied to the will of God. Some of these found little favor in Reformed theology, such as the distinction between an *antecedent* and a *consequent* will of God, and that between an *absolute* and a *conditional* will. These distinctions were not only liable to misunderstanding, but were actually interpreted in objectionable ways. Others, however, were found useful, and were therefore more generally accepted. They may be stated as follows: (1) *The decretive*

and the preceptive will of God. The former is that will of God by which He purposes or decrees whatever shall come to pass, whether He wills to accomplish it effectively (causatively), or to permit it to occur through the unrestrained agency of His rational creatures. The latter is the rule of life which God has laid down for His moral creatures, indicating the duties which He enjoins upon them. The former is always accomplished, while the latter is often disobeyed. (2) *The will of eudokia and the will of eurestia.* This division was made, not so much in connection with the purpose to do, as with respect to the pleasure in doing, or the desire to see something done. It corresponds with the preceding, however, in the fact that the will of *eudokia*, like that of the decree, comprises what shall certainly be accomplished, while the will of *eurestia*, like that of the precept, embraces simply what God is pleased to have His creatures do. The word *eudokia* should not mislead us to think that the will of *eudokia* has reference only to good, and not to evil, cf. Matt. 11:26. It is hardly correct to say that the element of complacency or delight is always present in it. (3) *The will of the beneplacitum and the will of the signum.* The former again denotes the will of God as embodied in His hidden counsel, until He makes it known by some revelation, or by the event itself. Any will that is so revealed becomes *a signum*. This distinction is meant to correspond to that between the decretive and the preceptive will of God, but can hardly be said to do this. The good pleasure of God also finds expression in His preceptive will; and the decretive will sometimes also comes to our knowledge by a signum. (4) *The secret and the revealed will of God.* This is the most common distinction. The former is the will of God's decree, which is largely hidden in God, while the latter is the will of the precept, which is revealed in the law and in the gospel. The distinction is based on Deut. 29:29. The secret will of God is mentioned in Ps. 115:3; Dan. 4:17,25,32,35; Rom. 9:18,19; 11:33,34; Eph. 1:5,9,11; and His revealed will, in Matt. 7:21; 12:50; John 4:34; 7:17; Rom. 12:2. The latter is accessible to all and is not far from us, Deut. 30:14; Rom. 10:8. The secret will of God pertains to all things which He wills either to effect or to permit, and which are therefore absolutely

fixed. The revealed will prescribes the duties of man, and represents the way in which he can enjoy the blessings of God.

c. *The freedom of God's will.* The question is frequently debated whether God, in the exercise of His will, acts necessarily or freely. The answer to this question requires careful discrimination. Just as there is a *scientia necessaria* and a *scientia libera*, there is also a *voluntas necessaria* (necessary will) and a *voluntas libera* (free will) in God. God Himself is the object of the former. He *necessarily* wills Himself, His holy nature, and the personal distinctions in the Godhead. This means that He necessarily loves Himself and takes delight in the contemplation of His own perfections. Yet He is under no compulsion, but acts according to the law of His Being; and this, while necessary, is also the highest freedom. It is quite evident that the idea of causation is absent here, and that the thought of complacency or self-approval is in the foreground. God's creatures, however, are the objects of His *voluntas libera*. God determines *voluntarily* what and whom He will create, and the times, places, and circumstances, of their lives. He marks out the path of all His rational creatures, determines their destiny, and uses them for His purposes. And though He endows them with freedom, yet His will controls their actions. The Bible speaks of this freedom of God's will in the most absolute terms, Job 11:10; 33:13; Ps. 115:3; Prov. 21:1; Isa. 10:15; 29:16; 45:9; Matt. 20:15; Rom. 9:15-18,20,21; I Cor. 12:11; Rev. 4:11. The Church always defended this freedom, but also emphasized the fact that it may not be regarded as absolute indifference. Duns Scotus applied the idea of a will in no sense determined to God; but this idea of a blind will, acting with perfect indifference, was rejected by the Church. The freedom of God is not pure indifference, but rational self-determination. God has reasons for willing as He does, which induce Him to choose one end rather than another, and one set of means to accomplish one end in preference to others. There is in each case a prevailing motive, which makes the end chosen and the means selected the most pleasing to Him, though we may not be able to determine what this motive is. In general it may be said that God cannot will anything that is contrary

to His nature, to His wisdom or love, to His righteousness or holiness. Dr. Bavinck points out that we can seldom discern why God willed one thing rather than another, and that it is not possible nor even permissible for us to look for some deeper ground of things than the will of God, because all such attempts result in seeking a ground for the creature in the very Being of God, in robbing it of its contingent character, and in making it necessary, eternal, divine. [*Geref. Dogm.* II, p. 241.]

d. God's *will in relation to sin*. The doctrine of the will of God often gives rise to serious questions. Problems arise here which have never yet been solved and which are probably incapable of solution by man.

(1) It is said that if the decretive will of God also determined the entrance of sin into the world, God thereby becomes the author of sin and really wills something that is contrary to His moral perfections. Arminians, to escape the difficulty, make the will of God to permit sin dependent on His foreknowledge of the course which man would choose. Reformed theologians, while maintaining on the basis of such passages as Acts 2:23; 3:8; etc., that God's decretive will also includes the sinful deeds of man, are always careful to point out that this must be conceived in such a way that God does not become the author of sin. They frankly admit that they cannot solve the difficulty, but at the same time make some valuable distinctions that prove helpful. Most of them insist on it that God's will with respect to sin is simply a will to permit sin and not a will to effectuate it, as He does the moral good. This terminology is certainly permissible, provided it is understood correctly. It should be borne in mind that God's will to permit sin carries certainty with it. Others call attention to the fact that, while the terms "will" or "to will" may include the idea of complacency or delight, they sometimes point to a simple determination of the will; and that therefore the will of God to permit sin need not imply that He takes delight or pleasure in sin.

(2) Again, it is said that the decretive and preceptive will of God are often contradictory. His decretive will includes many things which He forbids in His preceptive will, and excludes many things which He commands in His preceptive will, cf. Gen. 22; Ex. 4:21-23; II Kings 20:1-7; Acts 2:23. Yet it is of great importance to maintain both the decretive and the preceptive will, but with the definite understanding that, while they appear to us as distinct, they are yet fundamentally one in God. Though a perfectly satisfactory solution of the difficulty is out of the question for the present, it is possible to make some approaches to a solution. When we speak of the decretive and the preceptive will of God, we use the word “will” in two different senses. By the former God has determined what He will do or what shall come to pass; in the latter He reveals to us what we are in duty bound to do.[Cf. Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* II, pp. 246 ff.; Dabney, *Syst. and Polem. Theol.*, p. 162] At the same time we should remember that the moral law, the rule of our life, is also in a sense the embodiment of the will of God. It is an expression of His holy nature and of what this naturally requires of all moral creatures. Hence another remark must be added to the preceding. The decretive and preceptive will of God do not conflict in the sense that in the former He does, and according to the latter He does not, take pleasure in sin; nor in the sense that according to the former He does not, and according to the latter He does, will the salvation of every individual *with a positive volition*. Even according to the decretive will God takes no pleasure in sin; and even according to the preceptive will He does not will the salvation of every individual *with a positive volition*.

2. THE SOVEREIGN POWER OF GOD. The sovereignty of God finds expression, not only in the divine will, but also in the omnipotence of God or the power to execute His will. Power in God may be called the effective energy of His nature, or *that perfection of His Being by which He is the absolute and highest causality*. It is customary to distinguish between a *potentia Dei absoluta* (absolute power of God) and a *potentia Dei ordinata* (ordered power of God). However, Reformed theology rejects this distinction in the sense in

which it was understood by the Scholastics, who claimed that God by virtue of His absolute power could effect contradictions, and could even sin and annihilate Himself. At the same time it adopts the distinction as expressing a real truth, though it does not always represent it in the same way. According to Hodge and Shedd absolute power is the divine efficiency, as exercised without the intervention of second causes; while ordinate power is the efficiency of God, as exercised by the ordered operation of second causes. [Shedd, *Dogm. Theol.* I, pp. 361f., Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* 1, pp. 410f.] The more general view is stated by Charnock as follows: "Absolute, is that power whereby God is able to do that which He will not do, but is possible to be done; ordinate, is that power whereby God doth that which He hath decreed to do, that is, which He hath ordained or appointed to be exercised; which are not distinct powers, but one and the same power. His ordinate power is a part of His absolute; for if He had not power to do everything that He could will, He might not have the power to do everything that He doth will." [*Existence and Attributes of God* II, p. 12. Cf. also Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* II, p. 252; Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm., De Deo* I, pp. 412f.] The *potentia ordinata* can be defined as *that perfection of God whereby He, through the mere exercise of His will, can realize whatsoever is present in His will or counsel.* The power of God in actual exercise limits itself to that which is comprehended in His eternal decree. But the actual exercise of God's power does not represent its limits. God could do more than that, if He were so minded. In that sense we can speak of the *potentia absoluta*, or absolute power, of God. This position must be maintained over against those who, like Schleiermacher and Strauss, hold that God's power is limited to that which He actually accomplishes. But in our assertion of the absolute power of God it is necessary to guard against misconceptions. The Bible teaches us on the one hand that the power of God extends beyond that which is actually realized, Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:27; Zech. 8:6; Matt. 3:9; 26:53. We cannot say, therefore, that what God does not bring to realization, is not possible for Him. But on the other hand it also indicates that there are many things which God cannot do. He can neither lie, sin, change, nor deny Himself, Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29;

II Tim. 2:13; Heb. 6:18; Jas. 1:13,17. There is no absolute power in Him that is divorced from His perfections, and in virtue of which He can do all kinds of things which are inherently contradictory. The idea of God's omnipotence is expressed in the name *'El-Shaddai*; and the Bible speaks of it in no uncertain terms, Job 9:12; Ps. 115:3; Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26; Luke 1:37; Rom. 1:20; Eph. 1:19. God manifests His power in creation, Rom. 4:17; Isa. 44:24; in the works of providence, Heb. 1:3, and in the redemption of sinners, I Cor. 1:24; Rom. 1:16.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY. In what different senses can we speak of the foreknowledge of God? How do the Arminians conceive of this foreknowledge? What objections are there to the Jesuit idea of a *scientia media*? How must we judge of the modern emphasis on the love of God as the central and all-determining attribute of God? What is Otto's conception of "the Holy" in God? What objection is there to the position that the punishments of God simply serve to reform the sinner, or to deter others from sin? What is the Socinian and the Grotian conception of retributive justice in God? Is it correct to say that God can do everything in virtue of His omnipotence?

LITERATURE: Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* II, pp. 171-259; Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm., De Deo* I, pp. 355-417; Vos, *Geref. Dogm.* I, pp. 2-36; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* I, pp. 393-441; Shedd, *Dogm. Theol.* I, pp. 359-392; Dabney, *Syst. and Polem. Theol.*, pp. 154-174; Pope, *Chr. Theol.* I, pp. 307-358; Watson, *Theol. Inst.* Part II, Chap. II; Wilmer, *Handbook of the Chr. Religion*, pp. 171-181; Harris, *God, Creator and Lord of All*, I, pp. 128-209; Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, Discourse III, VII-IX; Bates, *On the Attributes*; Clarke, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 56-115; Snowden, *The Personality of God*; Adeney, *The Christian Conception of God*, pp. 86-152; Macintosh, *Theology as an Empirical Science*, pp. 159-194; Strong, *Syst. Theol.*, pp. 282-303.

VIII. The Holy Trinity

A. The Doctrine of the Trinity in History.

The doctrine of the Trinity has always bristled with difficulties, and therefore it is no wonder that the Church in its attempt to formulate it was repeatedly tempted to rationalize it and to give a construction of it which failed to do justice to the Scriptural data.

1. THE PRE-REFORMATION PERIOD. The Jews of Jesus' days strongly emphasized the unity of God, and this emphasis was carried over into the Christian Church. The result was that some ruled out the personal distinctions in the Godhead altogether, and that others failed to do full justice to the essential deity of the second and third persons of the Holy Trinity. Tertullian was the first to use the term "Trinity" and to formulate the doctrine, but his formulation was deficient, since it involved an unwarranted subordination of the Son to the Father. Origen went even farther in this direction by teaching explicitly that the Son is subordinate to the Father *in respect to essence*, and that the Holy Spirit is subordinate even to the Son. He detracted from the essential deity of these two persons in the Godhead, and furnished a steppingstone to the Arians, who denied the deity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit by representing the Son as the first creature of the Father, and the Holy Spirit as the first creature of the Son. Thus the consubstantiality of the Son and the Holy Spirit with the Father was sacrificed, in order to preserve the unity of God; and the three persons of the Godhead were made to differ in rank. The Arians still retained a semblance of the doctrine of three persons in the Godhead, but this was sacrificed entirely by Monarchianism, partly in the interest of the unity of God and partly to maintain the deity of the Son. Dynamic Monarchianism saw in Jesus but a man and in the Holy Spirit a divine influence, while Modalistic Monarchianism regarded the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, merely as three modes of manifestation successively assumed by the Godhead. On the other hand there were also some

who lost sight of the unity of God to such an extent that they landed in Tritheism. Some of the later Monophysites, such as John Ascunages and John Philoponus, fell into this error. During the Middle Ages the Nominalist, Roscelinus, was accused of the same error. The Church began to formulate its doctrine of the Trinity in the fourth century. The Council of Nicea declared the Son to be co-essential with the Father (325 A.D.), while the Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.) asserted the deity of the Holy Spirit, though not with the same precision. As to the interrelation of the three it was officially professed that the Son is generated by the Father, and that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. In the East the doctrine of the Trinity found its fullest statement in the work of John of Damascus, and in the West, in Augustine's great work *De Trinitate*. The former still retains an element of subordination, which is entirely eliminated by the latter.

2. THE POST-REFORMATION PERIOD. We have no further development of the doctrine of the Trinity, but only encounter repeatedly some of the earlier erroneous constructions of it after the Reformation. The Arminians, Episcopius, Curcellæus, and Limborgh, revived the doctrine of subordination, chiefly again, so it seems, to maintain the unity of the Godhead. They ascribed to the Father a certain pre-eminence over the other persons, *in order, dignity, and power*. A somewhat similar position was taken by Samuel Clarke in England and by the Lutheran theologian, Kahnis. Others followed the way pointed out by Sabellius by teaching a species of Modalism, as, for instance, Emanuel Swedenborg, who held that the eternal God-man became flesh in the Son, and operated through the Holy Spirit; Hegel, who speaks of the Father as God in Himself, of the Son as God objectifying Himself, and of the Holy Spirit as God returning unto Himself; and Schleiermacher, who regards the three persons simply as three aspects of God: the Father is God as the underlying unity of all things, the Son is God as coming to conscious personality in man, and the Holy Spirit is God as living in the Church. The Socinians of the days of the Reformation moved along Arian lines, but even went beyond Arius, by making Christ merely a man and the

Holy Spirit but a power or influence. They were the forerunners of the Unitarians and also of the liberal theologians who speak of Jesus as a divine teacher, and identify the Holy Spirit with the immanent God. Finally, there were also some who, since they regarded the statement of the doctrine of an ontological Trinity as unintelligible, wanted to stop short of it and rest satisfied with the doctrine of an economic Trinity, a Trinity as revealed in the work of redemption and in human experience, as Moses Stuart, W. L. Alexander, and W. A. Brown. For a considerable time interest in the doctrine of the Trinity waned, and theological discussion centered more particularly on the personality of God. Brunner and Barth have again called attention to its importance. The latter places it very much in the foreground, discussing it in connection with the doctrine of revelation, and devotes 220 pages of his *Dogmatics* to it. Materially, he derives the doctrine from Scripture, but, formally and logically, he finds that it is involved in the simple sentence, "God speaks." He is Revealer (Father), Revelation (Son) and Revealedness (Holy Spirit). He reveals Himself, He is the Revelation, and He is also the content of the Revelation. God and His revelation are identified. He remains God also in His revelation, absolutely free and sovereign. This view of Barth is not a species of Sabellianism, for he recognizes three persons in the Godhead. Moreover, he does not allow for any subordination. Says he: "Thus, to the same God who in unimpaired unity is Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness, is also ascribed in unimpaired variety in Himself precisely this threefold mode of being." [*The Doctrine of the Word of God*, p. 344.]

B. God as Trinity in Unity.

The word "Trinity" is not quite as expressive as the Holland word "Drieeenheid," for it may simply denote the state of being three, without any implication as to the unity of the three. It is generally understood, however, that, as a technical term in theology, it includes that idea. It goes without saying that, when we speak of the

Trinity of God, we refer to a trinity in unity, and to a unity that is trinal.

1. THE PERSONALITY OF GOD AND THE TRINITY. As stated in the preceding, the communicable attributes of God stress His personality, since they reveal Him as a rational and moral Being. His life stands out clearly before us in Scripture as a personal life; and it is, of course, of the greatest importance to maintain the personality of God, for without it there can be no religion in the real sense of the word: no prayer, no personal communion, no trustful reliance and no confident hope. Since man is created in the image of God, we learn to understand something of the personal life of God from the contemplation of personality as we know it in man. We should be careful, however, not to set up man's personality as a standard by which the personality of God must be measured. The original form of personality is not in man but in God; His is archetypal, while man's is ectypal. The latter is not identical with the former, but does contain faint traces of similarity with it. We should not say that man is personal, while God is super-personal (a very unfortunate term), for what is super-personal is not personal; but rather, that what appears as imperfect in man exists in infinite perfection in God. The one outstanding difference between the two is that man is uni-personal, while God is tri-personal. And this tri-personal existence is a necessity in the Divine Being, and not in any sense the result of a choice of God. He could not exist in any other than the tri-personal form. This has been argued in various ways. It is very common to argue it from the idea of personality itself. Shedd bases his argument on the *general* self-consciousness of the triune God, as distinguished from the particular individual self-consciousness of each one of the Persons in the Godhead, for in self-consciousness the subject must know itself as an object, and also perceive that it does. This is possible in God because of His trinal existence. He says that God could not be self-contemplating, self-cognitive, and self-communing, if He were not trinal in His constitution.[*Dogm. Theol.*, I, pp. 393 f., 251 ff., 178ff.] Bartlett presents in an interesting way a variety of considerations to prove

that God is *necessarily* tri-personal.[*The Triune God, Part Two.*] The argument from personality, to prove at least a plurality in God, can be put in some such form as this: Among men the ego awakens to consciousness only by contact with the non-ego. Personality does not develop nor exist in isolation, but only in association with other persons. Hence it is not possible to conceive of personality in God apart from an association of *equal* persons in Him. His contact with His creatures would not account for His personality any more than man's contact with the animals would explain his personality. In virtue of the tri-personal existence of God there is an infinite fulness of divine life in Him. Paul speaks of this *pleroma* (fulness) of the Godhead in Eph. 3:19 and Col. 1:9; 2:9. In view of the fact that there are three persons in God, it is better to say that God is personal than to speak of Him as a Person.

2. SCRIPTURAL PROOF FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY. The doctrine of the Trinity is very decidedly a doctrine of revelation. It is true that human reason may suggest some thoughts to substantiate the doctrine, and that men have sometimes on purely philosophical grounds abandoned the idea of a bare unity in God, and introduced the idea of living movement and self-distinction. And it is also true that Christian experience would seem to demand some such construction of the doctrine of God. At the same time it is a doctrine which we would not have known, nor have been able to maintain with any degree of confidence, on the basis of experience alone, and which is brought to our knowledge only by God's special self-revelation. Therefore it is of the utmost importance that we gather the Scriptural proofs for it.

a. *Old Testament proofs.* Some of the early Church Fathers and even some later theologians, disregarding the progressive character of God's revelation, gave the impression that the doctrine of the Trinity was completely revealed in the Old Testament. On the other hand Socinians and Arminians were of the opinion that it was not found there at all. Both were mistaken. The Old Testament does not contain a full revelation of the trinitarian existence of God, but does contain

several indications of it. And this is exactly what might be expected. The Bible never deals with the doctrine of the Trinity as an abstract truth, but reveals the trinitarian life in its various relations as a living reality, to a certain extent in connection with the works of creation and providence, but particularly in relation to the work of redemption. Its most fundamental revelation is a revelation given in facts rather than in words. And this revelation increases in clarity in the measure in which the redemptive work of God is more clearly revealed, as in the incarnation of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And the more the glorious reality of the Trinity stands out in the facts of history, the clearer the statements of the doctrine become. The fuller revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament is due to the fact that the Word became flesh, and that the Holy Spirit took up His abode in the Church.

Proof for the Trinity has sometimes been found in the distinction of Jehovah and Elohim, and also in the plural Elohim, but the former is entirely unwarranted, and the latter is, to say the least, very dubious, though Rottenberg still maintains it in his work on *De Triniteit in Israels Godsbegrip*. [pp. 19ff.] It is far more plausible that the passages in which God speaks of Himself in the plural, Gen. 1:26; 11:7, contain an indication of personal distinctions in God, though even these do not point to a trinity but only to a plurality of persons. Still clearer indications of such personal distinctions are found in those passages which refer to the Angel of Jehovah, who is on the one hand identified with Jehovah, and on the other hand distinguished from Him, Gen. 16:7-13; 18:1-21; 19:1-28; Mal. 3:1; and also in passages in which the Word or Wisdom of God is personified, Ps. 33:4, 6; Prov. 8:12-31. In some cases more than one person is mentioned, Ps. 33:6; 45:6, 7 (comp. Heb. 1:8, 9), and in others God is the speaker, and mentions both the Messiah and the Spirit, or the Messiah is the speaker who mentions both God and the Spirit, Isa. 48:16; 61:1; 63:9, 10. Thus the Old Testament contains a clear anticipation of the fuller revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament.

b. *New Testament proofs.* The New Testament carries with it a clearer revelation of the distinctions in the Godhead. If in the Old Testament Jehovah is represented as the Redeemer and Saviour of His people, Job. 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; 106:21; Isa. 41:14; 43:3,11,14; 47:4; 49:7,26; 60:16; Jer. 14:3; 50:14; Hos. 13:3, in the New Testament the Son of God clearly stands out in that capacity, Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:76-79; 2:17; John 4:42; Acts 5:3; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Phil. 3:30; Tit. 2:13,14. And if in the Old Testament it is Jehovah that dwells among Israel and in the hearts of those that fear Him, Ps. 74:2; 135:21; Isa. 8:18; 57:15; Ezek. 43:7-9; Joel 3:17,21; Zech. 2:10, 11, in the New Testament it is the Holy Spirit that dwells in the Church, Acts 2:4, Rom. 8:9,11; I Cor. 3:16; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 2:22; Jas. 4:5. The New Testament offers the clear revelation of God sending His Son into the world, John 3:16; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 1:6; I John 4:9; and of both the Father and the Son, sending the Spirit, John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; Gal. 4:6. We find the Father addressing the Son, Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22, the Son communing with the Father, Matt. 11:25,26; 26:39; John 11:41; 12:27,28, and the Holy Spirit praying to God in the hearts of believers, Rom. 8:26. Thus the separate persons of the Trinity are made to stand out clearly before our minds. At the baptism of the Son the Father speaks from heaven, and the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove, Matt. 3:16,17. In the great commission Jesus mentions the three persons: “. . . baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” Matt. 28:19. They are also named alongside of each other in I Cor. 12:4-6; II Cor. 13:14; and I Peter 1:2. The only passage speaking of tri-unity is I John 5:7 (Auth. Ver.), but this is of doubtful genuineness, and is therefore eliminated from the latest critical editions of the New Testament.

3. STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY. The doctrine of the Trinity can best be discussed briefly in connection with various propositions, which constitute an epitome of the faith of the Church on this point.

a. *There is in the Divine Being but one indivisible essence (ousia, essentia).* God is one in His essential being or constitutional nature. Some of the early Church Fathers used the term “*substantia*” as synonymous with “*essentia*,” but later writers avoided this use of it in view of the fact that in the Latin Church “*substantia*” was used as a rendering of “*hupostasis*” as well as of “*ousia*”, and was therefore ambiguous. At present the two terms “*substance*” and “*essence*” are often used interchangeably. There is no objection to this, provided we bear in mind that they have slightly different connotations. Shedd distinguishes them as follows: “*Essence is from esse, to be, and denotes energetic being. Substance is from substare, and denotes the latent possibility of being. . . . The term essence describes God as a sum-total of infinite perfections; the term substance describes Him as the underlying ground of infinite activities. The first is, comparatively, an active word; the last, a passive. The first is, comparatively, a spiritual, the last a material term. We speak of material substance rather than of material essence.*”[*Dogm. Theol.*, I, p. 271.] Since the unity of God was already discussed in the preceding, it is not necessary to dwell on it in detail in the present connection. This proposition respecting the unity of God is based on such passages as Deut. 6:4; Jas. 2:19, on the self-existence and immutability of God, and on the fact that He is identified with His perfections as when He is called life, light, truth, righteousness, and so on.

b. *In this one Divine Being there are three Persons or individual subsistences, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.* This is proved by the various passages referred to as substantiating the doctrine of the Trinity. To denote these distinctions in the Godhead, Greek writers generally employed the term *hupostasis*, while Latin authors used the term *persona*, and sometimes *substantia*. Because the former was apt to be misleading and the latter was ambiguous, the Schoolmen coined the word *subsistentia*. The variety of the terms used points to the fact that their inadequacy was always felt. It is generally admitted that the word “*person*” is but an imperfect expression of the idea. In common parlance it denotes a separate

rational and moral individual, possessed of self-consciousness, and conscious of his identity amid all changes. Experience teaches that where you have a person, you also have a distinct individual essence. Every person is a distinct and separate individual, in whom human nature is individualized. But in God there are no three individuals alongside of, and separate from, one another, but only personal self-distinctions within the Divine essence, which is not only generically, but also numerically, one. Consequently many preferred to speak of three hypostases in God, three different modes, not of manifestation, as Sabellius taught, *but of existence or subsistence*. Thus Calvin says: “By person, then, I mean a subsistence in the Divine essence. — a subsistence which, while related to the other two, is distinguished from them by incommunicable properties.”[*Inst.* I, XIII, 6] This is perfectly permissible and may ward off misunderstanding, but should not cause us to lose sight of the fact that the self-distinctions in the Divine Being imply an “I” and “Thou” and “He,” in the Being of God, which assume personal relations to one another. Matt. 3:16; 4:1; John 1:18; 3:16; 5:20-22; 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15.

c. The whole undivided essence of God belongs equally to each of the three persons. This means that the divine essence is not divided among the three persons, but is wholly with all its perfection in each one of the persons, so that they have a numerical unity of essence. The divine nature is distinguished from the human nature in that it can subsist *wholly and indivisibly* in more than one person. While three persons among men have only a *specific* unity of nature or essence, that is, share in the same kind of nature or essence, the persons in the Godhead have a *numerical* unity of essence, that is, possess the identical essence. Human nature or essence may be regarded as a species, of which each man has an individual part, so that there is a *specific* (from species) unity; but the divine nature is indivisible and therefore identical in the persons of the Godhead. It is numerically one and the same, and therefore the unity of the essence in the persons is a numerical unity. From this it follows that the divine essence is not an independent existence alongside of the three persons. It has no existence outside of and apart from the three

persons. If it did, there would be no true unity, but a division that would lead into tetratheism. The personal distinction is one within the divine essence. This has, as it is usually termed, three modes of subsistence. Another conclusion which follows from the preceding, is that there can be no subordination *as to essential being* of the one person of the Godhead to the other, and therefore no difference in personal dignity. This must be maintained over against the subordinationism of Origen and other early Church Fathers, and the Arminians, and of Clarke and other Anglican theologians. The only subordination of which we can speak, is a subordination in respect to order and relationship. It is especially when we reflect on the relation of the three persons to the divine essence that all analogies fail us and we become deeply conscious of the fact that the Trinity is a mystery far beyond our comprehension. It is the incomprehensible glory of the Godhead. Just as human nature is too rich and too full to be embodied in a single individual, and comes to its adequate expression only in humanity as a whole so the divine Being unfolds itself in its fulness only in its three fold subsistence of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

d. *The subsistence and operation of the three persons in the divine Being is marked by a certain definite order.* There is a certain order in the ontological Trinity. In personal subsistence the Father is first, the Son second, and the Holy Spirit third. It need hardly be said that this order does not pertain to any priority of time or of essential dignity, but only to the logical order of derivation. The Father is neither begotten by, nor proceeds from any other person; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son from all eternity. Generation and procession take place within the Divine Being, and imply a certain subordination as to the manner of personal subsistence, but no subordination as far as the possession of the divine essence is concerned. This ontological Trinity and its inherent order is the metaphysical basis of the economical Trinity. It is but natural, therefore, that the order existing in the essential Trinity should be reflected in the *opera ad extra* that are more particularly ascribed to each one of the persons.

Scripture clearly indicates this order in the so-called *praepositiones distinctionales*, *ek*, *dia*, and *en*, which are used in expressing the idea that all things are out of the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.

e. *There are certain personal attributes by which the three persons are distinguished.* These are also called *opera ad intra*, because they are works within the Divine Being, which do not terminate on the creature. They are personal operations, which are not performed by the three persons jointly and which are incommunicable. Generation is an act of the Father only; filiation belongs to the Son exclusively; and procession can only be ascribed to the Holy Spirit. As *opera ad intra* these works are distinguished from the *opera ad extra*, or those activities and effects by which the Trinity is manifested outwardly. These are never works of one person exclusively, but always works of the Divine Being as a whole. At the same time it is true that in the economical order of God's works some of the *opera ad extra* are ascribed more particularly to one person, and some more especially to another. Though they are all works of the three persons jointly, creation is ascribed primarily to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Spirit. This order in the divine operations points back to the essential order in God and forms the basis for what is generally known as the economic Trinity.

f. *The Church confesses the Trinity to be a mystery beyond the comprehension of man.* The Trinity is a mystery, not merely in the Biblical sense that it is a truth, which was formerly hidden but is now revealed; but in the sense that man cannot comprehend it and make it intelligible. It is intelligible in some of its relations and modes of manifestation, but unintelligible in its essential nature. The many efforts that were made to explain the mystery were speculative rather than theological. They invariably resulted in the development of tritheistic or modalistic conceptions of God, in the denial of either the unity of the divine essence or the reality of the personal distinctions within the essence. The real difficulty lies in the relation

in which the persons in the Godhead stand to the divine essence and to one another; and this is a difficulty which the Church cannot remove, but only try to reduce to its proper proportion by a proper definition of terms. It has never tried to explain the mystery of the Trinity, but only sought to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity in such a manner that the errors which endangered it were warded off.

4. VARIOUS ANALOGIES SUGGESTED TO SHED LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT. From the very earliest time of the Christian era attempts were made to shed light on the trinitarian Being of God, on the trinity in unity and the unity in trinity, by analogies drawn from several sources. While these are all defective, it cannot be denied that they were of some value in the trinitarian discussion. This applies particularly to those derived from the constitutional nature, or from the psychology, of man. In view of the fact that man was created in the image of God, it is but natural to assume that, if there are some traces of the trinitarian life in the creature, the clearest of these will be found in man.

a. Some of these illustrations or analogies were taken from inanimate nature or from plant life, as the water of the fountain, the creek, and the river, or of the rising mist, the cloud, and the rain, or in the form of rain, snow, and ice; and as the tree with its root, trunk, and branches. These and all similar illustrations are very defective. The idea of personality is, of course, entirely wanting; and while they do furnish examples of a common nature or substance, they are not examples of a common essence which is present, not merely in part, but in its entirety, in each of its constituent parts or forms.

b. Others of greater importance were drawn from the life of man, particularly from the constitution and the processes of the human mind. These were considered to be of special significance, because man is the image-bearer of God. To this class belong the psychological unity of the intellect, the affections, and the will (Augustine); the logical unity of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis (Hegel); and the metaphysical unity of subject, object, and subject-

object (Olshausen, Shedd). In all of these we do have a certain trinity in unity, but no tri-personality in unity of substance.

c. Attention has also been called to the nature of love, which presupposes a subject and an object, and calls for the union of these two, so that, when love has its perfect work, three elements are included. But it is easy to see that this analogy is faulty, since it coordinates two persons and a relationship. It does not illustrate a tri-personality at all. Moreover, it only refers to a quality and not at all to a substance possessed in common by the subject and the object.

C. The Three Persons Considered Separately.

1. THE FATHER OR THE FIRST PERSON IN THE TRINITY.

a. *The name "Father" as applied to God.* This name is not always used of God in the same sense in Scripture. (1) Sometimes it is applied to the Triune God as the origin of all created things, I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:15; Heb. 12:9; Jas. 1:17. While in these cases the name applies to the triune God, it does refer more particularly to the first person, to whom the work of creation is more especially ascribed in Scripture. (2) The name is also ascribed to the triune God to express the theocratic relation in which He stands to Israel as His Old Testament people, Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4; Mal. 1:6; 2:10; (3) In the New Testament the name is generally used to designate the triune God as the Father in an ethical sense of all His spiritual children, Matt. 5:45; 6:6-15; Rom. 8:16; I John 3:1. (4) In an entirely different sense, however, the name is applied to the first person of the Trinity in His relation to the second person, John 1:14,18; 5:17-26; 8:54; 14:12,13. The first person is the Father of the second in a metaphysical sense. This is the original fatherhood of God, of which all earthly fatherhood is but a faint reflection.

b. *The distinctive property of the Father.* The personal property of the Father is, negatively speaking, that He is not begotten or unbegotten, and positively speaking, the generation of the Son and the spiration of the Holy Spirit. It is true that spiration is also a work of the Son, but in Him it is not combined with generation. Strictly speaking, the only work that is peculiar to the Father exclusively is that of active generation.

c. *The opera ad extra ascribed more particularly to the Father.* All the *opera ad extra* of God are works of the triune God, but in some of these works the Father is evidently in the foreground, such as: (1) Designing the work of redemption, including election, of which the Son was Himself an object, Ps. 2:7-9; 40:6-9; Isa. 53:10; Matt. 12:32; Eph. 1:3-6. (2) The works of creation and providence, especially in their initial stages, I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 2:9. (3) The work of representing the Trinity in the Counsel of Redemption, as the holy and righteous Being, whose right was violated, Ps. 2:7-9; 40:6-9; John 6:37,38; 17:4-7.

2. THE SON OR THE SECOND PERSON IN THE TRINITY.

a. *The name "Son" as applied to the second person.* The second person in the Trinity is called "Son" or "Son of God" in more than one sense of the word. (1) *In a metaphysical sense.* This must be maintained over against Socinians and Unitarians, who reject the idea of a tri-personal Godhead, see in Jesus a mere man, and regard the name "Son of God" as applied to Him primarily as an honorary title conferred upon Him. It is quite evident that Jesus Christ is represented as the Son of God in Scripture, irrespective of His position and work as Mediator. (a) He is spoken of as the Son of God from a pre-incarnation standpoint, for instance in John 1:14,18; Gal. 4:4. (b) He is called the "only-begotten" Son of God or of the Father, a term that would not apply to Him, if He were the Son of God only in an official or in an ethical sense, John 1:14,18; 3:16,18; I John 4:9. Compare II Sam. 7:14; Job 2:1; Ps. 2:7; Luke 3:38; John 1:12. (c) In some passages it is abundantly evident from the context that the

name is indicative of the deity of Christ, John 5:18-25; Heb. 1. (d) While Jesus teaches His disciples to speak of God, and to address Him as “our Father,” He Himself speaks of Him, and addresses Him, simply as “Father” or “my Father,” and thereby shows that He was conscious of a unique relationship to the Father, Matt. 6:9; 7:21; John 20:17. (e) According to Matt. 11:27, Jesus as the Son of God claims a unique knowledge of God, a knowledge such as no one else can possess. (f) The Jews certainly understood Jesus to claim that He was the Son of God in a metaphysical sense, for they regarded the manner in which He spoke of Himself as the Son of God as blasphemy, Matt. 26:63; John 5:18; 10:36. — (2) *In an official or Messianic sense.* In some passages this meaning of the name is combined with the one previously mentioned. The following passages apply the name “Son of God” to Christ as Mediator, Matt. 8:29, 26:63 (where this meaning is combined with the other); 27:40; John 1:49; 11:27. This Messiah-Sonship is, of course, related to the original Sonship of Christ. It was only because He was the essential and eternal Son of God, that He could be called the Son of God as Messiah. Moreover, the Messiah-Sonship reflects the eternal Sonship of Christ. It is from the point of view of this Messiah-Sonship that God is even called the God of the Son, II Cor. 11:31; Eph. 1:3, and is sometimes mentioned as God in distinction from the Lord, John 17:3; I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:5,6. — (3) *In a nativistic sense.* The name “Son of God” is given to Jesus also in view of the fact that He owed His birth to the paternity of God. He was begotten, according to His human nature, by the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit, and is in that sense the Son of God. This is clearly indicated in Luke 1:32,35, and may probably be inferred also from John 1:13.

b. *The personal subsistence of the Son.* The personal subsistence of the Son must be maintained over against all Modalists, who in one way or another deny the *personal* distinctions in the Godhead. The personality of the Son may be substantiated as follows: (1) The way in which the Bible speaks of the Father and the Son alongside of each other implies that the one is just as personal as the other, and is also indicative of a personal relationship existing between the two. (2)

The use of the appellatives “only-begotten” and “firstborn” imply that the relation between the Father and the Son, while unique, can nevertheless be represented approximately as one of generation and birth. The name “firstborn” is found in Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:6, and emphasizes the fact of the eternal generation of the Son. It simply means that He was before all creation. (3) The distinctive use of the term “Logos” in Scripture points in the same direction. This term is applied to the Son, not in the first place to express His relation to the world (which is quite secondary), but to indicate the intimate relation in which He stands to the Father, the relation like that of a word to the speaker. In distinction from philosophy, the Bible represents the Logos as personal and identifies Him with the Son of God, John 1:1-14; I John 1:1-3. (4) The description of the Son as the image, or even as the very image of God in II Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3. God clearly stands out in Scripture as a personal Being. If the Son of God is the very image of God, He too must be a person.

c. The eternal generation of the Son. The personal property of the Son is that He is eternally begotten of the Father (briefly called “filiation”), and shares with the Father in the spiration of the Spirit. The doctrine of the generation of the Son is suggested by the Biblical representation of the first and second persons of the Trinity as standing in the relation of Father and Son to each other. Not only do the names “Father” and “Son” suggest the generation of the latter by the former, but the Son is also repeatedly called “the only-begotten,” John 1:14,18; 3:16,18; Heb. 11:17; I John 4:9. Several particulars deserve emphasis in connection with the generation of the Son: (1) *It is a necessary act of God.* Origen, one of the very first to speak of the generation of the Son, regarded it as an act dependent on the Father’s will and therefore free. Others at various times expressed the same opinion. But it was clearly seen by Athanasius and others that a generation dependent on the optional will of the Father would make the existence of the Son contingent and thus rob Him of His deity. Then the Son would not be equal to and *homoousios* with the Father, for the Father exists necessarily, and cannot be conceived of as non-existent. The generation of the Son must be regarded as a

necessary and perfectly natural act of God. This does not mean that it is not related to the Father's will in any sense of the word. It is an act of the Father's necessary will, which merely means that His concomitant will takes perfect delight in it. (2) *It is an eternal act of the Father.* This naturally follows from the preceding. If the generation of the Son is a *necessary* act of the Father, so that it is impossible to conceive of Him as not generating, it naturally shares in the eternity of the Father. This does not mean, however, that it is an act that was completed in the far distant past, but rather that it is a timeless act, the act of an eternal present, an act always continuing and yet ever completed. Its eternity follows not only from the eternity of God, but also from the divine immutability and from the true deity of the Son. In addition to this it can be inferred from all those passages of Scripture which teach either the pre-existence of the Son or His equality with the Father, Mic. 5:2; John 1:14,18; 3:16; 5:17,18,30,36; Acts 13:33; John 17:5; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:3. The statement of Ps. 2:7, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee," is generally quoted to prove the generation of the Son, but, according to some, with rather doubtful propriety, cf. Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5. They surmise that these words refer to the raising up of Jesus as Messianic King, and to the recognition of Him as Son of God in an official sense, and should probably be linked up with the promise found in II Sam. 7:14, just as they are in Heb. 1:5. (3) *It is a generation of the personal subsistence rather than of the divine essence of the Son.* Some have spoken as if the Father generated the essence of the Son, but this is equivalent to saying that He generated His own essence, for the essence of both the Father and the Son is exactly the same. It is better to say that the Father generates the personal subsistence of the Son, but thereby also communicates to Him the divine essence in its entirety. But in doing this we should guard against the idea that the Father first generated a second person, and then communicated the divine essence to this person, for that would lead to the conclusion that the Son was not generated out of the divine essence, but created out of nothing. In the work of generation there was a communication of essence; it was one indivisible act. And in virtue of this communication the Son also has

life in Himself. This is in agreement with the statement of Jesus, "For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself," John 5:26. (4) *It is a generation that must be conceived of as spiritual and divine.* In opposition to the Arians, who insisted that the generation of the Son necessarily implied separation or division in the divine Being, the Church Fathers stressed the fact that this generation must not be conceived in a physical and creaturely way, but should be regarded as spiritual and divine, excluding all idea of division or change. It brings *distinctio* and *distributio*, but no *diversitas* and *divisio* in the divine Being. (Bavinck) The most striking analogy of it is found in man's thinking and speaking, and the Bible itself seems to point to this, when it speaks of the Son as the Logos. (5) The following definition may be given of the generation of the Son: *It is that eternal and necessary act of the first person in the Trinity, whereby He, within the divine Being, is the ground of a second personal subsistence like His own, and puts this second person in possession of the whole divine essence, without any division, alienation, or change.*

d. *The deity of the Son.* The deity of the Son was denied in the early Church by the Ebionites and the Alogi, and also by the dynamic Monarchians and the Arians. In the days of the Reformation the Socinians followed their example, and spoke of Jesus as a mere man. The same position is taken by Schleiermacher and Ritschl, by a host of liberal scholars, particularly in Germany, by the Unitarians, and by the Modernists and Humanists of the present day. This denial is possible only for those who disregard the teachings of Scripture, for the Bible contains an abundance of evidence for the deity of Christ. [This is very ably summed up in such works as Liddon's *The Divinity of Our Lord*, Warfield's *The Lord of Glory*, and Wm. C. Robinson's *Our Lord*.] We find that Scripture (1) *explicitly asserts the deity of the Son* in such passages as John 1:1; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; Tit. 2:13; I John 5:20; (2) *applies divine names to Him*, Isa. 9:6; 40:3; Jer. 23:5,6; Joel 2:32 (comp. Acts 2:21); I Tim. 3:16; (3) *ascribes to Him divine attributes*, such as eternal existence, Isa. 9:6; John 1:1,2; Rev. 1:8; 22:13, omnipresence, Matt. 18:20; 28:20; John 3:13,

omniscience, John 2:24,25; 21:17; Rev. 2:23, omnipotence. Isa. 9:6; Phil. 3:21; Rev. 1:8, immutability, Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8, and in general every attribute belonging to the Father, Col. 2:9; (4) *speaks of Him as doing divine works*, as creation, John 1:3,10; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2,10, providence, Luke 10:22; John 3:35; 17:2; Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3, the forgiveness of sins, Matt. 9:2-7; Mark 2:7-10; Col. 3:13, resurrection and judgment, Matt. 25:31,32; John 5:19-29; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Phil. 3:21; II Tim. 4:1, the final dissolution and renewal of all things, Heb. 1:10-12; Phil. 3:21; Rev. 21:5, and (5) *accords Him divine honour*, John 5:22,23; 14:1; I Cor. 15:19; II Cor. 13:13; Heb. 1:6; Matt. 28:19.

e. *The place of the Son in the economic Trinity.* It should be noted that the order of existence in the essential or ontological Trinity is reflected in the economic Trinity. The Son occupies the second place in the *opera ad extra*. If all things are *out of* the Father, they are *through* the Son, I Cor. 8:6. If the former is represented as the absolute cause of all things, the latter stands out clearly as the mediating cause. This applies in the natural sphere, where all things are created and maintained through the Son, John 1:3,10; Heb. 1:2,3. He is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, John 1:9. It applies also to the work of redemption. In the Counsel of Redemption He takes upon Himself to be Surety for His people, and to execute the Father's plan of redemption, Ps. 40:7,8. He works this out more particularly in His incarnation, sufferings, and death, Eph. 1:3-14. In connection with His function the attributes of wisdom and power, I Cor. 1:24; Heb. 1:3, and of mercy and grace, are especially ascribed to Him, II Cor. 13:13; Eph. 5:2,25.

3. THE HOLY SPIRIT OR THE THIRD PERSON IN THE TRINITY.

a. *The name applied to the third person of the Trinity.* While we are told in John 4:24 that God is Spirit, the name is applied more particularly to the third person in the Trinity. The Hebrew term by which He is designated is *ruach*, and the Greek *pneuma*, both of

which are, like the Latin *spiritus*, derived from roots which mean “to breathe.” Hence they can also be rendered “breath,” Gen. 2:7; 6:17; Ezek. 37:5, 6, or “wind,” Gen. 8:1; I Kings 19:11; John 3:8. The Old Testament generally uses the term “spirit” without any qualification, or speaks of “the Spirit of God” or “the Spirit of the Lord,” and employs the term “Holy Spirit” only in Ps. 51:11; Isa. 63:10,11, while in the New Testament this has become a far more common designation of the third person in the Trinity. It is a striking fact that, while the Old Testament repeatedly calls God “the Holy One of Israel,” Ps. 71:22; 89:18; Isa. 10:20; 41:14; 43:3; 48:17, the New Testament seldom applies the adjective “holy” to God in general, but uses it frequently to characterize the Spirit. This is in all probability due to the fact that it was especially in the Spirit and His sanctifying work that God revealed Himself as the Holy One. It is the Holy Spirit that takes up His abode in the hearts of believers, that separates them unto God, and that cleanses them from sin.

b. *The personality of the Holy Spirit.* The terms “Spirit of God” or “Holy Spirit” do not suggest personality as much as the term “Son” does. Moreover, the person of the Holy Spirit did not appear in a clearly discernible personal form among men, as the person of the Son of God did. As a result the personality of the Holy Spirit was often called in question, and therefore deserves special attention. The personality of the Spirit was denied in the early Church by the Monarchians and the Pneumatomachians. In this denial they were followed by the Socinians in the days of the Reformation. Still later Schleiermacher, Ritschl, the Unitarians, present-day Modernists, and all modern Sabellians reject the personality of the Holy Spirit. It is often said in the present day that those passages which seem to imply the personality of the Holy Spirit simply contain personifications. But personifications are certainly rare in the prose writings of the New Testament and can easily be recognized. Moreover, such an explanation clearly destroys the sense of some of these passages, e.g. John 14:26; 16:7-11; Rom. 8:26. Scripture proof for the personality of the Holy Spirit is quite sufficient: (1) *Designations that are proper to personality are given to Him.*

Though *pneuma* is neuter, yet the masculine pronoun *ekeinos* is used of the Spirit in John 16:14; and in Eph. 1:14 some of the best authorities have the masculine relative pronoun *hos*. Moreover, the name Parakletos is applied to Him, John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7, which cannot be translated by “comfort,” or be regarded as the name of any abstract influence. That a person is meant is indicated by the fact that the Holy Spirit as Comforter is placed in juxtaposition with Christ as the Comforter about to depart, to whom the same term is applied in I John 2:1. It is true that this term is followed by the neuters *ho* and *auto* in John 14:16-18, but this is due to the fact that *pneuma* intervenes. (2) *The characteristics of a person are ascribed to Him*, such as intelligence, John 14:26; 15:26; Rom. 8:16, will, Acts 16:7; I Cor. 12:11, and affections, Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30. Moreover, He performs acts proper to personality. He searches, speaks, testifies, commands, reveals, strives, creates, makes intercession, raises the dead, etc., Gen. 1:2; 6:3; Luke 12:12; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8; Acts 8:29; 13:2; Rom. 8:11; I Cor. 2:10,11. What does all these things cannot be a mere power or influence, but must be a person. (3) *He is represented as standing in such relations to other persons as imply His own personality*. He is placed in juxtaposition with the apostles in Acts 15:28, with Christ in John 16:14, and with the Father and the Son in Matt. 28:19; II Cor. 13:13; I Pet. 1:1,2; Jude 20, 21. Sound exegesis requires that in these passages the Holy Spirit be regarded as a person. (4) *There are also passages in which the Holy Spirit is distinguished from His own power*, Luke 1:35; 4:14; Acts 10:38; Rom. 15:13; I Cor. 2:4. Such passages would become tautological, meaningless, and even absurd, if they were interpreted on the principle that the Holy Spirit is merely a power. This can be shown by substituting for the name “Holy Spirit” such a word as “power” or “influence.”

c. The relation of the Holy Spirit to the other persons in the trinity. The early trinitarian controversies led to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit, as well as the Son, is of the same essence as the Father, and is therefore consubstantial with Him. And the long drawn dispute about the question, whether the Holy Spirit proceeded from the

Father alone or also from the Son, was finally settled by the Synod of Toledo in 589 by adding the word “Filioque” to the Latin version of the Constantinopolitan Creed: “*Credimus in Spiritum Sanctum qui a Patre Filioque procedit*” (“We believe in the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son”). This procession of the Holy Spirit, briefly called spiration, is his personal property. Much of what was said respecting the generation of the Son also applies to the spiration of the Holy Spirit, and need not be repeated. The following points of distinction between the two may be noted, however: (1) Generation is the work of the Father only; spiration is the work of both the Father and the Son. (2) By generation the Son is enabled to take part in the work of spiration, but the Holy Spirit acquires no such power. (3) In logical order generation precedes spiration. It should be remembered, however, that all this implies no essential subordination of the Holy Spirit to the Son. In spiration as well as in generation there is a communication of the whole of the divine essence, so that the Holy Spirit is on an equality with the Father and the Son. The doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son is based on John 15:26, and on the fact that the Spirit is also called the Spirit of Christ and of the Son, Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6, and is sent by Christ into the world. Spiration may be defined as *that eternal and necessary act of the first and second persons in the Trinity whereby they, within the divine Being, become the ground of the personal subsistence of the Holy Spirit, and put the third person in possession of the whole divine essence, without any division, alienation or change.* *p> <p>The Holy Spirit stands in the closest possible relation to the other persons.* In virtue of His procession from the Father and the Son the Spirit is represented as standing in the closest possible relation to both of the other persons.

From I Cor. 2:10,11, we may infer, not that the Spirit is the same as the self-consciousness of God, but that He is as closely connected with God the Father as the soul of man is with man. In II Cor. 3:17, we read, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Here the Lord (Christ) is identified with the Spirit, not with respect to personality, but as to manner of working.

In the same passage the Spirit is called “the Spirit of the Lord.” The work for which the Holy Spirit was sent into the Church on the day of Pentecost was based on His unity with the Father and the Son. He came as the Parakletos to take the place of Christ and to do His work on earth, that is, to teach, proclaim, testify, bear witness, etc., as the Son had done. Now in the case of the Son this revelational work rested on His unity with the Father. Just so the work of the Spirit is based on His unity with the Father and the Son, John 16:14,15. Notice the words of Jesus in this passage: “He shall glorify me; for He shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you. All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you.”

d. *The deity of the Holy Spirit.* The deity of the Holy Spirit may be established from Scripture by a line of proof quite similar to that employed in connection with the Son: (1) *Divine names are given to Him*, Ex. 17:7 (comp. Heb. 3:7-9); Acts 5:3,4; I Cor. 3:16; II Tim. 3:16 (comp. II Pet. 1:21). (2) *Divine perfections are ascribed to Him*, such as omnipresence, Ps. 139:7-10, omniscience, Isa. 40:13,14 (comp. Rom. 11:34); I Cor. 2:10,11, omnipotence, I Cor. 12:11; Rom. 15:19, and eternity, Heb. 9:14 (?). (3) *Divine works are performed by Him*, such as creation, Gen. 1:2; Job. 26:13; 33:4, providential renovation, Ps. 104:30, regeneration, John 3:5,6; Tit. 3:5, and the resurrection of the dead, Rom. 8:11. (4) *Divine honour is also paid to Him*, Matt. 28:19; Rom. 9:1; II Cor. 13:13.

e. *The work of the Holy Spirit in the divine economy.* There are certain works which are more particularly ascribed to the Holy Spirit, not only in the general economy of God, but also in the special economy of redemption. In general it may be said that it is the special task of the Holy Spirit to bring things to completion by acting immediately upon and in the creature. Just as He Himself is the person who completes the Trinity, so His work is the completion of God’s contact with His creatures and the consummation of the work of God in every sphere. It follows the work of the Son, just as the work of the Son follows that of the Father. It is important to bear this

in mind, for if the work of the Holy Spirit is divorced from the objective work of the Son, false mysticism is bound to result. The work of the Holy Spirit includes the following in the natural sphere: (1) *The generation of life*. As being is out of the Father, and thought through the Son, so life is mediated by the Spirit, Gen. 1:3; Job. 26:13; Ps. 33:6 (?); Ps. 104:30. In that respect He puts the finishing touch to the work of creation. (2) *The general inspiration and qualification of men*. The Holy Spirit inspires and qualifies men for their official tasks, for work in science and art, etc., Ex. 28:3; 31:2,3,6; 35:35; I Sam. 11:6; 16:13,14.

Of even greater importance is the work of the Holy Spirit in the sphere of redemption. Here the following points may be mentioned: (1) *The preparation and qualification of Christ for His mediatorial work*. He prepared Christ a body and thus enabled Him to become a sacrifice for sin, Luke 1:35; Heb. 10:5-7. In the words "a body thou didst prepare for me," the writer of Hebrews follows the Septuagint. The meaning is: Thou hast enabled me by the preparation of a holy body to become a real sacrifice. At His baptism Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit, Luke 3:22, and received the qualifying gifts of the Holy Spirit without measure, John 3:24. (2) *The inspiration of Scripture*. The Holy Spirit inspired Scripture, and thus brought to men the special revelation of God, I Cor. 2:13; II Pet. 1:21, the knowledge of the work of redemption which is in Christ Jesus. (3) *The formation and augmentation of the Church*. The Holy Spirit forms and increases the Church, the mystical body of Jesus Christ, by regeneration and sanctification, and dwells in it as the principle of the new life, Eph. 1:22,23; 2:22; I Cor. 3:16; 12:4 ff. (4) *Teaching and guiding the Church*. The Holy Spirit testifies to Christ and leads the Church in all the truth. By doing this He manifests the glory of God and of Christ, increases the knowledge of the Saviour, keeps the Church from error, and prepares her for her eternal destiny, John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13,14; Acts 5:32; Heb. 10:15; I John 2:27.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY. Does pagan literature contain any analogies of the doctrine of the Trinity? Does the development of

the doctrine of the Trinity start from the ontological or from the economical Trinity? Can the economical Trinity be understood apart from the ontological? Why is the doctrine of the Trinity discussed by some as introductory to the doctrine of redemption? What is the Hegelian conception of the Trinity? How did Swedenborg conceive of it? Where do we find Sabellianism in modern theology? Why is it objectionable to hold that the Trinity is purely economical? What objections are there to the modern Humanitarian conception of the Trinity? Why does Barth treat of the Trinity in the Prolegomena to theology? What is the practical significance of the doctrine of the Trinity?

LITERATURE: Bavinck, *Geref Dogm.* II, pp. 260-347; Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm., De Deo* II, pp. 3-255; Vos, *Geref. Dogm.* I, pp. 36-81; Mastricht, *Godgeleerdheit* I, pp. 576-662; Turretin, *Opera, Locus Tertius*; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* I, pp. 442-534; Dabney, *Syst. and Polem. Theol.*, pp. 174-211; Curtiss, *The Chr. Faith*, pp. 483-510; Harris, *God, Creator and Lord of All*, I, pp. 194-407; Illingworth, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*; Adeney, *The Christian Conception of God*, pp. 215-246; Steenstra, *The Being of God as Unity and Trinity*, pp. 159-269; Clarke, *The Chr. Doct. of God*, pp. 227-248; Bartlett, *The Triune God*; Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord*; Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*; Warfield, *The Lord of Glory*; *ibid.*, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament*; and *The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity* (both in *Biblical Doctrines*), pp. 101 ff.; *ibid.*, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity* (in *Calvin and Calvinism*); Kuyper, *Het Werk van den Heiligen Geest*, cf. Index; Owen, *A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*, cf. Index; Smeaton, *The Doct. of the Holy Spirit*; Pohle-Preuss, *The Divine Trinity*.

The Works of God

I. The Divine Decrees in General

A. The Doctrine of the Decrees in Theology.

Reformed theology stresses the sovereignty of God in virtue of which He has sovereignly determined from all eternity whatsoever will come to pass, and works His sovereign will in His entire creation, both natural and spiritual, according to His pre-determined plan. It is in full agreement with Paul when he says that God “worketh all things after the counsel of His will,” Eph. 1:11. For that reason it is but natural that, in passing from the discussion of the Being of God to that of the works of God, it should begin with a study of the divine decrees. This is the only proper theological method. A theological discussion of the works of God should take its startingpoint in God, both in the work of creation and in that of redemption or recreation. It is only as issuing from, and as related to, God that the works of God come into consideration as a part of theology.

In spite of this fact, however, Reformed theology stands practically alone in its emphasis on the doctrine of the decrees. Lutheran theology is less theological and more anthropological. It does not consistently take its starting point in God and consider all things as divinely pre-determined, but reveals a tendency to consider things from below rather than from above. And in so far as it does believe in pre-determination, it is inclined to limit this to the good that is in the world, and more particularly to the blessings of salvation. It is a striking fact that many Lutheran theologians are silent, or all but

silent, respecting the doctrine of the decrees of God in general and discuss only the doctrine of pre-destination, and regard this as *conditional* rather than absolute. In the doctrine of predestination Lutheran theology shows strong affinity with Arminianism. Krauth (an influential leader of the Lutheran Church in our country) even says: "The views of Arminius himself, in regard to the five points, were formed under Lutheran influences, and do not differ essentially from those of the Lutheran Church; but on many points in the developed system now known as Arminianism, the Lutheran Church has no affinity whatever with it, and on these points would sympathize far more with Calvinism, though she has never believed that in order to escape from Pelagianism, it is necessary to run into the doctrine of absolute predestination. The 'Formula of Concord' touches the five points almost purely on their practical sides, and on them arrays itself against Calvinism, rather by the negation of the inferences which result logically from that system, than by express condemnation of its fundamental theory in its abstract form." [*The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology*, pp. 127f.] In so far as Lutheran theologians include the doctrine of predestination in their system, they generally consider it in connection with Soteriology.

Naturally, Arminian theology does not place the doctrine of the decrees in the foreground. That of the decrees in general is usually conspicuous by its absence. Pope brings in the doctrine of predestination only in passing, and Miley introduces it as an issue for discussion. Raymond discusses only the doctrine of election, and Watson devotes considerable space to this in considering the extent of the atonement. One and all reject the doctrine of absolute predestination, and substitute for it a conditional predestination. Modern liberal theology does not concern itself with the doctrine of predestination, since it is fundamentally anthropological. In the "theology of crisis" it is again recognized, but in a form that is neither Scriptural nor historical. In spite of its appeal to the Reformers, it departs widely from the doctrine of predestination, as it was taught by Luther and Calvin.

B. Scriptural Names for the Divine Decrees.

From the purely immanent works of God (*opera ad intra*) we must distinguish those which bear directly on the creatures (*opera ad extra*). Some theologians, in order to avoid misunderstanding, prefer to speak of *opera immanentia* and *opera exeuntia*, and subdivide the former into two classes, *opera immanentia per se*, which are the *opera personalia* (generation, filiation, spiration), and *opera immanentia donec exeunt*, which are *opera essentialia*, that is, works of the triune God, in distinction from works of any one of the persons of the Godhead, but are immanent in God, until they are realized in the works of creation, providence, and redemption. The divine decrees constitute this class of divine works. They are not described in the abstract in Scripture, but are placed before us in their historical realization. Scripture uses several terms for the eternal decree of God.

1. OLD TESTAMENT TERMS. There are some terms which stress the intellectual element in the decree, such as *'etsah* from *ya'ats*, to counsel, to give advice, Job 38:2; Isa. 14:26; 46:11; *sod* from *yasad*, to sit together in deliberation (niphah), Jer. 23:18,22; and *mezimmah* from *zamam*, to meditate, to have in mind, to purpose, Jer. 4:28; 51:12; Prov. 30:32. Besides these there are terms which emphasize the volitional element, such as *chaphets*, inclination, will, good pleasure, Isa. 53:10; and *ratson*, to please, to be delighted, and thus denoting delight, good pleasure, or sovereign will, Ps. 51:19; Isa. 49:8.

2. NEW TESTAMENT TERMS. The New Testament also contains a number of significant terms. The most general word is *boule*, designating the decree in general, but also pointing to the fact that the purpose of God is based on counsel and deliberation, Acts 2:23; 4:28; Heb. 6:17. Another rather general word is *thelema*, which, as applied to the counsel of God, stresses the volitional rather than the

deliberative element, Eph. 1:11. The word *eudokia* emphasizes more particularly the freedom of the purpose of God, and the delight with which it is accompanied, though this idea is not always present, Matt. 11:26; Luke 2:14; Eph. 1:5,9. Other words are used more especially to designate that part of the divine decree that pertains in a very special sense to God's moral creatures, and is known as predestination. These terms will be considered in connection with the discussion of that subject.

C. The Nature of the Divine Decrees.

The decree of God may be defined with the Westminster Shorter Catechism as "*His eternal purpose according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.*"

1. THE DIVINE DECREE IS ONE. Though we often speak of the decrees of God in the plural, yet in its own nature the divine decree is but a single act of God. This is already suggested by the fact that the Bible speaks of it as a *prothesis*, a purpose or counsel. It follows also from the very nature of God. His knowledge is all immediate and simultaneous rather than successive like ours, and His comprehension of it is always complete. And the decree that is founded on it is also a single, all-comprehensive, and simultaneous act. As an eternal and immutable decree it could not be otherwise. There is, therefore, no series of decrees in God, but simply one comprehensive plan, embracing all that comes to pass. Our finite comprehension, however, constrains us to make distinctions, and this accounts for the fact that we often speak of the decrees of God in the plural. This manner of speaking is perfectly legitimate, provided we do not lose sight of the unity of the divine decree, and of the inseparable connection of the various decrees as we conceive of them.

2. THE RELATION OF THE DECREE TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. The decree of God bears the closest relation to the divine knowledge. There is in God, as we have seen, a necessary knowledge, including all possible causes and results. This knowledge furnishes the material for the decree; it is the perfect fountain out of which God drew the thoughts which He desired to objectify. Out of this knowledge of all things possible He chose, by an act of His perfect will, led by wise considerations, what He wanted to bring to realization, and thus formed His eternal purpose. The decree of God is, in turn, the foundation of His free knowledge or *scientia libera*. It is the knowledge of things as they are realized in the course of history. While the necessary knowledge of God logically precedes the decree, His free knowledge logically follows it. This must be maintained over against all those who believe in a conditional predestination (such as Semi-Pelagians and Arminians), since they make the pre-determinations of God dependent on His foreknowledge. Some of the words used to denote the divine decree point to an element of deliberation in the purpose of God. It would be a mistake, however, to infer from this that the plan of God is the result of any deliberation which implies short-sightedness or hesitation, for it is simply an indication of the fact that there is no blind decree in God, but only an intelligent and deliberate purpose.

3. THE DECREE RELATES TO BOTH GOD AND MAN. The decree has reference, first of all, to the works of God. It is limited, however, to God's *opera ad extra* or transitive acts, and does not pertain to the essential Being of God, nor to the immanent activities within the Divine Being which result in the trinitarian distinctions. God did not decree to be holy and righteous, nor to exist as three persons in one essence or to generate the Son. These things are as they are *necessarily*, and are not dependent on the optional will of God. That which is essential to the inner Being of God can form no part of the contents of the decree. This includes only the *opera ad extra* or *exeuntia*. But while the decree pertains primarily to the acts of God Himself, it is not limited to these, but also embraces the actions of His free creatures. And the fact that they are included in

the decree renders them absolutely certain, though they are not all effectuated in the same manner. In the case of some things God decided, not merely that they would come to pass, but that He Himself would bring them to pass, either immediately, as in the work of creation, or through the mediation of secondary causes, which are continually energized by His power. He Himself assumes the responsibility for their coming to pass. There are other things, however, which God included in His decree and thereby rendered certain, but which He did not decide to effectuate Himself, as the sinful acts of His rational creatures. The decree, in so far as it pertains to these acts, is generally called God's permissive decree. This name does not imply that the futuration of these acts is not certain to God, but simply that He permits them to come to pass by the free agency of His rational creatures. God assumes no responsibility for these sinful acts whatsoever.

4. THE DECREE TO ACT IS NOT THE ACT ITSELF. The decrees are an internal manifestation and exercise of the divine attributes, rendering the futuration of things certain but this exercise of the intelligent volition of God should not be confounded with the realization of its objects in creation, providence, and redemption. The decree to create is not creation itself, nor is the decree to justify justification itself. A distinction must be made between the decree and its execution. God's so ordering the universe that man will pursue a certain course of action, is also quite a different thing from His commanding him to do so. The decrees are not addressed to man, and are not of the nature of a statute law; neither do they impose compulsion or obligation on the wills of men.

D. The Characteristics of the Divine Decree.

1. IT IS FOUNDED IN DIVINE WISDOM. The word "counsel," which is one of the terms by which the decree is designated, suggests careful deliberation and consultation. It may contain a suggestion of

an intercommunion between the three persons of the Godhead. In speaking of God's revelation of the mystery that was formerly hid in Him, Paul says that this was "to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," Eph. 3:10,11. The wisdom of the decree also follows from the wisdom displayed in the realization of the eternal purpose of God. The poet sings in Ps. 104:24, "O Jehovah, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all." The same idea is expressed in Prov. 3:19, "Jehovah by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens." Cf. also Jer. 10:12; 51:15. The wisdom of the counsel of the Lord can also be inferred from the fact that it stands fast forever, Ps. 33:11; Prov. 19:21. There may be a great deal in the decree that passes human understanding and is inexplicable to the finite mind, but it contains nothing that is irrational or arbitrary. God formed his determination with wise insight and knowledge.

2. IT IS ETERNAL. The divine decree is eternal in the sense that it lies entirely in eternity. In a certain sense it can be said that all the acts of God are eternal, since there is no succession of moments in the Divine Being. But some of them terminate in time, as, for instance, creation and justification. Hence we do not call them eternal but temporal acts of God. The decree, however, while it relates to things outside of God, remains in itself an act within the Divine Being, and is therefore eternal in the strictest sense of the word. Therefore it also partakes of the simultaneousness and the successionlessness of the eternal, Acts 15:18; Eph. 1:4; II Tim. 1:9. The eternity of the decree also implies that the order in which the different elements in it stand to each other may not be regarded as temporal, but only as logical. There is a real chronological order in the events as effectuated, but not in the decree respecting them.

3. IT IS EFFICACIOUS. This does not mean that God has determined to bring to pass Himself by a direct application of His power all things which are included in His decree, but only that what

He has decreed will certainly come to pass; that nothing can thwart His purpose. Says Dr. A. A. Hodge: “The decree itself provides in every case that the event shall be effected by causes acting in a manner perfectly consistent with the nature of the event in question. Thus in the case of every free act of a moral agent the decree provides at the same time — (a) That the agent shall be a free agent. (b) That his antecedents and all the antecedents of the act in question shall be what they are. (c) That all the present *conditions* of the act shall be what they are. (d) That the act shall be perfectly spontaneous and free on the part of the agent. (e) That it shall be certainly future. Ps. 33:11; Prov. 19:21; Isa. 46:10.”[*Outlines of Theology*, p. 203.]

4. IT IS IMMUTABLE. Man may and often does alter his plans for various reasons. It may be that in making his plan he lacked seriousness of purpose, that he did not fully realize what the plan involved, or that he is wanting the power to carry it out. But in God nothing of the kind is conceivable. He is not deficient in knowledge, veracity, or power. Therefore He need not change His decree because of a mistake of ignorance, nor because of inability to carry it out. And He will not change it, because He is the immutable God and because He is faithful and true. Job 23:13,14; Ps. 33:11; Isa. 46:10; Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23.

5. IT IS UNCONDITIONAL OR ABSOLUTE. This means that it is not dependent in any of its particulars on anything that is not part and parcel of the decree itself. The various elements in the decree are indeed mutually dependent but nothing in the plan is conditioned by anything that is not in the decree. The execution of the plan may require means or be dependent on certain conditions, but then these means or conditions have also been determined in the decree. God did not simply decree to save sinners without determining the means to effectuate the decree. The means leading to the pre-determined end were also decreed, Acts 2:23; Eph. 2:8; I Pet. 1:2. The absolute character of the decree follows from its eternity, its immutability, and its exclusive dependence on the good pleasure of God. It is denied by all Semi-Pelagians and Arminians.

6. IT IS UNIVERSAL OR ALL-COMPREHENSIVE. The decree includes whatsoever comes to pass in the world, whether it be in the physical or in the moral realm, whether it be good or evil, Eph. 1:11. It includes: (a) the good actions of men, Eph. 21:0; (b) their wicked acts, Prov. 16:4; Acts 2:23; 4:27,28; (c) contingent events, Gen. 45:8; 50:20; Prov. 16:33; (d) the means as well as the end, Ps. 119:89-91; II Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:4; (e) the duration of man's life, Job 14:5; Ps. 39:4, and the place of his habitation, Acts 17:26.

7. WITH REFERENCE TO SIN IT IS PERMISSIVE. It is customary to speak of the decree of God respecting moral evil as permissive. By His decree God rendered the sinful actions of man infallibly certain without deciding to effectuate them by acting immediately upon and in the finite will. This means that God does not positively work in man "both to will and to do," when man goes contrary to His revealed will. It should be carefully noted, however, that this permissive decree does not imply a passive permission of something which is not under the control of the divine will. It is a decree which renders the future sinful act absolutely certain, but in which God determines (a) not to hinder the sinful self-determination of the finite will; and (b) to regulate and control the result of this sinful self-determination. Ps. 78:29; 106:15; Acts 14:16; 17:30.

E. Objections to the Doctrine of the Decrees.

As was said in the preceding, only Reformed theology does full justice to the doctrine of the decrees. Lutheran theologians do not, as a rule, construe it theologically but soteriologically, for the purpose of showing how believers can derive comfort from it. Pelagians and Socinians reject it as unscriptural; and Semi-Pelagians and Arminians show it scant favor: some ignoring it altogether; others stating it only to combat it; and still others maintaining only a decree conditioned by the foreknowledge of God. The objections raised to it are, in the main, always the same.

1. IT IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE MORAL FREEDOM OF MAN. Man is a free agent with the power of rational self-determination. He can reflect upon, and in an intelligent way choose, certain ends, and can also determine his action with respect to them. The decree of God however, carries with it necessity. God has decreed to effectuate all things or, if He has not decreed that, He has at least determined that they must come to pass. He has decided the course of man's life for him.[Cf. Watson, *Theological Institutes*, Part II, Chap. XXVIII; Miley, *Systematic Theology* II, pp. 271 ff.] In answer to this objection it may be said that the Bible certainly does not proceed on the assumption that the divine decree is inconsistent with the free agency of man. It clearly reveals that God has decreed the free acts of man, but also that the actors are none the less free and therefore responsible for their acts, Gen. 50:19,20; Acts 2:23; 4:27,28. It was determined that the Jews should bring about the crucifixion of Jesus; yet they were perfectly free in their wicked course of action, and were held responsible for this crime. There is not a single indication in Scripture that the inspired writers are conscious of a contradiction in connection with these matters. They never make an attempt to harmonize the two. This may well restrain us from assuming a contradiction here, even if we cannot reconcile both truths.

Moreover, it should be borne in mind that God has not decreed *to effectuate by His own direct action* whatsoever must come to pass. The divine decree only brings certainty into the events, but does not imply that God will actively effectuate them, so that the question really resolves itself into this, whether previous certainty is consistent with free agency. Now experience teaches us that we can be reasonably certain as to the course a man of character will pursue under certain circumstances, without infringing in the least on his freedom. The prophet Jeremiah predicted that the Chaldeans would take Jerusalem. He knew the coming event as a certainty, and yet the Chaldeans freely followed their own desires in fulfilling the prediction. Such certainty is indeed inconsistent with the Pelagian liberty of indifference, according to which the will of man is not

determined in any way, but is entirely indeterminate, so that in every volition it can decide in opposition, not only to all outward inducements, but also to all inward considerations and judgments, inclinations and desires, and even to the whole character and inner state of man. But it is now generally recognized that such freedom of the will is a psychological fiction. However, the decree is not necessarily inconsistent with human freedom in the sense of rational self-determination, according to which man freely acts in harmony with his previous thoughts and judgments, his inclinations and desires, and his whole character. This freedom also has its laws, and the better we are acquainted with them, the more sure we can be of what a free agent will do under certain circumstances. God Himself has established these laws. Naturally, we must guard against all determinism, materialistic, pantheistic, and rationalistic, in our conception of freedom in the sense of rational self-determination.

The decree is no more inconsistent with free agency than foreknowledge is, and yet the objectors, who are generally of the Semi-Pelagian or Arminian type, profess to believe in divine foreknowledge. By His foreknowledge God *knows* from all eternity the *certain futurity* of all events. It is based on His foreordination, by which He determined their future certainty. The Arminian will of course, say that he does not believe in a foreknowledge based on a decree which renders things certain, but in a foreknowledge of facts and events which are contingent on the free will of man, and therefore indeterminate. Now such a foreknowledge of the free actions of man may be possible, if man even in his freedom acts in harmony with divinely established laws, which again bring in the element of certainty; but it would seem to be impossible to foreknow events which are entirely dependent on the chance decision of an unprincipled will, which can at any time, irrespective of the state of the soul, of existing conditions, and of the motives that present themselves to the mind, turn in different directions. Such events can only be foreknown as bare possibilities.

2. IT TAKES AWAY ALL MOTIVES FOR HUMAN EXERTION. This objection is to the effect that people will naturally say that, if all things are bound to happen as God has determined them, they need not concern themselves about the future and need not make any efforts to obtain salvation. But this is hardly correct. In the case of people who speak after that fashion this is generally the mere excuse of indolence and disobedience. The divine decrees are not addressed to men as a rule of action, and cannot be such a rule, since their contents become known only through, and therefore after, their realization. There is a rule of action, however, embodied in the law and in the gospel, and this puts men under obligation to employ the means which God has ordained.

This objection also ignores the logical relation, determined by God's decree, between the means and the end to be obtained. The decree includes not only the various issues of human life, but also the free human actions which are logically prior to, and are destined to bring about, the results. It was absolutely certain that all those who were in the vessel with Paul (Acts 27) were to be saved, but it was equally certain that, in order to secure this end, the sailors had to remain aboard. And since the decree establishes an interrelation between means and ends, and ends are decreed only as the result of means, they encourage effort instead of discouraging it. Firm belief in the fact that, according to the divine decrees, success will be the reward of toil, is an inducement to courageous and persevering efforts. On the very basis of the decree Scripture urges us to be diligent in using the appointed means, Phil. 2:13; Eph. 2:10.

3. IT MAKES GOD THE AUTHOR OF SIN. This, if true, would naturally be an insuperable objection, for God cannot be the author of sin. This follows equally from Scripture, Ps. 92:15; Eccl. 7:29; Jas. 1:13; I John 1:5, from the law of God which prohibits all sin, and from the holiness of God. But the charge is not true; the decree merely makes God the author of free moral beings, who are themselves the authors of sin. God decrees to sustain their free agency, to regulate the circumstances of their life, and to permit that free agency to exert

itself in a multitude of acts, of which some are sinful. For good and holy reasons He renders these sinful acts certain, but He does not decree to work evil desires or choices efficiently in man. The decree respecting sin is not an efficient but a permissive decree, or a decree to permit, in distinction from a decree to produce, sin by divine efficiency. No difficulty attaches to such a decree which does not also attach to a *mere* passive permission of what He could very well prevent, such as the Arminians, who generally raise this objection, assume. The problem of God's relation to sin remains a mystery for us, which we are not able to solve. It may be said, however, that His decree to permit sin, while it renders the entrance of sin into the world certain, does not mean that He takes delight in it; but only that He deemed it wise, for the purpose of His self-revelation, to permit moral evil, however abhorrent it may be to His nature.

II. Predestination

In passing from the discussion of the divine decree to that of predestination, we are still dealing with the same subject, but are passing from the general to the particular. The word "predestination" is not always used in the same sense. Sometimes it is employed simply as a synonym of the generic word "decree." In other cases it serves to designate the purpose of God respecting all His moral creatures. Most frequently, however, it denotes "the counsel of God concerning fallen men, including the sovereign election of some and the righteous reprobation of the rest. In the present discussion it is used primarily in the last sense, though not altogether to the exclusion of the second meaning.

A. The Doctrine of Predestination in History.

Predestination does not form an important subject of discussion in history until the time of Augustine. Earlier Church Fathers allude to it, but do not as yet seem to have a very clear conception of it. On the whole they regard it as the prescience of God with reference to human deeds, on the basis of which He determines their future destiny. Hence it was possible for Pelagius to appeal to some of those early Fathers. "According to Pelagius," says Wiggers, "foreordination to salvation or to damnation, is founded on prescience. Consequently he did not admit an 'absolute predestination,' but in every respect a 'conditional predestination'." [*Augustinism and Pelagianism*, p. 252.] At first, Augustine himself was inclined to this view, but deeper reflection on the sovereign character of the good pleasure of God led him to see that predestination was in no way dependent on God's foreknowledge of human actions, but was rather the basis of the divine foreknowledge. His representation of reprobation is not as unambiguous as it might be. Some of his statements are to the effect that in predestination God foreknows what He will Himself do, while He is also able to foreknow what He will not do, as all sins; and speak of the elect as subjects of predestination, and of the reprobate as subjects of the divine foreknowledge. [Cf. Wiggers, *ibid.*, p. 239; Dijk. Om't Eeuwig Welbehagen, pp. 39f.; Polman, *De Praedestinatieleer van Augustinus, Thomas van Aquino, en Calvijn*, pp. 149ff.] In other passages, however, he also speaks of the reprobate as subjects of predestination, so that there can be no doubt about it that he taught a double predestination. However, he recognized their difference, consisting in this that God did not predestinate unto damnation and the means unto it in the same way as He did to salvation, and that predestination unto life is purely sovereign, while predestination unto eternal death is also judicial and takes account of man's sin. [Cf. Dyk, *ibid.*, p. 40; Polman, *ibid.*, p. 158.]

Augustine's view found a great deal of opposition, particularly in France, where the semi-Pelagians, while admitting the need of divine grace unto salvation, reasserted the doctrine of a predestination based on foreknowledge. And they who took up the defense of Augustine felt constrained to yield on some important points. They

failed to do justice to the doctrine of a double predestination. Only Gottschalk and a few of his friends maintained this, but his voice was soon silenced, and Semi-Pelagianism gained the upper hand at least among the leaders of the Church. Toward the end of the Middle Ages it became quite apparent that the Roman Catholic Church would allow a great deal of latitude in the doctrine of predestination. As long as its teachers maintained that God willed the salvation of all men, and not merely of the elect, they could with Thomas Aquinas move in the direction of Augustinianism in the doctrine of predestination, or with Molina follow the course of Semi-Pelagianism, as they thought best. This means that even in the case of those who, like Thomas Aquinas, believed in an absolute and double predestination, this doctrine could not be carried through consistently, and could not be made determinative of the rest of their theology.

The Reformers of the sixteenth century all advocated the strictest doctrine of predestination. This is even true of Melancton in his earliest period. Luther accepted the doctrine of absolute predestination, though the conviction that God willed that all men should be saved caused him to soft-pedal the doctrine of predestination somewhat later in life. It gradually disappeared from Lutheran theology, which now regards it either wholly or in part (reprobation) as conditional. Calvin firmly maintained the Augustinian doctrine of an absolute double predestination. At the same time he, in his defense of the doctrine against Pighius, stressed the fact that the decree respecting the entrance of sin into the world was a permissive decree, and that the decree of reprobation should be so construed that God was not made the author of sin nor in any way responsible for it. The Reformed Confessions are remarkably consistent in embodying this doctrine, though they do not all state it with equal fulness and precision. As a result of the Arminian assault on the doctrine, the Canons of Dort contain a clear and detailed statement of it. In churches of the Arminian type the doctrine of absolute predestination has been supplanted by the doctrine of conditional predestination.

Since the days of Schleiermacher the doctrine of predestination received an entirely different form. Religion was regarded as a feeling of absolute dependence, a *Hinneigung zum Weltall*, a consciousness of utter dependence on the causality that is proper to the natural order with its invariable laws and second causes, which predetermine all human resolves and actions. And predestination was identified with this predetermination by nature or the universal causal connection in the world. The scathing denunciation of this view by Otto is none too severe: "There can be no more spurious product of theological speculation, no more fundamental falsification of religious conceptions than this; and it is certainly not against this that the Rationalist feels an antagonism, for it is itself a piece of solid Rationalism, but at the same time a complete abandonment of the real religious idea of 'predestination'." [*The Idea of the Holy*, p. 90.] In modern liberal theology the doctrine of predestination meets with little favor. It is either rejected or changed beyond recognition. G. B. Foster brands it as determinism; Macintosh represents it as a predestination of *all men* to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ; and others reduce it to a predestination to certain offices or privileges.

In our day Barth has again directed attention to the doctrine of predestination, but has given a construction of it which is not even distantly related to that of Augustine and Calvin. With the Reformers he holds that this doctrine stresses the sovereign freedom of God in His election, revelation, calling, and so on. [*The Doctrine of the Word of God*, p. 168; *Roemerbrief* (2nd ed.), p. 332.] At the same time he does not see in predestination a predetermined separation of men, and does not understand election like Calvin as particular election. This is evident from what he says on page 332 of his *Roemerbrief*. Camfield therefore says in his *Essay in Barthian Theology*, entitled *Revelation and the Holy Spirit*: [p. 92.] "It needs to be emphasized that predestination does not mean the selection of a number of people for salvation and the rest for damnation according to the determination of an unknown and unknowable will. That idea does not belong to predestination proper." Predestination brings man into

crisis in the moment of revelation and decision. It condemns him in the relation in which he stands to God by nature, as sinner, and in that relation rejects him, but it chooses him in the relation to which he is called in Christ, and for which he was destined in creation. If man responds to God's revelation by faith, he is what God intended him to be, an elect; but if he does not respond, he remains a reprobate. But since man is always in crisis, unconditional pardon and complete rejection continue to apply to every one simultaneously. Esau may become Jacob, but Jacob may also become once more Esau. Says McConnachie: "For Barth, and as he believes, for St. Paul, the individual is not the object of election or reprobation, but rather the arena of election or reprobation. The two decisions meet within the same individual, but in such a way that, seen from the human side, man is always reprobate, but seen from the divine side, he is always elect. . . . The ground of election is faith. The ground of reprobation is want of faith. But who is he who believes? And who is he who disbelieves? Faith and unbelief are grounded in God. We stand at the gates of mystery." [*The Significance of Karl Barth*, pp. 240f.]

B. Scriptural Terms for Predestination.

The following terms come into consideration here:

1. THE HEBREW WORD *yada'* AND THE GREEK WORDS *ginoskein*, *proginoskein*, AND *prognosis*. The word *yada'* may simply mean "to know" or "to take cognizance" of someone or something, but may also be used in the more pregnant sense of "taking knowledge of one with loving care," or "making one the object of loving care or elective love." In this sense it serves the idea of election, Gen. 18:19; Amos 3:2; Hos. 13:5. The meaning of the words *proginoskein* and *prognosis* in the New Testament is not determined by their usage in the classics, but by the special meaning of *yada'*. They do not denote simple intellectual foresight or prescience, the mere taking knowledge of something beforehand, but

rather a selective knowledge which regards one with favor and makes one an object of love, and thus approaches the idea of foreordination, Acts 2:23 (comp. 4:28); Rom. 8:29; 11:2; I Peter 1:2. These passages simply lose their meaning, if the words be taken in the sense of simply taking knowledge of one in advance, for God foreknows all men in that sense. Even Arminians feel constrained to give the words a more determinative meaning, namely, to foreknow one with absolute assurance in a certain state or condition. This includes the absolute certainty of that future state, and for that very reason comes very close to the idea of predestination. And not only these words, but even the simple *ginoskein* has such a specific meaning in some cases, I Cor. 8:3; Gal. 4:9; II Tim. 2:19.[Cf. Article of C. W. Hodge on “Foreknow, Foreknowledge” in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*.]

2. THE HEBREW WORD *bachar* AND THE GREEK WORDS *eklegesthai* AND *ekloge*. These words stress the element of choice or selection in the decree of God respecting the eternal destiny of sinners, a choice accompanied with good pleasure. They serve to indicate the fact that God selects a certain number of the human race and places them in a special relation to Himself. Sometimes they include the idea of a call to a certain privilege, or of the call to salvation; but it is a mistake to think, as some do, that this exhausts their meaning. It is perfectly evident that they generally refer to a prior and eternal election, Rom. 9:11; 11:5; Eph. 1:4; II Thess. 2:13.

3. THE GREEK WORDS *proorizein* AND *proorismos*. These words always refer to absolute predestination. In distinction from the other words, they really require a complement. The question naturally arises, Foreordained unto what? The words always refer to the foreordination of man to a certain end, and from the Bible it is evident that the end may be either good or bad, Acts 4:28; Eph. 1:5. However, the end to which they refer is not necessarily the final end, but is even more frequently some end in time, which is in turn a means to the final end, Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29; I Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5,11.

4. THE GREEK WORDS *protithenai* AND *prothesis*. In these words attention is directed to the fact that God sets before Him a definite plan to which He steadfastly adheres. They clearly refer to God's purpose of predestinating men unto salvation in Rom. 8:29; 9:11; Eph. 1:9,11; II Tim. 1:9.

C. The Author and Objects of Predestination.

1. THE AUTHOR. The decree of predestination is undoubtedly in all its parts the concurrent act of the three persons in the Trinity, who are one in their counsel and will. But in the economy of salvation, as it is revealed in Scripture, the sovereign act of predestination is more particularly attributed to the Father, John 17:6,9; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4; I Pet. 1:2.

2. THE OBJECTS OF PREDESTINATION. In distinction from the decree of God in general, predestination has reference to God's rational creatures only. Most frequently it refers to fallen men. Yet it is also employed in a wider sense, and we use it in the more inclusive sense here, in order to embrace all the objects of predestination. It includes all God's rational creatures, that is:

a. *All men, both good and evil.* These are included not merely as groups, but as individuals, Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29,30; 9:11-13; Eph. 1:5,11.

b. *The angels, both good and evil.* The Bible speaks not only of holy angels, Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26, and of wicked angels, which kept not their first estate, II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; but also makes explicit mention of elect angels, I Tim. 5:21, thereby implying that there were also non-elect angels. The question naturally arises, How are we to conceive of the predestination of angels? According to some it simply means that God determined in general that the angels which remained holy would be confirmed in a state of bliss, while the

others would be lost. But this is not at all in harmony with the Scriptural idea of predestination. It rather means that God decreed, for reasons sufficient unto Himself, to give some angels, in addition to the grace with which they were endowed by creation and which included ample power to remain holy, a special grace of perseverance; and to withhold this from others. There are points of difference between the predestination of men and that of the angels: (1) While the predestination of men may be conceived of as infralapsarian, the predestination of the angels can only be understood as supralapsarian. God did not choose a certain number out of the fallen mass of angels. (2) The angels were not elected or predestined in Christ as Mediator, but in Him as Head, that is, to stand in a ministerial relation to Him.

c. *Christ as Mediator.* Christ was the object of predestination in the sense that (1) a special love of the Father, distinct from His usual love to the Son, rested upon Him from all eternity, I Pet. 1:20; 2:4; (2) in His quality as Mediator he was the object of God's good pleasure, I Pet. 2:4; (3) as Mediator He was adorned with the special image of God, to which believers were to be conformed, Rom. 8:29; and (4) the Kingdom with all its glory and the means leading to its possession were ordained for Him, that He might pass these on to believers, Luke 22:29.

D. The Parts of Predestination.

Predestination includes two parts, namely, election and reprobation, the predetermination of both the good and the wicked to their final end, and to certain proximate ends which are instrumental in the realization of their final destiny. 1. ELECTION.

a. *The Biblical Idea of Election.* The Bible speaks of election in more than one sense. There is (1) the election of Israel as a people for special privileges and for special service, Deut. 4:37; 7:6-8; 10:15; Hos. 13:5. (2) The election of individuals to some office, or to the

performance of some special service, as Moses, Ex. 3, the priests, Deut. 18:5; the kings, I Sam. 10:24; Ps. 78:70, the prophets, Jer. 1:5, and the apostles, John 6:70; Acts 9:15. (3) The election of individuals to be children of God and heirs of eternal glory, Matt. 22:14; Rom. 11:5; I Cor. 1:27,28; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 1:4; I Pet. 1:2; II Pet. 1:10. The last is the election that comes into consideration here as a part of predestination. It may be defined as *that eternal act of God whereby He, in His sovereign good pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, chooses a certain number of men to be the recipients of special grace and of eternal salvation.* More briefly it may be said to be God's eternal purpose to save some of the human race in and by Jesus Christ.

b. *The characteristics of election.* The characteristics of election are identical with the characteristics of the decrees in general. The decree of election: (1) *Is an expression of the sovereign will of God, His divine good pleasure.* This means among other things that Christ as Mediator is not the impelling, moving, or meritorious cause of election, as some have asserted. He may be called the mediate cause of the realization of election, and the meritorious cause of the salvation unto which believers are elected, but He is not the moving or meritorious cause of election itself. This is impossible, since He is Himself an object of predestination and election, and because, when He took His mediatorial work upon Him in the Counsel of Redemption, there was already a fixed number that was given unto Him. Election logically precedes the Counsel of Peace. The elective love of God precedes the sending of the Son, John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; II Tim. 1:9; I John 4:9. By saying that the decree of election originates in the divine good pleasure the idea is also excluded that it is determined by anything in man, such as foreseen faith or good works, Rom. 9:11; II Tim. 1:9. (2) *It is immutable, and therefore renders the salvation of the elect certain.* God realizes the decree of election by His own efficiency, by the saving work which He accomplishes in Jesus Christ. It is His purpose that certain individuals should believe and persevere unto the end, and He secures this result by the objective work of Christ and the subjective

operations of the Holy Spirit, Rom. 8:29,30; 11:29; II Tim. 2:19. It is the firm foundation of God which standeth, "having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His." And as such it is the source of rich comfort for all believers. Their final salvation does not depend on their uncertain obedience, but has its guarantee in the unchangeable purpose of God. (3) *It is eternal, that is, from eternity.* This divine election should never be identified with any *temporal* selection, whether it be for the enjoyment of the special grace of God in this life, for special privileges and responsible services, or for the inheritance of glory hereafter, but must be regarded as eternal, Rom. 8:29,30; Eph. 1:4,5. (4) *It is unconditional.* Election does not in any way depend on the foreseen faith or good works of man, as the Arminians teach, but exclusively on the sovereign good pleasure of God, who is also the originator of faith and good works, Rom. 9:11; Acts 13:48; II Tim. 1:9; I Pet. 1:2. Since all men are sinners and have forfeited the blessings of God, there is no basis for such a distinction in them; and since even the faith and good works of the believers are the fruit of the grace of God, Eph. 2:8,10; II Tim. 2:21, even these, as foreseen by God, could not furnish such a basis. (5) *It is irresistible.* This does not mean that man cannot oppose its execution to a certain degree, but it does mean that his opposition will not prevail. Neither does it mean that God in the execution of His decree overpowers the human will in a manner which is inconsistent with man's free agency. It does mean, however, that God can and does exert such an influence on the human spirit as to make it willing, Ps. 110:3; Phil. 2:13. (6) *It is not chargeable with injustice.* The fact that God favors some and passes by others, does not warrant the charge that He is guilty of injustice. We can speak of injustice only when one party has a claim on another. If God owed the forgiveness of sin and eternal life to all men, it would be an injustice if He saved only a limited number of them. But the sinner has absolutely no right or claim on the blessings which flow from divine election. As a matter of fact he has forfeited these blessings. Not only have we no right to call God to account for electing some and passing others by, but we must admit that He would have been perfectly just, if He had not saved any, Matt. 20:14,15; Rom. 9:14,15.

c. *The purpose of election.* The purpose of this eternal election is twofold: (1) *The proximate purpose is the salvation of the elect.* That man is chosen or elected unto salvation is clearly taught in the Word of God, Rom. 11:7-11; II Thess. 2:13. (2) *The final aim is the glory of God.* Even the salvation of men is subordinate to this. That the glory of God is the highest purpose of the electing grace is made very emphatic in Eph. 1:6,12,14. The social gospel of our day likes to stress the fact that man is elected unto service. In so far as this is intended as a denial of man's election unto salvation and unto the glory of God, it plainly goes contrary to Scripture. Taken by itself, however, the idea that the elect are predestined unto service or good works is entirely Scriptural, Eph. 2:10; II Tim. 2:21; but this end is subservient to the ends already indicated.

2. REPROBATION. Our confessional standards speak not only of election, but also of reprobation.[*Conf. Belg.* Art. XVI; *Canons of Dort*, I, 15.] Augustine taught the doctrine of reprobation as well as that of election, but this "hard doctrine" met with a great deal of opposition. Roman Catholics, the great majority of Lutherans, Arminians, and Methodists, generally reject this doctrine in its absolute form. If they still speak of reprobation, it is only of a reprobation based on foreknowledge. That Calvin was deeply conscious of the seriousness of this doctrine, is perfectly evident from the fact that he speaks of it as a "*decretum horribile*" (dreadful decree).[*Inst.* III. 23. 7.] Nevertheless, he did not feel free to deny what he regarded as an important Scriptural truth. In our day some scholars who claim to be Reformed balk at this doctrine. Barth teaches a reprobation which is dependent on man's rejection of God's revelation in Christ. Brunner seems to have a more Scriptural conception of election than Barth, but rejects the doctrine of reprobation entirely. He admits that it logically follows from the doctrine of election, but cautions against the guidance of human logic in this instance, since the doctrine of reprobation is not taught in Scripture.[*Our Faith*, pp. 32f.]

a. *Statement of the doctrine.* Reprobation may be defined as *that eternal decree of God whereby He has determined to pass some men by with the operations of His special grace, and to punish them for their sins, to the manifestation of His justice.* The following points deserve special emphasis: (1) *It contains two elements.* According to the most usual representation in Reformed theology the decree of reprobation comprises two elements, namely, *preterition* or the determination to pass by some men; and *condemnation* (sometimes called *precondemnation*) or the determination to punish those who are passed by for their sins. As such it embodies a twofold purpose: (a) to pass by some in the bestowal of regenerating and saving grace; and (b) to assign them to dishonor and to the wrath of God for their sins. The Belgic Confession mentions only the former, but the Canons of Dort name the latter as well. Some Reformed theologians would omit the second element from the decree of reprobation. Dabney prefers to regard the condemnation of the wicked as the foreseen and intended result of their preterition, thus depriving reprobation of its positive character; and Dick is of the opinion that the decree to condemn ought to be regarded as a separate decree, and not as a part of the decree of reprobation. It seems to us, however, that we are not warranted in excluding the second element from the decree of reprobation, nor to regard it as a different decree. The positive side of reprobation is so clearly taught in Scripture as the opposite of election that we cannot regard it as something purely negative, Rom. 9:21,22; Jude 4. However, we should notice several points of distinction between the two elements of the decree of reprobation: (a) Preterition is a sovereign act of God, an act of His mere good pleasure, in which the demerits of man do not come into consideration, while precondemnation is a judicial act, visiting sin with punishment. Even Supralapsarians are willing to admit that in condemnation sin is taken into consideration. (b) The reason for preterition is not known by man. It cannot be sin, for all men are sinners. We can only say that God passed some by for good and wise reasons sufficient unto Himself. On the other hand the reason for condemnation is known; it is sin. (c) Preterition is purely passive, a simple passing by without any action on man, but condemnation is

efficient and positive. Those who are passed by are condemned on account of their sin. (2) We should guard against the idea, however, that as election and reprobation both determine with absolute certainty the end unto which man is predestined and the means by which that end is realized, they also imply that in the case of reprobation as well as in that of election God will bring to pass by His own direct efficiency whatsoever He has decreed. This means that, while it can be said that God is the author of the regeneration, calling, faith, justification, and sanctification, of the elect, and thus by direct action on them brings their election to realization, it cannot be said that He is also the responsible author of the fall, the unrighteous condition, and the sinful acts of the reprobate by direct action on them, and thus effects the realization of their reprobation. God's decree undoubtedly rendered the entrance of sin into the world certain, but He did not predestinate some unto sin, as He did others unto holiness. And as the holy God He cannot be the author of sin. The position which Calvin takes on this point in his Institutes is clearly indicated in the following deliverances found in Calvin's *Articles on Predestination*:

“Although the will of God is the supreme and first cause of all things and God holds the devil and all the impious subject to His will, God nevertheless cannot be called the cause of sin, nor the author of evil, neither is He open to any blame.

“Although the devil and reprobates are God's servants and instruments to carry out His secret decisions, nevertheless in an incomprehensible manner God so works in them and through them as to contract no stain from their vice, because their malice is used in a just and righteous way for a good end, although the manner is often hidden from us.

“They act ignorantly and calumniously who say that God is made the author of sin, if all things come to pass by His will and ordinance; because they make no distinction between the depravity of men and the hidden appointments of God.”[Quoted by Warfield, *Studies in*

Theology, p. 194.] (3) It should be noted that that with which God decided to pass some men by, is not His common but his special, His regenerating, grace, the grace that changes sinners into saints. It is a mistake to think that in this life the reprobate are entirely destitute of God's favor. God does not limit the distribution of His natural gifts by the purpose of election. He does not even allow election and reprobation to determine the measure of these gifts. The reprobate often enjoy a greater measure of the natural blessings of life than the elect. What effectively distinguishes the latter from the former is that *they* are made recipients of the regenerating and saving grace of God.

b. *Proof for the doctrine of reprobation.* The doctrine of reprobation naturally follows from the logic of the situation. The decree of election inevitably implies the decree of reprobation. If the all-wise God, possessed of infinite knowledge, has eternally purposed to save some, then He *ipso facto* also purposed not to save others. If He has chosen or elected some, then He has by that very fact also rejected others. Brunner warns against this argument, since the Bible does not in a single word teach a divine predestination unto rejection. But it seems to us that the Bible does not contradict but justifies the logic in question. Since the Bible is primarily a revelation of redemption, it naturally does not have as much to say about reprobation as about election. But what it says is quite sufficient, cf. Matt. 11:25,26; Rom. 9:13,17,18,21,22; 11:7; Jude 4; I Pet. 2:8.

E. Supra- and Infralapsarianism.

The doctrine of predestination has not always been presented in exactly the same form. Especially since the days of the Reformation two different conceptions of it gradually emerged, which were designated during the Arminian controversy as Infra- and Supralapsarianism. Already existing differences were more sharply defined and more strongly accentuated as the results of the theological disputes of that day. According to Dr. Dijk the two views under consideration were in their original form simply a difference of

opinion respecting the question, whether the fall of man was also included in the divine decree. Was the first sin of man, constituting his fall, predestinated, or was this merely the object of divine foreknowledge? In their original form Supralapsarianism held the former, and Infralapsarianism, the latter. In this sense of the word Calvin was clearly a Supralapsarian. The later development of the difference between the two began with Beza, the successor of Calvin at Geneva. In it the original point in dispute gradually retires into the background, and other differences are brought forward, some of which turn out to be mere differences of emphasis. Later Infralapsarians, such as Rivet, Walaeus, Mastricht, Turretin, à Mark, and de Moor, all admit that the fall of man was included in the decree; and of the later Supralapsarians, such as Beza, Gomarus, Peter Martyr, Zanchius, Ursinus, Perkins, Twisse, Trigland, Voetius, Burmannus, Witsius and Comrie, at least some are quite willing to admit that in the decree of Reprobation God in some way took sin into consideration. We are concerned at present with Supra- and Infralapsarianism in their more developed form.

1. THE EXACT POINT AT ISSUE. It is quite essential to have a correct view of the exact point or points at issue between the two.

a. *Negatively, the difference is not found:* (1) *In divergent views respecting the temporal order of the divine decrees.* It is admitted on all hands that the decree of God is one and in all its parts equally eternal, so that it is impossible to ascribe any temporal succession to the various elements which it includes. (2) *In any essential difference as to whether the fall of man was decreed or was merely the object of divine foreknowledge.* This may have been, as Dr. Dijk says, the original point of difference; but, surely, anyone who asserts that the fall was not decreed but only foreseen by God, would now be said to be moving along Arminian rather than Reformed lines. Both Supra- and Infralapsarians admit that the fall is included in the divine decree, and that preterition is an act of God's sovereign will. (3) *In any essential difference as to the question, whether the decree relative to sin is permissive.* There is some difference of emphasis on

the qualifying adjective. Supralapsarians (with few exceptions) are willing to admit that the decree relative to sin is permissive, but hasten to add that it nevertheless makes the entrance of sin into the world a certainty. And Infralapsarians (with few exceptions) will admit that sin is included in God's decree, but hasten to add that the decree, in so far as it pertains to sin, is permissive rather than positive. The former occasionally over-emphasize the positive element in the decree respecting sin, and thus expose themselves to the charge that they make God the author of sin. And the latter sometimes over-emphasize the permissive character of the decree, reducing it to a bare permission, and thus expose themselves to the charge of Arminianism. As a whole, however, Supralapsarians emphatically repudiate every interpretation of the decree that would make God the author of sin; and Infralapsarians are careful to point out explicitly that the permissive decree of God relative to sin makes sin certainly future. (4) *In any essential difference as to the question, whether the decree of reprobation takes account of sin.* It is sometimes represented as if God destined some men for eternal destruction, simply by an act of His sovereign will, without taking account of their sin; as if, like a tyrant, He simply decided to destroy a large number of His rational creatures, purely for the manifestation of His glorious virtues. But Supralapsarians abhor the idea of a tyrannical God, and at least some of them explicitly state that, while preterition is an act of God's sovereign will, the second element of reprobation, namely, condemnation, is an act of justice and certainly takes account of sin. This proceeds on the supposition that logically preterition precedes the decree to create and to permit the fall, while condemnation follows this. The logic of this position may be questioned, but it at least shows that the Supralapsarians who assume it, teach that God takes account of sin in the decree of reprobation. p> <p>b. *Positively, the difference does concern:* (1) *The extent of predestination.* Supralapsarians include the decree to create and to permit the fall in the decree of predestination, while Infralapsarians refer it to the decree of God in general, and exclude it from the special decree of predestination. According to the former, man appears in the decree of predestination, *not as created and*

fallen, but as certain to be created and to fall; while according to the latter, he appears in it as already created and fallen. (2) *The logical order of the decrees.* The question is, whether the decrees to create and to permit the fall were means to the decree of redemption. Supralapsarians proceed on the assumption that in planning the rational mind passes from the end to the means in a retrograde movement, so that what is first in design is last in accomplishment. Thus they determine upon the following order: (a) The decree of God to glorify Himself, and particularly to magnify His grace and justice in the salvation of some and the perdition of other rational creatures, which exist in the divine mind as yet only as possibilities. (b) The decree to create those who were thus elected and reprobated. (c) The decree to permit them to fall. (d) The decree to justify the elect and to condemn the non-elect. On the other hand the Infralapsarians suggest a more historical order: (a) The decree to create man in holiness and blessedness. (b) The decree to permit man to fall by the self-determination of his own will. (c) The decree to save a certain number out of this guilty aggregate. (d) The decree to leave the remainder in their self-determination in sin, and to subject them to the righteous punishment which their sin deserves. (3) *The extension of the personal element of predestination to the decrees to create and to permit the fall.* According to Supralapsarians God, even in the decree to create and permit the fall, had His eye fixed on His elect individually, so that there was not a single moment in the divine decree, when they did not stand in a special relation to God as His beloved ones. Infralapsarians, on the other hand, hold that this personal element did not appear in the decree till after the decree to create and to permit the fall. In these decrees themselves the elect are simply included in the whole mass of humanity, and do not appear as the special objects of God's love.

2. THE SUPRALAPSARIAN POSITION.

a. *Arguments in favor of it:* (1) It appeals to all those passages of Scripture which emphasize the absolute sovereignty of God, and more particularly His sovereignty in relation to sin, such as Ps. 115:3;

Prov. 16:4; Isa. 10:15; 45:9; Jer. 18:6; Matt. 11:25,26; 20:15; Rom. 9:17,19-21. Special emphasis is laid on the figure of the potter, which is found in more than one of these passages. It is said that this figure not merely stresses the sovereignty of God in general, but more especially His sovereignty in determining the quality of the vessels at creation. This means that Paul in Rom. 9 speaks from a pre-creation standpoint, an idea that is favored (a) by the fact that the potter's work is frequently used in Scripture as a figure of creation; and (b) by the fact that the potter determines each vessel for a certain use and gives it a corresponding quality, which might cause the vessel to ask, though without any right, Why didst Thou make me thus? (2) Attention is called to the fact that some passages of Scripture suggest that the work of nature or of creation in general was so ordered as to contain already illustrations of the work of redemption. Jesus frequently derives His illustrations for the elucidation of spiritual things from nature, and we are told in Matt. 13:35 that this was in fulfilment of the words of the prophet, "I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world." Comp. Ps. 78:2. This is taken to mean that they were *hidden in nature*, but were brought to light in the parabolic teachings of Jesus. Ephesians 3:9 is also considered as an expression of the idea that the design of God in the creation of the world was directed to the manifestation of His wisdom, which would issue in the New Testament work of redemption. But the appeal to this passage seems, to say the least, very doubtful. (3) The order of the decrees, as accepted by the Supralapsarians, is regarded as the more ideal, the more logical and unified of the two. It clearly exhibits the rational order which exists between the ultimate end and the intermediate means. Therefore the Supralapsarians can, while the Infralapsarians cannot, give a specific answer to the question why God decreed to create the world and to permit the fall. They do full justice to the sovereignty of God and refrain from all futile attempts to justify God in the sight of men, while the Infralapsarians hesitate, attempt to prove the justice of God's procedure, and yet in the end must come to the same conclusion as the Supralapsarians, namely, that, in the last analysis, the decree to permit the fall finds its explanation only in the sovereign good pleasure of God.[Bavinck,

Geref. Dogm. II, p. 400.] (4) The analogy of the predestination of the angels would seem to favor the Supralapsarian position, for it can only be conceived as supralapsarian. God decreed, for reasons sufficient to Himself, to grant some angels the grace of perseverance and to withhold this from others; and to connect with this righteously the confirmation of the former in a state of glory, and the eternal perdition of the latter. This means, therefore, that the decree respecting the fall of the angels forms a part of their predestination. And it would seem impossible to conceive of it in any other way.

b. *Objections to it:* Notwithstanding its seeming pretensions, it does not give a solution of the problem of sin. It would do this, if it dared to say that God decreed to bring sin into the world *by His own direct efficiency*. Some Supralapsarians, it is true, do represent the decree as the efficient cause of sin, but yet do not want this to be interpreted in such a way that God becomes the author of sin. The majority of them do not care to go beyond the statement that God willed to permit sin. Now this is no objection to the Supralapsarian in distinction from the Infralapsarian, for neither one of them solves the problem. The only difference is that the former makes greater pretensions in this respect than the latter. (2) According to its representations man appears in the divine decree first as *creabilis et labilis* (certain to be created and to fall). The objects of the decree are first of all men considered as mere possibilities, as non-existent entities. But such a decree necessarily has only a provisional character, and must be followed by another decree. After the election and reprobation of these possible men follows the decree to create them and to permit them to fall, and this must be followed by another decree respecting these men whose creation and fall have now been definitely determined, namely, the decree to elect some and to reprobate the rest of those who now appear in the divine purpose as real men. Supralapsarians claim that this is no insuperable objection because, while it is true that on their position the actual existence of men has not yet been determined when they are elected and reprobated, they do exist in the divine idea. (3) It is said that Supralapsarianism makes the eternal punishment of the

reprobate an object of the divine will in the same sense and in the same manner as the eternal salvation of the elect; and that it makes sin, which leads to eternal destruction, a means unto this end in the same manner and in the same sense as the redemption in Christ is a means unto salvation. If consistently carried through, this would make God the author of sin. It should be noted, however, that the Supralapsarian does not, as a rule, so represent the decree, and explicitly states that the decree may not be so interpreted as to make God the author of sin. He will speak of a predestination unto the grace of God in Jesus Christ, but not of a predestination unto sin. (4) Again, it is objected that Supralapsarianism makes the decree of reprobation just as absolute as the decree of election. In other words, that it regards reprobation as purely an act of God's sovereign good pleasure, and not as an act of punitive justice. According to its representation sin does not come into consideration in the decree of reprobation. But this is hardly correct, though it may be true of some Supralapsarians. In general, however, it may be said that, while they regard preterition as an act of God's sovereign good pleasure, they usually regard precondemnation as an act of divine justice which does take sin into consideration. And the Infralapsarian himself cannot maintain the idea that reprobation is an act of justice pure and simple, contingent on the sin of man. In the last analysis, he, too, must declare that it is an act of God's sovereign good pleasure, if he wants to avoid the Arminian camp. (5) Finally, it is said that it is not possible to construe a serviceable doctrine of the covenant of grace and of the Mediator on the basis of the Supralapsarian scheme. Both the covenant and the Mediator of the covenant can only be conceived as infralapsarian. This is frankly admitted by some Supralapsarians. Logically, the Mediator appears in the divine decree only after the entrance of sin; and this is the only point of view from which the covenant of grace can be construed. This will naturally have an important bearing on the ministry of the Word.

3. THE INFRALAPSARIAN POSITION.

a. *Arguments in favor of it.* (1) Infralapsarians appeal more particularly to those passages of Scripture in which the objects of election appear as in a condition of sin, as being in close union with Christ, and as objects of God's mercy and grace, such as Matt. 11:25,26; John 15:19; Rom. 8:28,30; 9:15,16; Eph. 1:4-12; II Tim. 1:9. These passages would seem to imply that in the thought of God the fall of man preceded the election of some unto salvation. (2) It also calls attention to the fact that in its representation the order of the divine decrees is less philosophical and more natural than that proposed by Supralapsarians. It is in harmony with the historical order in the execution of the decrees, which would seem to reflect the order in the eternal counsel of God. Just as in the execution, so there is in the decree a causal order. It is more modest to abide by this order, just because it reflects the historical order revealed in Scripture and does not pretend to solve the problem of God's relation to sin. It is considered to be less offensive in its presentation of the matter and to be far more in harmony with the requirements of practical life.[Cf. Edwards, *Works* II, p. 543.] (3) While Supralapsarians claim that their construction of the doctrine of the decrees is the more logical of the two, Infralapsarians make the same claim for their position. Says Dabney: "The Supralapsarian (scheme) under the pretense of greater symmetry, is in reality the more illogical of the two." [*Syst. and Polem. Theol*, p. 233.] It is pointed out that the supralapsarian scheme is illogical in that it makes the decree of election and preterition refer to non-entities, that is, to men who do not exist, except as bare possibilities, even in the mind of God; who do not yet exist in the divine decree and are therefore not contemplated as created, but only as creatable. Again, it is said that the supralapsarian construction is illogical in that it necessarily separates the two elements in reprobation, placing preterition before, and condemnation after, the fall. (4) Finally, attention is also called to the fact that the Reformed Churches in their official standards have always adopted the infralapsarian position, even though they have never condemned, but always tolerated, the other view. Among the members of the Synod of Dort and of the Westminster Assembly there were several Supralapsarians who were

held in high honour (the presiding officer in both cases belonging to the number), but in both the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Confession the infralapsarian view finds expression.

b. *Objections to it.* The following are some of the most important objections raised against Infralapsarianism: (1) It does not give, nor does it claim to give a solution of the problem of sin. But this is equally true of the other view, so that, in a comparison of the two, this cannot very well be regarded as a real objection, though it is sometimes raised. The problem of the relation of God to sin has proved to be insoluble for the one as well as for the other. (2) While Infralapsarianism may be actuated by the laudable desire to guard against the possibility of charging God with being the author of sin, it is, in doing this, always in danger of overshooting the mark, and some of its representatives have made this mistake. They are averse to the statement that God *willed* sin, and substitute for it the assertion that He *permitted it*. But then the question arises as to the exact meaning of this statement. Does it mean that God merely took cognizance of the entrance of sin, without in any way hindering it, so that the fall was in reality a frustration of His plan? The moment the Infralapsarian answers this question in the affirmative, he enters the ranks of the Arminians. While there have been some who took this stand, the majority of them feel that they cannot consistently take this position, but must incorporate the fall in the divine decree. They speak of the decree respecting sin as a *permissive decree*, but with the distinct understanding that this decree rendered the entrance of sin into the world certain. And if the question be raised, why God decreed to permit sin and thus rendered it certain, they can only point to the divine good pleasure, and are thus in perfect agreement with the Supralapsarian. (3) The same tendency to shield God reveals itself in another way and exposes one to a similar danger. Infralapsarianism really wants to explain reprobation as an act of God's justice. It is inclined to deny either explicitly or implicitly that it is an act of the mere good pleasure of God. This really makes the decree of reprobation a conditional decree and leads into the Arminian fold. But infralapsarians on the whole do not want to teach

a conditional decree, and express themselves guardedly on this matter. Some of them admit that it is a mistake to consider reprobation purely as an act of divine justice. And this is perfectly correct. Sin is not the ultimate cause of reprobation any more than faith and good works are the cause of election, for all men are by nature dead in sin and trespasses. When confronted with the problem of reprobation, Infralapsarians, too, can find the answer only in the good pleasure of God. Their language may sound more tender than that of the Supralapsarians, but is also more apt to be misunderstood, and after all proves to convey the same idea. (4) The Infralapsarian position does not do justice to the unity of the divine decree, but represents the different members of it too much as disconnected parts. First God decrees to create the world for the glory of His name, which means among other things also that He determined that His rational creatures should live according to the divine law implanted in their hearts and should praise their Maker. Then He decreed to permit the fall, whereby sin enters the world. This seems to be a frustration of the original plan, or at least an important modification of it, since God no more decrees to glorify Himself by the voluntary obedience of *all* His rational creatures. Finally, there follow the decrees of election and reprobation, which mean only a partial execution of the original plan.

4. From what was said it would seem to follow that we cannot regard Supra- and Infralapsarianism as absolutely antithetical. They consider the same mystery from different points of view, the one fixing its attention on the ideal or teleological; the other, on the historical, order of the decrees. To a certain extent they can and must go hand in hand. Both find support in Scripture. Supralapsarianism in those passages which stress the sovereignty of God, and Infralapsarianism in those which emphasize the mercy and justice of God, in connection with election and reprobation. Each has something in its favor: the former that it does not undertake to justify God, but simply rests in the sovereign and holy good pleasure of God; and the latter, that it is more modest and tender, and reckons with the demands and requirements of practical life. Both are

necessarily inconsistent; the former because it cannot regard sin as a progression, but must consider it as a disturbance of creation, and speaks of a *permissive* decree; and the latter, since in the last analysis it must also resort to a permissive *decree*, which makes sin certain. But each one of them also emphasizes an element of truth. The true element in Supralapsarianism is found in its emphasis on the following: that the decree of God is a unit; that God had *one* final aim in view; that He willed sin in a certain sense; and that the work of creation was immediately adapted to the recreative activity of God. And the true element in Infralapsarianism is, that there is a certain diversity in the decrees of God; that creation and fall cannot be regarded merely as means to an end, but also had great independent significance; and that sin cannot be regarded as an element of progress, but should rather be considered as an element of disturbance in the world. In connection with the study of this profound subject we feel that our understanding is limited, and realize that we grasp only fragments of the truth. Our confessional standards embody the infralapsarian position, but do not condemn Supralapsarianism. It was felt that this view was not necessarily inconsistent with Reformed theology. And the conclusions of Utrecht, adopted in 1908 by our Church, state that, while it is not permissible to represent the supralapsarian view as *the* doctrine of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, it is just as little permissible to molest any one who cherishes that view for himself.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY. Is a foreknowledge of future events which is not based on the decree possible in God? What is the inevitable result of basing God's decree on His foreknowledge rather than *vice versa*, his foreknowledge on His decree? How does the doctrine of the decrees differ from fatalism and from determinism? Does the decree of predestination necessarily exclude the possibility of a universal offer of salvation? Are the decrees of election and reprobation equally absolute and unconditional or not? Are they alike in being causes from which human actions proceed as effects? How is the doctrine of predestination related to the doctrine of the divine sovereignty;— to the doctrine of total depravity;—to the

doctrine of the atonement;—to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints? Do the Reformed teach a predestination unto sin?

LITERATURE: Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* II, pp. 347-425; Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm., De Deo* III, pp. 80-258; Vos, *Geref. Dogm.* I, pp. 81-170; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* I, pp. 535-549; II, pp. 315-321; Shedd, *Dogm. Theol.* I, pp. 393-462; Maastricht, *Godgeleerdheit*, I, pp. 670-757; Comrie en Holtius, *Examen van het Ontwerp van Tolerantie, Samenspraken VI and VII*; Turretin, *Opera*, I, pp. 279-382; Dabney, *Syst. and Polem Theol.*, pp. 211-246; Miley, *Syst. Theol.* II, pp. 245-266; Cunningham, *Hist. Theol.*, II, pp. 416-489; Wiggers, *Augustinism and Pelagianism*, pp. 237-254; Girardeau, *Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism*, pp. 14-412; *ibid.*, *The Will in its Theological Relations*; Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines*, pp. 3-67; *ibid.*, *Studies in Theology*, pp. 117-231; Cole, *Calvin's Calvinism*, pp. 25-206; Calvin, *Institutes* III. Chap. XXI-XXIV; Dijk, *De Strijd over Infra-en Supralapsarisme in de Gereformeerde Kerken van Nederland*; *ibid.*, *Om 't Eeuwig Welbehagen*; Fernhout, *De Leer der Uitverkiezing*; Polman, *De Praedestinatieleer van Augustinus, Thomas van Aquino en Calvijn*.

III. Creation in General

The discussion of the decrees naturally leads on to the consideration of their execution, and this begins with the work of creation. This is not only first in order of time, but is also a logical prius. It is the beginning and basis of all divine revelation, and consequently also the foundation of all ethical and religious life. The doctrine of creation is not set forth in Scripture as a philosophical solution of the problem of the world, but in its ethical and religious significance, as a revelation of the relation of man to his God. It stresses the fact that God is the origin of all things, and that all things belong to Him and are subject to Him. The knowledge of it is derived from Scripture

only and is accepted by faith (Heb. 11:3), though Roman Catholics maintain that it can also be gathered from nature.

A. The Doctrine of Creation in History.

While Greek philosophy sought the explanation of the world in a dualism, which involves the eternity of matter, or in a process of emanation, which makes the world the outward manifestation of God, the Christian Church from the very beginning taught the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* and as a *free* act of God. This doctrine was accepted with singular unanimity from the start. It is found in Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and others. Theophilus was the first Church Father to stress the fact that the days of creation were literal days. This seems to have been the view of Irenaeus and Tertullian as well, and was in all probability the common view in the Church. Clement and Origen thought of creation as having been accomplished *in a single indivisible moment*, and conceived of its description as the work of several days merely as a literary device to describe the origin of things in the order of their worth or of their logical connection. The idea of an eternal creation, as taught by Origen, was commonly rejected. At the same time some of the Church Fathers expressed the idea that God was always Creator, though the created universe began in time. During the trinitarian controversy some of them emphasized the fact that, in distinction from the generation of the Son, which was a *necessary* act of the Father, the creation of the world was a *free* act of the triune God. Augustine dealt with the work of creation more in detail than others did. He argues that creation was eternally in the will of God, and therefore brought no change in Him. There was no time before creation, since the world was brought into being *with* time rather than *in* time. The question what God did in the many ages before creation is based on a misconception of eternity. While the Church in general still seems to have held that the world was created in six ordinary days, Augustine suggested a somewhat different view. He strongly defended the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*,

but distinguished two moments of creation: the production of matter and spirits out of nothing, and the organization of the material universe. He found it difficult to say what kind of days the days of Genesis were, but was evidently inclined to think that God created all things *in a moment of time*, and that the thought of days was simply introduced to aid the finite intelligence. The Scholastics debated a great deal about the possibility of eternal creation; some, such as, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventura, Albertus Magnus, Henry of Ghent, and the great majority of the Scholastics denying this; and others, such as Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Durandus, Biel, and others affirming it. Yet the doctrine of creation with or in time carried the day. Erigena and Eckhart were exceptional in teaching that the world originated by emanation. Seemingly the days of creation were regarded as ordinary days, though Anselm suggested that it might be necessary to conceive of them as different from our present days. The Reformers held firmly to the doctrine of creation out of nothing by a free act of God in or with time, and regarded the days of creation as six literal days. This view is also generally maintained in the Post-Reformation literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though a few theologians (as Maresius) occasionally speak of *continuous creation*. In the eighteenth century, however, under the dominating influence of Pantheism and Materialism, science launched an attack on the Church's doctrine of creation. It substituted the idea of evolution or development for that of absolute origination by a divine fiat. The world was often represented as a necessary manifestation of the Absolute. Its origin was pushed back thousands and even millions of years into an unknown past. And soon theologians were engaged in various attempts to harmonize the doctrine of creation with the teachings of science and philosophy. Some suggested that the first chapters of Genesis should be interpreted allegorically or mythically; others, that a long period elapsed between the primary creation of Gen. 1:1,2 and the secondary creation of the following verses; and still others, that the days of creation were in fact long periods of time.

B. Scriptural Proof for the Doctrine of Creation.

The Scriptural proof for the doctrine of creation is not found in a single and limited portion of the Bible, but is found in every part of the Word of God. It does not consist of a few scattered passages of doubtful interpretation, but of a large number of clear and unequivocal statements, which speak of the creation of the world as a historical fact. We have first of all the extended narrative of creation found in the first two chapters of Genesis, which will be discussed in detail when the creation of the material universe is considered. These chapters certainly appear to the unbiased reader as a historical narrative, and as the record of a historical fact. And the many cross-references scattered throughout the Bible do not regard them in any other light. They all refer to creation as a fact of history. The various passages in which they are found may be classified as follows: (1) Passages which stress the omnipotence of God in the work of creation, Isa. 40:26,28; Amos 4:13. (2) Passages which point to His exaltation above nature as the great and infinite God, Ps. 90:2; 102:26,27; Acts 17:24. (3) Passages which refer to the wisdom of God in the work of creation, Isa. 40:12-14; Jer. 10:12-16; John 1:3; (4) Passages regarding creation from the point of view of God's sovereignty and purpose in creation, Isa. 43:7; Rom. 1:25. (5) Passages that speak of creation as a fundamental work of God, I Cor. 11:9; Col. 1:16. One of the fullest and most beautiful statements is that found in Neh. 9:6: "Thou art Jehovah, even thou alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are thereon, the seas and all that is in them, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee." This passage is typical of several other, less extensive, passages that are found in the Bible, which emphasize the fact that Jehovah is the Creator of the universe, Isa. 42:5; 45:18; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11; 10:6.

C. The Idea of Creation.

The faith of the Church in the creation of the world is expressed in the very first article of the *Apostolic Confession of Faith*, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." This is an expression of the faith of the early Church, that God by His almighty power brought forth the universe out of nothing. The words "Maker of heaven and earth" were not contained in the original form of the creed, but represent a later addition. It ascribes to the Father, that is, to the first person in the Trinity, the origination of all things. This is in harmony with the representation of the New Testament that all things are of the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. The word "Maker" is a rendering of the word *poieten*, found in the Greek form of the Apostolic Confession, while the Latin form has *creatorem*. Evidently, it is to be understood as a synonymous term for "Creator." "To create" was understood in the early Church in the strict sense of "to bring forth something out of nothing." It should be noted that Scripture does not always use the Hebrew word *bara'* and the Greek term *ktizein* in that absolute sense. It also employs these terms to denote a secondary creation, in which God made use of material that was already in existence but could not of itself have produced the result indicated, Gen. 1:21,27; 5:1; Isa. 45:7,12; 54:16; Amos 4:13; I Cor. 11:9; Rev. 10:6. It even uses them to designate that which comes into existence under the providential guidance of God, Ps. 104:30; Isa. 45:7,8; 65:18; I Tim. 4:4. Two other terms are used synonymously with the term "to create," namely, "to make" (Heb., *'asah*; Greek, *poiein*) and "to form" (Heb. *yatsar*; Greek, *plasso*). The former is clearly used in all the three senses indicated in the preceding: of primary creation in Gen. 2:4; Prov. 16:4; Acts 17:24; more frequently of secondary creation, Gen. 1:7,16,26; 2:22; Ps. 89:47; and of the work of providence in Ps. 74:17. The latter is used similarly of primary creation, Ps. 90:2 (perhaps the only instance of this use); of secondary creation, Gen. 2:7,19; Ps. 104:26; Amos 4:13; Zech. 12:1; and of the work of providence, Deut. 32:18; Isa. 43:1,7,21; 45:7. All three words are found together in Isa. 45:7. Creation in the

strict sense of the word may be defined as *that free act of God whereby He, according to His sovereign will and for His own glory, in the beginning brought forth the whole visible and invisible universe, without the use of preexistent material, and thus gave it an existence, distinct from His own and yet always dependent on Him.* In view of the Scriptural data indicated in the preceding, it is quite evident, however, that this definition applies only to what is generally known as primary or immediate creation, that is, the creation described in Gen. 1:1. But the Bible clearly uses the word “create” also in cases in which God did make use of pre-existing materials, as in the creation of sun, moon, and stars, of the animals and of man. Hence many theologians add an element to the definition of creation. Thus Wollebius defines: “*Creation is that act by which God produces the world and all that is in it, partly out of nothing and partly out of material that is by its very nature unfit, for the manifestation of the glory of His power, wisdom, and goodness.*” Even so, however, the definition does not cover those cases, also designated in Scripture as creative work, in which God works through secondary causes, Ps. 104:30; Isa. 45:7,8; Jer. 31:22; Amos 4:13, and produces results which only He could produce. The definition given includes several elements which call for further consideration.

1. CREATION IS AN ACT OF THE TRIUNE GOD. Scripture teaches us that the triune God is the author of creation, Gen. 1:1; Isa. 40:12; 44:24; 45:12, and this distinguishes Him from the idols, Ps. 96:5; Isa. 37:16; Jer. 10:11,12. Though the Father is in the foreground in the work of creation, I Cor. 8:6, it is also clearly recognized as a work of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Son’s participation in it is indicated in John 1:3; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-17, and the activity of the Spirit in it finds expression in Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; 33:4; Ps. 104:30; Isa. 40:12,13. The second and third persons are not dependent powers or mere intermediaries, but independent authors together with the Father. The work was not divided among the three persons, but the whole work, though from different aspects, is ascribed to each one of the persons. All things are at once *out of* the Father,

through the Son, and *in* the Holy Spirit. In general it may be said that *being* is out of the Father, *thought* or the *idea* out of the Son, and *life* out of the Holy Spirit. Since the Father takes the initiative in the work of creation, it is often ascribed to Him economically.

2. CREATION IS A FREE ACT OF GOD. Creation is sometimes represented as a necessary act of God rather than as a free act determined by His sovereign will. The old theories of emanation and their modern counterpart, the Pantheistic theories, naturally make the world but a mere moment in the process of divine evolution (Spinoza, Hegel), and therefore regard the world as a necessary act of God. And the necessity which they have in mind is not a relative necessity resulting from the divine decree, but an absolute necessity which follows from the very nature of God, from his omnipotence (Origen) or from His love (Rothe). However, this is not a Scriptural position. The only works of God that are inherently necessary with a necessity resulting from the very nature of God, are the *opera ad intra*, the works of the separate persons within the Divine Being: generation, filiation, and procession. To say that creation is a necessary act of God, is also to declare that it is just as eternal as those immanent works of God. Whatever necessity may be ascribed to God's *opera ad extra*, is a necessity conditioned by the divine decree and the resulting constitution of things. It is a necessity dependent on the sovereign will of God, and therefore no necessity in the absolute sense of the word. The Bible teaches us that God created all things, according to the counsel of His will, Eph. 1:11; Rev. 4:11; and that He is self-sufficient and is not dependent on His creatures in any way, Job 22:2,3; Acts 17:25.

3. CREATION IS A TEMPORAL ACT OF GOD.

a. *The teaching of Scripture on this point.* The Bible begins with the very simple statement, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," Gen. 1:1. As addressed to all classes of people, it employs the ordinary language of daily life, and not the technical language of philosophy. The Hebrew term *bereshith* (lit. "in

beginning”) is itself indefinite, and naturally gives rise to the question, In the beginning of what? It would seem best to take the expression in the absolute sense as an indication of the beginning of all temporal things and even of time itself; but Keil is of the opinion that it refers to the beginning of the work of creation. Technically speaking, it is not correct to assume that time was already in existence when God created the world, and that He at some point in that existing time, called “the beginning” brought forth the universe. Time is only one of the forms of all created existence, and therefore could not exist before creation. For that reason Augustine thought it would be more correct to say that the world was created *cum tempore* (with time) than to assert that it was created *in tempore* (in time). The great significance of the opening statement of the Bible lies in its teaching that the world had a beginning. Scripture speaks of this beginning also in other places, Matt. 19:4,8; Mark 10:6; John 1:1,2; Heb. 1:10. That the world had a beginning is also clearly implied in such passages as Ps. 90:2, “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God”; and Ps. 102:25, “Of old didst thou lay the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands.”

b. *Difficulties which burden this doctrine.* Prior to the beginning mentioned in Gen. 1:1, we must postulate a beginningless eternity, during which God only existed. How must we fill up these blank ages in the eternal life of God? What did God do before the creation of the world? It is so far from possible to think of Him as a *Deus otiosus* (a God who is not active), that He is usually conceived of as *actus purus* (pure action). He is represented in Scripture as always working, John 5:17. Can we then say that He passed from a state of inactivity to one of action? Moreover, how is the transition from a non-creative to a creative state to be reconciled with His immutability? And if He had the eternal purpose to create, why did He not carry it out at once? Why did He allow a whole eternity to elapse before His plan was put into execution? Moreover, why did He select that particular moment for His creative work?

c. *Suggested solutions of the problem.* (1) *The theory of eternal creation.* According to some, such as Origen, Scotus Erigena, Rothe, Dorner, and Pfleiderer, God has been creating from all eternity, so that the world, though a creature and dependent, is yet just as eternal as God Himself. This has been argued from the omnipotence, the timelessness, the immutability, and the love of God; but neither one of these necessarily imply or involve it. This theory is not only contradicted by Scripture, but is also contrary to reason, for (a) creation from eternity is a contradiction in terms; and (b) the idea of eternal creation, as applied to the present world, which is subject to the law of time, is based on an identification of time and eternity, while these two are essentially different. (2) *The theory of the subjectivity of time and eternity.* Some speculative philosophers, such as Spinoza, Hegel, and Green, claim that the distinction of time and eternity is purely subjective and due to our finite position. Hence they would have us rise to a higher point of vantage and consider things *sub specie aeternitatis* (from the point of view of eternity). What exists for our consciousness as a time development, exists for the divine consciousness only as an eternally complete whole. But this theory is contradicted by Scripture just as much as the preceding one, Gen. 1:1; Ps. 90:2; 102:25; John 1:3. Moreover, it changes objective realities into subjective forms of consciousness, and reduces all history to an illusion. After all, time-development is a reality; there is a succession in our conscious life and in the life of nature round about us. The things that happened yesterday are not the things that are happening today.[Cf. Orr, *Christian View of God and the World*, p. 130.]

d. *Direction in which the solution should be sought.* In connection with the problem under consideration, Dr. Orr correctly says, "The solution must lie in getting a proper idea of the relation of eternity to time." He adds that, as far as he can see, this has not yet been satisfactorily accomplished. A great deal of the difficulty encountered here is undoubtedly due to the fact that we think of eternity too much as an indefinite extension of time, as, for instance, when we speak of the ages of comparative inaction in God before the creation

of the world. God's eternity is no indefinitely extended time, but something essentially different, of which we can form no conception. His is a timeless existence, an eternal presence. The hoary past and the most distant future are both present to Him. He acts in all His works, and therefore also in creation, as the Eternal One, and we have no right to draw creation *as an act of God* into the temporal sphere. In a certain sense this can be called an eternal act, but only in the sense in which all the acts of God are eternal. They are all *as acts of God*, works that are done in eternity. However, it is not eternal in the same sense as the generation of the Son, for this is an immanent act of God in the absolute sense of the word, while creation results in a temporal existence and thus terminates in time.[Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* II, p. 452.] Theologians generally distinguish between active and passive creation, the former denoting creation as an act of God, and the latter, its result, the world's being created. The former is not, but the latter is, marked by temporal succession, and this temporal succession reflects the order determined in the decree of God. As to the objection that a creation in time implies a change in God, Wollebius remarks that "creation is not the Creator's but the creature's passage from potentiality to actuality." [Quoted by Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, p. 294.]

4. CREATION AS AN ACT BY WHICH SOMETHING IS BROUGHT FORTH OUT OF NOTHING.

a. *The doctrine of creation is absolutely unique.* There has been a great deal of speculation about the origin of the world, and several theories have been proposed. Some declared the world to be eternal, while others saw in it the product of an antagonistic spirit (Gnostics). Some maintained that it was made out of pre-existing matter which God worked up into form (Plato); others held that it originated by emanation out of the divine substance (Syrian Gnostics, Swedenborg); and still others regarded it as the phenomenal appearance of the Absolute, the hidden ground of all things (Pantheism). In opposition to all these vain speculations of men the

doctrine of Scripture stands out in grand sublimity: “In the beginning God *created* the heavens and the earth.”

b. *Scriptural terms for “to create.”* In the narrative of creation, as was pointed out in the preceding, three verbs are used, namely, *bara*’, *’asah*, and *yatsar*, and they are used interchangeably in Scripture, Gen. 1:26,27; 2:7. The first word is the most important. Its original meaning is *to split, to cut, to divide*; but in addition to this it also means *to fashion, to create*, and in a more derivative sense, *to produce, to generate*, and *to regenerate*. The word itself does not convey the idea of bringing forth something out of nothing, for it is even used of works of providence, Isa. 45:7; Jer. 31:22; Amos 4:13. Yet it has a distinctive character: it is always used of divine and never of human production; and it never has an accusative of material, and for that very reason serves to stress the greatness of the work of God. The word *’asah* is more general, meaning *to do* or *to make*, and is therefore used in the general sense of *doing, making, manufacturing, or fashioning*. The word *yatsar* has, more distinctively, the meaning of *fashioning out of pre-existent materials*, and is therefore used of the potter’s fashioning vessels out of clay. The New Testament words are *ktizein*, Mark 13:19, *poiein*, Matt. 19:4; *themelioun*, Heb. 1:10, *katartizein*, Rom. 9:22, *kataskewazein*, Heb. 3:4, and *plassein*, Rom. 9:20. None of these words in themselves express the idea of creation out of nothing.

c. *Meaning of the term “creation out of nothing.”* The expression “to create or bring forth out of nothing” is not found in Scripture. It is derived from one of the Apocrypha, namely, II. Macc. 7:28. The expression *ex nihilo* has been both misinterpreted and criticized. Some even considered the word *nihilum* (nothing) as the designation of a certain matter out of which the world was created, a matter without qualities and without form. But this is too puerile to be worthy of serious consideration. Others took the expression “to create out of nothing” to mean that the world came into being without a cause, and proceeded to criticize it as conflicting with what is generally regarded as an axiomatic truth, *ex nihilo nihil fit* (out of

nothing comes nothing). But this criticism is entirely unwarranted. To say that God created the world out of nothing is not equivalent to saying that the world came into being without a cause. God Himself or, more specifically, the will of God is the cause of the world. Martensen expresses himself in these words: "The nothing out of which God creates the world are the eternal possibilities of His will, which are the sources of all the actualities of the world." [*Christian Dogmatics*, p. 116.] If the Latin phrase "*ex nihilo nihil fit*" be taken to mean that no effect can be without a cause, its truth may be admitted, but it cannot be regarded as a valid objection against the doctrine of creation out of nothing. But if it be understood to express the idea that nothing can originate, except out of previously existing material, it certainly cannot be regarded as a self-evident truth. Then it is rather a purely arbitrary assumption which, as Shedd points out, does not even hold true of man's thoughts and volitions, which are *ex nihilo*. [*Dogm. Theol.* I, p. 467.] But even if the phrase does express a truth of common experience as far as human works are concerned, this does not yet prove its truth with respect to the work of the almighty power of God. However, in view of the fact that the expression "creation out of nothing" is liable to misunderstanding, and has often been misunderstood, it is preferable to speak of creation without the use of pre-existing material.

d. *Scriptural basis for the doctrine of creation out of nothing.* Gen. 1:1 records the beginning of the work of creation, and it certainly does not represent God as bringing the world forth out of pre-existent material. It was creation out of nothing, creation in the strict sense of the word, and therefore the only part of the work recorded in Gen. 1 to which Calvin would apply the term. But even in the remaining part of the chapter God is represented as calling forth all things by the word of His power, by a simple divine fiat. The same truth is taught in such passages as Ps. 33:6,9 and 148:5. The strongest passage is Heb. 11:3, "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear." Creation is here represented as a fact which we apprehend only by faith. By faith we

understand (perceive, not comprehend) that the world was framed or fashioned by the word of God, that is, the word of God's power, the divine fiat, so that the things which are seen, the visible things of this world, were not made out of things which do appear, which are visible, and which are at least occasionally seen. According to this passage the world certainly was not made out of anything that is palpable to the senses. Another passage that may be quoted in this connection is Rom. 4:7, which speaks of God, "who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Moffatt: "who makes the dead alive and calls into being what does not exist"). The apostle, it is true, does not speak of the creation of the world in this connection, but of the hope of Abraham that he would have a son. However, the description here given of God is general and is therefore also of a general application. It belongs to the very nature of God that He is able to call into being what does not exist, and does so call it into being.

5. CREATION GIVES THE WORLD A DISTINCT, YET ALWAYS DEPENDENT EXISTENCE.

a. *The world has a distinct existence.* This means that the world is not God nor any part of God, but something absolutely distinct from God; and that it differs from God, not merely in degree, but in its essential properties. The doctrine of creation implies that, while God is self-existent and self-sufficient, infinite and eternal, the world is dependent, finite, and temporal. The one can never change into the other. This doctrine is an absolute barrier against the ancient idea of emanation, as well as against all pantheistic theories. The universe is not the existence-form of God nor the phenomenal appearance of the Absolute; and God is not simply the life, or soul, or inner law of the world, but enjoys His own eternally complete life above the world, in absolute independence of it. He is the transcendent God, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. This doctrine is supported by passages of Scripture which (1) testify to the distinct existence of the world, Isa. 42:5; Acts 17:24; (2) speak of the immutability of God, Ps. 102:27; Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17; (3) draw a

comparison between God and the creature, Ps. 90:2; 102:25-27; 103:15-17; Isa. 2:21; 22:17, etc.; and (4) speak of the world as lying in sin or sinful, Rom. 1:18-32; I John 2:15-17, etc.

b. *The world is always dependent on God.* While God gave the world an existence distinct from His own, He did not withdraw from the world after its creation, but remained in the most intimate connection with it. The universe is not like a clock which was wound up by God and is now allowed to run off without any further divine intervention. This deistic conception of creation is neither biblical nor scientific. God is not only the transcendent God, infinitely exalted above all His creatures; He is also the immanent God, who is present in every part of His creation, and whose Spirit is operative in all the world. He is *essentially*, and not merely *per potentiam*, present in all His creatures, but He is not present in every one of them in the same manner. His immanence should not be interpreted as boundless extension throughout all the spaces of the universe, nor as a partitive presence, so that He is partly here and partly there. God is Spirit, and just because He is Spirit He is everywhere present *as a whole*. He is said to fill heaven and earth, Ps. 139:7-10; Jer. 23:24, to constitute the sphere in which we live and move and have our being, Acts 17:28, to renew the face of the earth by His Spirit, Ps. 104:30, to dwell in those that are of a broken heart, Ps. 51:11; Isa. 57:15, and in the Church as His temple, I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 2:22. Both transcendence and immanence find expression in a single passage of Scripture, namely, Eph. 4:6, where the apostle says that we have “one God and Father of all, who is *over all*, and *through all*, and *in all*.” The doctrine of divine immanence has been stretched to the point of Pantheism in a great deal of modern theology. The world, and especially man, was regarded as the phenomenal manifestation of God. At present there is a strong reaction to this position in the so-called “theology of crisis.” It is sometimes thought that this theology, with its emphasis on the “infinite qualitative difference” between time and eternity, on God as the “wholly Other” and the hidden God, and on the distance between God and man, naturally rules out the immanence of God. Brunner gives us the assurance, however, that

this is not so. Says he, “Much nonsense has been talked about the ‘Barthian theology’ having perception only for the transcendence of God, not for His immanence. As if we too were not aware of the fact that God the Creator upholds all things by His power, that He has set the stamp of His divinity on the world and created man to be His own image.”[*The Word and the World*, p. 7.] And Barth says, “Dead were God Himself if He moved His world only from the outside, if He were a ‘thing in Himself’ and not the One in all, the Creator of all things visible and invisible, the beginning and the ending.”[*The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p. 291.] These men oppose the modern pantheistic conception of the divine immanence, and also the idea that, in virtue of this immanence, the world is a luminous revelation of God.

6. THE FINAL END OF GOD IN CREATION. The question of the final end of God in the work of creation has frequently been debated. In the course of history the question has received especially a twofold answer.

a. *The happiness of man or of humanity.* Some of the earlier philosophers, such as Plato, Philo, and Seneca, asserted that the goodness of God prompted Him to create the world. He desired to communicate Himself to His creatures; their happiness was the end He had in view. Though some Christian theologians chimed in with this idea, it became prominent especially through the Humanism of the Reformation period and the Rationalism of the eighteenth century. This theory was often presented in a very superficial way. The best form in which it is stated is to the effect that God could not make Himself the end of creation, because He is sufficient unto Himself and could need nothing. And if He could not make Himself the end, then this can be found only in the creature, especially in man, and ultimately in his supreme happiness. The teleological view by which the welfare or happiness of man or humanity is made the final end of creation, was characteristic of the thinking of such influential men as Kant, Schleiermacher, and Ritschl, though they did not all present it in the same way. But this theory does not satisfy

for several reasons: (1) Though God undoubtedly reveals His goodness in creation, it is not correct to say that His goodness or love could not express itself, if there were no world. The personal relations within the triune God supplied all that was necessary for a full and eternal life of love. (2) It would seem to be perfectly self-evident that God does not exist for the sake of man, but man for the sake of God. God only is Creator and the supreme Good, while man is but a creature, who for that very reason cannot be the end of creation. The temporal finds its end in the eternal, the human in the divine, and not *vice versa*. (3) The theory does not fit the facts. It is impossible to subordinate all that is found in creation to this end, and to explain all in relation to human happiness. This is perfectly evident from a consideration of all the sufferings that are found in the world.

b. *The declarative glory of God.* The Church of Jesus Christ found the true end of creation, not in anything outside of God, but in God Himself, more particularly in the external manifestation of His inherent excellency. This does not mean that God's receiving glory from others is the final end. The receiving of glory through the praises of His moral creatures, is an end included in the supreme end, but is not itself that end. God did not create first of all to receive glory, but to make His glory extant and manifest. The glorious perfections of God are manifested in His entire creation; and this manifestation is not intended as an empty show, a mere exhibition to be admired by the creatures, but also aims at promoting their welfare and perfect happiness. Moreover, it seeks to attune their hearts to the praises of the Creator, and to elicit from their souls the expression of their gratefulness and love and adoration. The supreme end of God in creation, the manifestation of His glory, therefore, includes, as subordinate ends, the happiness and salvation of His creatures, and the reception of praise from grateful and adoring hearts. This doctrine is supported by the following considerations: (1) It is based on the testimony of Scripture, Isa. 43:7; 60:21; 61:3; Ezek. 36:21,22; 39:7; Luke 2:14; Rom. 9:17; 11:36; I Cor. 15:28; Eph. 1:5,6,9,12,14; 3:9,10; Col. 1:16. (2) The infinite God would hardly

choose any but the highest end in creation, and this end could only be found in Himself. If whole nations, as compared with Him, are but as a drop in a bucket and as the small dust of the balance, then, surely, His declarative glory is intrinsically of far greater value than the good of His creatures, Isa. 40:15,16. (3) The glory of God is the only end that is consistent with His independence and sovereignty. Everyone is dependent on whomsoever or whatsoever he makes his ultimate end. If God chooses anything in the creature as His final end, this would make Him dependent on the creature to that extent. (4) No other end would be sufficiently comprehensive to be the true end of all God's ways and works in creation. It has the advantage of comprising, in subordination, several other ends. (5) It is the only end that is actually and perfectly attained in the universe. We cannot imagine that a wise and omnipotent God would choose an end destined to fail wholly or in part, Job 23:13. Yet many of His creatures never attain to perfect happiness.

c. Objections to the doctrine that the glory of God is the end of creation. The following are the most important of these: (1) *It makes the scheme of the universe a selfish scheme.* But we should distinguish between selfishness and reasonable self-regard or self-love. The former is an undue or exclusive care for one's own comfort or pleasure, regardless of the happiness or rights of others; the latter is a due care for one's own happiness and well-being, which is perfectly compatible with justice, generosity, and benevolence towards others. In seeking self-expression for the glory of His name, God did not disregard the well-being, the highest good of others, but promoted it. Moreover, this objection draws the infinite God down to the level of finite and even sinful man and judges Him by human standards, which is entirely unwarranted. God has no equal, and no one can claim any right as over against Him. In making His declarative glory the end of creation, He has chosen the highest end; but when man makes himself the end of all his works, he is not choosing the highest end. He would rise to a higher level, if he chose the welfare of humanity and the glory of God as the end of his life. Finally, this objection is made primarily in view of the fact that the

world is full of suffering, and that some of God's rational creatures are doomed to eternal destruction. But this is not due to the creative work of God, but to the sin of man, which thwarted the work of God in creation. The fact that man suffers the consequences of sin and insurrection does not warrant anyone in accusing God of selfishness. One might as well accuse the government of selfishness for upholding its dignity and the majesty of the law against all wilful transgressors. (2) *It is contrary to God's self-sufficiency and independence.* By seeking His honour in this way God shows that He needs the creature. The world is created to glorify God, that is, to add to His glory. Evidently, then, His perfection is wanting in some respects; the work of creation satisfies a want and contributes to the divine perfection. But this representation is not correct. The fact that God created the world for His own glory does not mean that He needed the world. It does not hold universally among men, that the work which they do not perform for others, is necessary to supply a want. This may hold in the case of the common laborer, who is working for his daily bread, but is scarcely true of the artist, who follows the spontaneous impulse of his genius. In the same way there is a good pleasure in God, exalted far above want and compulsion, which artistically embodies His thoughts in creation and finds delight in them. Moreover, it is not true that, when God makes His declarative glory the final end of creation, He aims primarily at receiving something. The supreme end which He had in view, was not to receive glory, but to manifest His inherent glory in the works of His hands. It is true that in doing this, He would also cause the heavens to declare His glory, and the firmament to show His handiwork, the birds of the air and the beasts of the field to magnify Him, and the children of men to sing His praises. But by glorifying the Creator the creatures add nothing to the perfection of His being, but only acknowledge His greatness and ascribe to Him the glory which is due unto Him.

D. Divergent Theories Respecting the Origin of the World.

The Biblical doctrine is not the only view respecting the origin of the world. Three alternative theories, which were suggested, deserve brief consideration at this point.

1. THE DUALISTIC THEORY. Dualism is not always presented in the same form, but in its most usual form posits two self-existent principles, God and matter, which are distinct from and co-eternal with each other. Original matter, however, is regarded as but a negative and imperfect substance (sometimes regarded as evil), which is subordinate to God and is made the instrument of His will (Plato, Aristotle, the Gnostics, the Manichaeans). According to this theory God is not the creator, but only the framer and artificer of the world. This view is objectionable for several reasons. (a) It is wrong in its fundamental idea that there must have been some substance out of which the world was created, since *ex nihilo nihil fit*. This maxim is true only as an expression of the idea that no event takes place without a cause, and is false if it means to assert that nothing can ever be made except out of pre-existing material. The doctrine of creation does not dispense with a cause, but finds the all-sufficient cause of the world in the sovereign will of God. (b) Its representation of matter as eternal is fundamentally unsound. If matter is eternal, it must be infinite for it cannot be infinite in one way (duration) and finite in other respects. But it is impossible that two infinities or absolutes should exist side by side. The absolute and the relative may exist simultaneously, but there can be only one absolute and self-existent being. (c) It is unphilosophical to postulate two eternal substances, when one self-existent cause is perfectly adequate to account for all the facts. For that reason philosophy does not rest satisfied with a dualistic explanation of the world, but seeks to give a monistic interpretation of the universe. (d) If the theory assumes — as it does in some of its forms — the existence of an eternal principle of evil, there is absolutely no guarantee that good will triumph over evil in the world. It would seem that what is eternally necessary is bound to maintain itself and can never go down.

2. THE EMANATION THEORY IN VARIOUS FORMS. This theory is to the effect that the world is a necessary emanation out of the divine being. According to it God and the world are essentially one, the latter being the phenomenal manifestation of the former. The idea of emanation is characteristic of all pantheistic theories, though it is not always represented in the same way. Here, again, we may register several objections. (a) This view of the origin of the world virtually denies the infinity and transcendence of God by applying to Him a principle of evolution, of growth and progress, which characterizes only the finite and imperfect; and by identifying Him and the world. All visible objects thus become but fleeting modifications of a self-existent, unconscious, and impersonal essence, which may be called God, Nature, or the Absolute. (b) It robs God of His sovereignty by denuding Him of His power of self-determination in relation to the world. He is reduced to the hidden ground from which the creatures necessarily emanate, and which determines their movement by an inflexible necessity of nature. At the same time it deprives all rational creatures of their relative independence, of their freedom, and of their moral character. (c) It also compromises the holiness of God in a very serious manner. It makes God responsible for all that happens in the world, for the evil as well as for the good. This is, of course, a very serious consequence of the theory, from which Pantheists have never been able to escape.

3. THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION. The theory of evolution is sometimes spoken of as if it could be a substitute for the doctrine of creation. But this is clearly a mistake. It certainly cannot be a substitute for creation in the sense of absolute origination, since it presupposes something that evolves, and this must in the last resort be either eternal or created, so that, after all, the evolutionist must choose between the theory of the eternity of matter and the doctrine of creation. At best, it might conceivably serve as a substitute for what is called secondary creation, by which the substance already in existence is given a definite form. (a) Some evolutionists, as, for instance, Haeckel, believe in the eternity of matter, and ascribe the origin of life to spontaneous generation. But belief in the eternity of

matter is not only decidedly un-Christian and even atheistic; it is also generally discredited. The idea that matter, with force as its universal and inseparable property, is quite sufficient for the explanation of the world, finds little favor to-day in scientific circles. It is felt that a material universe, composed of finite parts (atoms, electrons, and so on) cannot itself be infinite; and that that which is subject to constant change cannot be eternal. Moreover, it has become increasingly clear that blind matter and force or energy cannot account for life and personality, for intelligence and free will. And the idea of spontaneous generation is a pure hypothesis, not only unverified, but practically exploded. The general law of nature seems to be "*omne vivum e vivo*" or "*ex vivo*." (b) Other evolutionists advocate what they call theistic evolution. This postulates the existence of God back of the universe, who works in it, as a rule according to the unalterable laws of nature and by physical forces only, but in some cases by direct miraculous intervention, as, for instance, in the case of the absolute beginning, the beginning of life, and the beginning of rational and moral existence. This has often been called derisively a "stop-gap" theory. It is really a child of embarrassment, which calls God in at periodic intervals to help nature over the chasms that yawn at her feet. It is neither the Biblical doctrine of creation, nor a consistent theory of evolution, for evolution is defined as "a series of gradual progressive changes *effected by means of resident forces*" (Le Conte). In fact, theistic evolution is a contradiction in terms. It is just as destructive of faith in the Biblical doctrine of creation as naturalistic evolution is; and by calling in the creative activity of God time and again it also nullifies the evolutionary hypothesis. Besides these two views we may also mention Bergson's Creative evolution, and C. Lloyd Morgan's Emergent evolution. The former is a vitalistic pantheist, whose theory involves the denial of the personality of God; and the latter in the end comes to the conclusion that he cannot explain his so-called emergents without positing some ultimate factor which might be called "God."

IV. Creation of the Spiritual World

A. The Doctrine of the Angels in History.

There are clear evidences of belief in the existence of angels from the very beginning of the Christian era. Some of them were regarded as good, and others as evil. The former were held in high esteem as personal beings of a lofty order, endowed with moral freedom, engaged in the joyful service of God, and employed by God to minister to the welfare of men. According to some of the early Church Fathers they had fine ethereal bodies. The general conviction was that all angels were created good, but that some abused their freedom and fell away from God. Satan, who was originally an angel of eminent rank, was regarded as their head. The cause of his fall was found in pride and sinful ambition, while the fall of his subordinates was ascribed to their lusting after the daughters of men. This view was based on what was then the common interpretation of Gen. 6:2. Alongside of the general idea that the good angels ministered to the needs and welfare of believers, the specific notion of guardian angels for individual churches and individual men was cherished by some. Calamities of various kinds, such as sicknesses, accidents, and losses, were frequently ascribed to the baneful influence of evil spirits. The idea of a hierarchy of angels already made its appearance (Clement of Alexandria), but it was not considered proper to worship any of the angels.

As time went on the angels continued to be regarded as blessed spirits, superior to men in knowledge, and free from the encumbrance of gross material bodies. While some still ascribed to them fine ethereal bodies, there was an ever increasing uncertainty as to whether they had any bodies at all. They who still clung to the idea that they were corporeal did this, so it seems, in the interest of the truth that they were subject to spatial limitations. Dionysius the Areopagite divided the angels into three classes: the first class consisting of Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim; the second, of

Mights, Dominions, and Powers; and the third, of Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. The first class is represented as enjoying the closest communion with God; the second, as being enlightened by the first; and the third, as being enlightened by the second. This classification was adopted by several later writers. Augustine stressed the fact that the good angels were rewarded for their obedience by the gift of perseverance, which carried with it the assurance that they would never fall. Pride was still regarded as the cause of Satan's fall, but the idea that the rest of the angels fell as the result of their lusting after the daughters of men, though still held by some, was gradually disappearing under the influence of a better exegesis of Gen. 6:2. A beneficent influence was ascribed to the unfallen angels, while the fallen angels were regarded as corrupting the hearts of men, as stimulating to heresy. and as engendering diseases and calamities. The polytheistic tendencies of many of the converts to Christianity fostered an inclination to worship the angels. Such worship was formally condemned by a council which convened at Laodicea in the fourth century.

During the Middle Ages there were still a few who were inclined to assume that the angels have ethereal bodies, but the prevailing opinion was that they were incorporeal. The angelic appearances were explained by assuming that in such cases angels adopted temporal bodily forms for revelational purposes. Several points were in debate among the Scholastics. As to the time of the creation of the angels the prevailing opinion was that they were created at the same time as the material universe. While some held that the angels were created in the state of grace, the more common opinion was that they were created in a state of natural perfection only. There was little difference of opinion respecting the question, whether angels can be said to be in a place. The common answer to this question was affirmative, though it was pointed out that their presence in space is not circumscriptive but definitive, since only bodies can be in space circumscriptively. While all the Scholastics agreed that the knowledge of the angels is limited, the Thomists and Scotists differed considerably respecting the nature of this knowledge. It was

admitted by all that the angels received infused knowledge at the time of their creation, but Thomas Aquinas denied, while Duns Scotus affirmed, that they could acquire new knowledge through their own intellectual activity. The former held that the knowledge of the angels is purely intuitive, but the latter asserted that it may also be discursive. The idea of guardian angels found considerable favor during the Middle Ages.

The period of the Reformation brought nothing new respecting the doctrine of the angels. Both Luther and Calvin had a vivid conception of their ministry, and particularly of the presence and power of Satan. The latter stresses the fact that he is under divine control, and that, while he is sometimes the instrument of God, he can only work within prescribed limits. Protestant theologians generally regarded the angels as pure spiritual beings, though Zanchius and Grotius still speak of them as having ethereal bodies. As to the work of the good angels the general opinion was that it is their special task to minister to the heirs of salvation. There was no general agreement, however, respecting the existence of guardian angels. Some favored this view, others opposed it, and still others refused to commit themselves on this point. Our Belgic Confession says in Article XII, which deals with creation: "He also created the angels good, to be His messengers and to serve His elect: some of whom are fallen from that excellency, in which God created them, into everlasting perdition; and the others have, by the grace of God, remained steadfast, and continued in their primitive state. The devils and evil spirits are so depraved that they are enemies of God and every good thing to the utmost of their power, as murderers watching to ruin the Church and every member thereof, and by their wicked stratagems to destroy all; and are therefore, by their own wickedness, adjudged to eternal damnation, daily expecting their horrible torments."

Up to the present time Roman Catholics generally regarded the angels as pure spirits, while some Protestants, such as Emmons, Ebrard, Kurtz, Delitzsch, and others, still ascribe to them some special kind of bodies. But even the great majority of the latter take

the opposite view. Swedenborg holds that all angels were originally men and exist in bodily form. Their position in the angelic world depends on their life in this world. Eighteenth century Rationalism boldly denied the existence of angels and explained what the Bible teaches about them as a species of accommodation. Some modern liberal theologians consider it worthwhile to retain the fundamental idea expressed in the doctrine of the angels. They find in it a symbolic representation of the protecting care and helpfulness of God.

B. The Existence of the Angels.

All religions recognize the existence of a spiritual world. Their mythologies speak of gods, half-gods, spirits, demons, genii, heroes, and so on. It was especially among the Persians that the doctrine of the angels was developed, and many critical scholars assert that the Jews derived their angelology from the Persians. But this is an unproved and, to say the least, very doubtful theory. It certainly cannot be harmonized with the Word of God, in which angels appear from the very beginning. Moreover, some great scholars, who made special study of the subject, came to the conclusion that the Persian angelology was derived from that current among the Hebrews. The Christian Church has always believed in the existence of angels, but in modern liberal theology this belief has been discarded, though it still regards the angel-idea as useful, since it imprints upon us “the living power of God in the history of redemption, His *providentia specialissima* for His people, especially for the ‘little ones.’”[Foster, *Christianity and Its Modern Expression*, p. 114.] Though such men as Leibnitz and Wolff, Kant and Schleiermacher, admitted the possibility of the existence of an angelic world, and some of them even tried to prove this by rational argumentation, it is quite evident that philosophy can neither prove nor disprove the existence of angels. From philosophy, therefore, we turn to Scripture, which makes no deliberate attempt to prove the existence of angels, but assumes this throughout, and in its historical books repeatedly

shows us the angels in action. No one who bows before the authority of the Word of God can doubt the existence of angels.

C. The Nature of the Angels.

Under this heading several points call for consideration.

1. IN DISTINCTION FROM GOD THEY ARE CREATED BEINGS. The creation of the angels has sometimes been denied, but is clearly taught in Scripture. It is not certain that those passages which speak of the creation of the host of heaven (Gen. 2:1; Ps. 33:6; Neh. 9:6) refer to the creation of the angels rather than to the creation of the starry host; but Ps. 148:2,5, and Col. 1:16 clearly speak of the creation of the angels, (comp. I Kings 22:19; Ps. 103:20,21). The time of their creation cannot be fixed definitely. The opinion of some, based on Job 38:7, that they were created before all other things, really finds no support in Scripture. As far as we know, no creative work preceded the creation of heaven and earth. The passage in the book of Job (38:7) teaches, indeed, in a poetic vein that they were present at the founding of the world just as the stars were, but not that they existed before the primary creation of heaven and earth. The idea that the creation of the heavens was completed on the first day, and that the creation of the angels was simply a part of the day's work, is also an unproved assumption, though the fact that the statement in Gen. 1:2 applies to the earth only would seem to favor it. Possibly the creation of the heavens was not completed in a single moment any more than that of the earth. The only safe statement seems to be that they were created before the seventh day. This at least follows from such passages as Gen. 2:1; Ex. 20:11; Job 38:7; Neh. 9:6.

2. THEY ARE SPIRITUAL AND INCORPOREAL BEINGS. This has always been disputed. The Jews and many of the early Church Fathers ascribed to them airy or fiery bodies; but the Church of the Middle Ages came to the conclusion that they are pure

spiritual beings. Yet even after that some Roman Catholic, Arminian, and even Lutheran and Reformed theologians ascribed to them a certain corporeity, most subtle and pure. They regarded the idea of a purely spiritual and incorporeal nature as metaphysically inconceivable, and also as incompatible with the conception of a creature. They also appealed to the fact that the angels are subject to spatial limitations, move about from place to place, and were sometimes seen by men. But all these arguments are more than counter-balanced by the explicit statements of Scripture to the effect that the angels are *pneumata*, Matt. 8:16; 12:45; Luke 7:21; 8:2; 11:26; Acts 19:12; Eph. 6:12; Heb. 1:14. They have no flesh and bone, Luke 24:39, do not marry, Matt. 22:30, can be present in great numbers in a very limited space, Luke 8:30, and are invisible, Col. 1:16. Such passages as Ps. 104:4 (comp. Heb. 1:7); Matt. 22:30; and I Cor. 11:10 do not prove the corporeity of the angels. Neither is this proved by the symbolical descriptions of the angels in the prophecy of Ezekiel and in the book of Revelation, nor by their appearance in bodily forms, though it is difficult to say, whether the bodies which they assumed on certain occasions were real or only apparent. It is clear, however, that they are creatures and therefore finite and limited, though they stand in a freer relation to time and space than man. We cannot ascribe to them an *ubi repletivum*, nor an *ubi circumscriptivum*, but only an *ubi definitivum*. They cannot be in two or more places simultaneously.

3. THEY ARE RATIONAL, MORAL, AND IMMORTAL BEINGS. This means that they are personal beings endowed with intelligence and will. The fact that they are intelligent beings would seem to follow at once from the fact that they are spirits; but it is also taught explicitly in Scripture, II Sam. 14:20; Matt. 24:36; Eph. 3:10; I Pet. 1:12; II Pet. 2:11. While not omniscient, they are superior to men in knowledge, Matt. 24:36. Moreover, they are possessed of moral natures, and as such are under moral obligation; they are rewarded for obedience, and are punished for disobedience. The Bible speaks of the angels which remained loyal as “holy angels,” Matt. 25:31; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; Acts 10:22; Rev. 14:10, and pictures those

who fell away as lying and sinning, John 8:44; I John 3:8-10. The good angels are also immortal in the sense that they are not subject to death. In that respect the saints in heaven are said to be like them, Luke 20:35,36. In addition to all this, great power is ascribed to them. They form the army of God, a host of mighty heroes, always ready to do the Lord's bidding, Ps. 103:20; Col. 1:16; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; Heb. 1:14; and the evil angels form the army of Satan, bent on destroying the work of the Lord, Luke 11:21; II Thess. 2:9; I Pet. 5:8.

4. THEY ARE PARTLY GOOD AND PARTLY EVIL. The Bible furnishes very little information respecting the original state of the angels. We read, however, that at the end of His creative work God saw everything that He had made and, behold, it was very good. Moreover, John 8:44; II Pet. 2:4; and Jude 6 presupposes an original good condition of all angels. The good angels are called elect angels in I Tim. 5:21. They evidently received, in addition to the grace with which all angels were endowed, and which was sufficient to enable them to retain their position, a special grace of perseverance, by which they were confirmed in their position. There has been a great deal of useless speculation about the time and character of the fall of the angels. Protestant theology, however, was generally satisfied with the knowledge that the good angels retained their original state, were confirmed in their position, and are now incapable of sinning. They are not only called holy angels, but also angels of light, II Cor. 11:14. They always behold the face of God, Matt. 18:10, are our exemplars in doing the will of God, Matt. 6:10, and possess immortal life, Luke 20:36.

D. The Number and Organization of the Angels.

1. THEIR NUMBER. The Bible contains no definite information respecting the number of the angels, but indicates very clearly that they constitute a mighty army. They are repeatedly called the host of heaven or of God, and this term itself already points to a goodly

number. In Deut. 33:2 we read that “Jehovah came from Sinai . . . from the ten thousands of holy ones,” and in Ps. 68:17 the poet sings, “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands upon thousands: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the sanctuary.” In reply to the question of Jesus addressed to an unclean spirit, the answer was, “my name is legion; for we are many,” Mark 5:9,15. The Roman legion was not always the same, but varied at different times all the way from 3000 to 6000, In Gethsemane Jesus said to the band that came to take him captive, “Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and He shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?” Matt. 26:53. And, finally, we read in Rev. 5:11, “And I saw, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.” In view of all these data it is perfectly safe to say that the angels constitute an innumerable company, a mighty host. They do not form an organism like mankind, for they are spirits, which do not marry and are not born the one out of the other. Their full number was created in the beginning; there has been no increase in their ranks.

2. THEIR ORDERS. Though the angels do not constitute an organism, they are evidently organized in some way. This follows from the fact that, alongside of the general name “angel,” the Bible uses certain specific names to indicate different classes of angels. The name “angel,” by which we designate the higher spirits generally, is not a *nomen naturae* in Scripture, but a *nomen officii*. The Hebrew word mal’ak simply means messenger, and serves to designate one sent by men, Job 1:14; I Sam. 11:3, or by God, Hag. 1:13; Mal. 2:7; 3:1. The Greek term *aggelos* is also frequently applied to men, Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24; 9:51; Gal. 4:14. There is no general distinctive name for all spiritual beings in Scripture. They are called sons of God, Job 1:6; 2:1; Ps. 29:1; 89:6, spirits, Heb. 1:14, saints, Ps. 89:5,7; Zech. 14:5; Dan. 8:13, watchers, Dan. 4:13,17,24. There are several specific names, however, which point to different classes of angels.

a. *Cherubim*. Cherubim are repeatedly mentioned in Scripture. They guard the entrance of paradise, Gen. 3:24, gaze upon the mercy-seat, Ex. 25:18; Ps. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16; Heb. 9:5, and constitute the chariot on which God descends to the earth, II Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10. In Ezek. 1 and Rev. 4 they are represented as living beings in various forms. These symbolical representations simply serve to bring out their extraordinary power and majesty. More than other creatures they were destined to reveal the power, the majesty, and the glory of God, and to guard His holiness in the garden of Eden, in tabernacle and temple, and in the descent of God to the earth.

b. *Seraphim*. A related class of angels are the Seraphim, mentioned only in Isa. 6:2,6. They are also symbolically represented in human form, but with six wings, two covering the face, two the feet, and two for the speedy execution of the Lord's commandments. In distinction from the Cherubim, they stand as servants round about the throne of the heavenly King, sing His praises, and are ever ready to do His bidding. While the Cherubim are the mighty ones, they might be called the nobles among the angels. While the former guard the holiness of God, they serve the purpose of reconciliation, and thus prepare men for the proper approach to God.

c. *Principalities, powers, thrones, and dominions*. In addition to the preceding the Bible speaks of certain classes of angels, which occupy places of authority in the angelic world, as *archai* and *exousiai* (principalities and powers), Eph. 3:10; Col. 2:10, *thronoi* (thrones), Col. 1:16, *kureotetoi* (dominions), Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16, and *dunameis* (powers), Eph. 1:21; I Pet. 3:22. These appellations do not point to different kinds of angels, but simply to differences of rank or dignity among them.

d. *Gabriel and Michael*. In distinction from all the other angels, these two are mentioned by name. Gabriel appears in Dan. 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19,26. The great majority of commentators regard him as a created angel, but some of these deny that the name Gabriel is a proper name and look upon it as common noun, meaning man of

God, a synonym for angel. But this is an untenable position.[Cf. especially Kuyper, *De Engelen Gods*, p. 175.] Some earlier and later commentators see in him an uncreated being, some even suggesting that he might be the third person of the Holy Trinity, while Michael was the second. But a simple reading of the passages in question shows the impossibility of this interpretation. He may be one of the seven angels that are said to stand before God in Rev. 8:2 (comp. Luke 1:19). It seems to have been his special task to mediate and interpret divine revelations.

The name Michael (lit., “who as God?”) has been interpreted as a designation of the second person of the Trinity. But this is no more tenable than the identification of Gabriel with the Holy Spirit. Michael is mentioned in Dan. 10:13,21; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7. From the fact that he is called “the archangel” in Jude 9, and from the expression used in Rev. 12:7 it would seem that he occupies an important place among the angels. The passages in Daniel also point to the fact that he is a prince among them. We see in him the valiant warrior fighting the battles of Jehovah against the enemies of Israel and against the evil powers in the spirit-world. It is not impossible that the title “archangel” also applies to Gabriel and a few other angels.

E. The Service of the Angels.

We can distinguish between an ordinary and an extraordinary service of the angels.

1. THEIR ORDINARY SERVICE. This consists first of all in their praising God day and night, Job 38:7; Isa. 6; Ps. 103:20; 148:2; Rev. 5:11. Scripture gives the impression that they do this audibly, as at the birth of Christ, though we can form no conception of this speaking and singing of the angels. Since the entrance of sin into the world they are sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation, Heb. 1:14. They rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, Luke

15:10, watch over believers, Ps. 34:7; 91:11, protect the little ones, Matt. 18:10, are present in the Church, I Cor. 11:10; I Tim. 5:21, learning from her the manifold riches of the grace of God, Eph. 3:10; I Pet. 1:12, and convey believers into the bosom of Abraham, Luke 16:22. The idea that some of them serve as guardians of individual believers finds no support in Scripture. The statement in Matt. 18:10 is too general to prove the point, though it seems to indicate that there is a group of angels who are particularly charged with the care of the little ones. Neither is it proved by Acts 12:15, for this passage merely goes to show that there were some even among the disciples of that early day who believed in guardian angels.

2. THEIR EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE. The extraordinary service of the angels was made necessary by the fall of man, and forms an important element in the special revelation of God. They often mediate the special revelations of God, communicate blessings to His people, and execute judgment upon His enemies. Their activity is most prominent in the great turning points of the economy of salvation, as in the days of the patriarchs, the time of the lawgiving, the period of the exile and of the restoration, and at the birth, the resurrection, and the ascension of the Lord. When the period of God's special revelation closed, the extraordinary service of the angels ceased, to be resumed only at the return of the Lord.

F. The Evil Angels.

1. THEIR ORIGIN. Besides the good there also are evil angels, who delight in opposing God and antagonizing His work. Though they are also creatures of God, they were not created as evil angels. God saw everything that He had created, and it was very good, Gen. 1:31. There are two passages in Scripture which clearly imply that some of the angels did not retain their original position, but fell from the state in which they were created, II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6. The special sin of these angels is not revealed, but has generally been thought to consist in this that they exalted themselves over against God, and

aspired to supreme authority. If this ambition played an important part in the life of Satan and led to his downfall, it would at once explain why he tempted man on this particular point, and sought to lure him to his destruction by appealing to a possible similar ambition in man. Some of the early Church Fathers distinguished between Satan and the subordinate devils in explaining the cause of their fall. That of the fall of Satan was found in pride, but that of the more general fall in the angelic world, in fleshly lust, Gen. 6:2. That interpretation of Gen. 6:2 was gradually discarded, however, during the Middle Ages. In view of this it is rather surprising to find that several modern commentators are reiterating the idea in their interpretation of II Pet. 2:4 and Jude 6 as, for instance, Meyer, Alford, Mayor, Wohlenberg. It is an explanation, however, that is contrary to the spiritual nature of the angels, and to the fact that, as Matt. 22:30 would seem to imply, there is no sexual life among the angels. Moreover, on that interpretation we shall have to assume a double fall in the angelic world, first the fall of Satan, and then, considerably later, the fall resulting in the host of devils that now serves Satan. It is much more likely that Satan dragged the others right along with him in his fall.

2. THEIR HEAD. Satan appears in Scripture as the recognized head of the fallen angels. He was originally, it would seem, one of the mightiest princes of the angelic world, and became the leader of those that revolted and fell away from God. The name "Satan" points to him as "the Adversary," not in the first place of man, but of God. He attacks Adam as the crown of God's handiwork, works destruction and is therefore called Apollyon (the Destroyer), and assaults Jesus when He undertakes the work of restoration. After the entrance of sin into the world he became Diabolos (the Accuser), accusing the people of God continually, Rev. 12:10. He is represented in Scripture as the originator of sin, Gen. 3:1,4; John 8:44; II Cor. 11:3; I John 3:8; Rev. 12:9; 20:2,10, and appears as the recognized head of those that fell away, Matt. 25:41; 9:34; Eph. 2:2. He remains the leader of the angelic hosts which he carried with him in his fall, and employs them in desperate resistance to Christ and His

Kingdom. He is also called repeatedly “the prince of this (not, “of the”) world, John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11, and even “the god of this world,” II Cor. 4:4. This does not mean that he is in control of the world, for God is in control, and He has given all authority to Christ, but it does convey the idea that he is in control of this evil world, the world in so far as it is ethically separated from God. This is clearly indicated in Eph. 2:2, where he is called “the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience.” He is superhuman, but not divine; has great power, but is not omnipotent; wields influence on a large but restricted scale, Matt. 12:29; Rev. 20:2, and is destined to be cast into the bottomless pit, Rev. 20:10.

3. THEIR ACTIVITY. Like the good angels, the fallen angels, too, are possessed of superhuman power, but their use of it contrasts sadly with that of the good angels. While the latter perennially praise God, fight His battles, and serve Him faithfully, they as powers of darkness are bent on cursing God, battling against Him and His Anointed, and destroying His work. They are in constant revolt against God, seek to blind and mislead even the elect, and encourage sinners in their evil. But they are lost and hopeless spirits. They are even now chained to hell and pits of darkness, and though not yet limited to one place, yet, as Calvin says, drag their chains with them wherever they go, II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6.

V. Creation of the Material World

A. The Scriptural Account of Creation.

Other nations, as well as the Hebrews, had their accounts respecting the origin of the material universe, and of the way in which the original chaos was changed into a cosmos or habitable world. Some of those accounts reveal traces of similarity with the Biblical record,

but contain even more striking dissimilarities. They are as a rule characterized by dualistic or polytheistic elements, represent the present world as the result of a fierce struggle among the gods, and are far removed from the simplicity and sobriety of the Biblical account. It may be advisable to preface our discussion of its details with a few general remarks.

1. THE POINT OF VIEW FROM WHICH THE BIBLE CONTEMPLATES THE WORK OF CREATION. It is a significant thing that the narrative of creation, while it mentions the creation of the heavens, devotes no further attention to the spiritual world. It concerns the material world only, and represents this primarily as the habitation of man and as the theater of his activities. It deals not with unseen realities such as spirits, but with the things that are seen. And because these things are palpable to the human senses, they come up for discussion, not only in theology, but also in other sciences and in philosophy. But while philosophy seeks to understand the origin and nature of all things by the light of reason, theology takes its starting point in God, allows itself to be guided by His special revelation respecting the work of creation, and considers everything in relation to Him. The narrative of creation is the beginning of God's self-revelation, and acquaints us with the fundamental relation in which everything, man included, stands to Him. It stresses the original position of man, in order that men of all ages might have a proper understanding of the rest of Scripture as a revelation of redemption. While it does not pretend to give us a complete philosophical cosmogony, it does contain important elements for the construction of a proper cosmogony.

2. THE ORIGIN OF THE ACCOUNT OF CREATION. The question as to the origin of the narrative of creation has been raised repeatedly, and the interest in it was renewed by the discovery of the Babylonian story of creation. This story, as it is known to us, took shape in the city of Babylon. It speaks of the generation of several gods, of whom Marduk proves supreme. He only was sufficiently powerful to overcome the primeval dragon Tiamat, and becomes the

creator of the world, whom men worship. There are some points of similarity between the narrative of creation in Genesis and this Babylonian story. Both speak of a primeval chaos, and of a division of the waters below and above the firmament. Genesis speaks of seven days, and the Babylonian account is arranged in seven tablets. Both accounts connect the heavens with the fourth epoch of creation, and the creation of man with the sixth. Some of these resemblances are of little significance, and the differences of the two accounts are far more important. The Hebrew order differs on many points from the Babylonian. The greatest difference is found, however, in the religious conceptions of the two. The Babylonian account, in distinction from that of Scripture, is mythological and polytheistic. The gods do not stand on a high level, but scheme and plot and fight. And Marduk succeeds only after a prolonged struggle, which taxes his strength, in overcoming the evil forces and reducing chaos to order. In Genesis, on the other hand, we encounter the most sublime monotheism, and see God calling forth the universe and all created things by the simple word of His power. When the Babylonian account was discovered, many scholars hastily assumed that the Biblical narrative was derived from the Babylonian source, forgetting that there are at least two other possibilities, namely, (a) that the Babylonian story is a corrupted reproduction of the narrative in Genesis; or (b) that both are derived from a common, more primitive, source. But however this question may be answered, it does not settle the problem of the origin of the narrative. How did the original, whether written or oral, come into existence? Some regard it simply as the natural product of man's reflection on the origin of things. But this explanation is extremely unlikely in view of the following facts: (a) the idea of creation is incomprehensible; (b) science and philosophy both equally oppose the doctrine of creation out of nothing; and (c) it is only by faith that we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, Heb. 11:3. We therefore come to the conclusion that the story of creation was revealed to Moses or to one of the earlier patriarchs. If this revelation was pre-Mosaic, it passed in tradition (oral or written) from one generation to another, probably lost something of its original purity,

and was finally incorporated in a pure form, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the first book of the Bible.

3. THE INTERPRETATION OF GEN. 1:1,2. Some regard Gen. 1:1 as the superscription or title of the whole narrative of creation. But this is objectionable for three reasons: (a) because the following narrative is connected with the first verse by the Hebrew conjunction *waw* (and), which would not be the case if the first verse were a title; (b) because, on that supposition, there would be no account whatsoever of the original and immediate creation; and (c) since the following verses contain no account of the creation of heaven at all. The more generally accepted interpretation is that Gen. 1:1 records the original and immediate creation of the universe, Hebraistically called "heaven and earth." In this expression the word "heaven" refers to that invisible order of things in which the glory of God reveals itself in the most perfect manner. It cannot be regarded as a designation of the cosmical heavens, whether of the clouds or of the stars, for these were created on the second and on the fourth day of the creative week. Then in the second verse the author describes the original condition of the earth (comp. Ps. 104:5,6). It is a debatable question, whether the original creation of matter formed a part of the work of the first day, or was separated from this by a shorter or longer period of time. Of those who would interpose a long period between the two, some hold that the world was originally a dwelling place of angels, was destroyed as the result of a fall in the angelic world, and was then reclaimed and turned into a fit habitation for men. We shall refer to this restitution theory in another connection.

B. The Hexaemeron, or the Work of the Separate Days.

After the creation of the universe out of nothing in a moment of time, the existing chaos was gradually changed into a cosmos, a habitable world, in six successive days. Before the work of the separate days is

indicated, the question as to the length of the days of creation calls for a brief discussion.

1. CONSIDERATION OF THE THEORY THAT THEY WERE LONG PERIODS OF TIME. Some scholars assume that the days of Gen. 1 were long periods of time, in order to make them harmonize with the geological periods. The opinion that these days were not ordinary days of twenty-four hours was not entirely foreign to early Christian theology, as E. C. Messenger shows in detail in his learned work on *Evolution and Theology*. But some of the Church Fathers, who intimated that these days were probably not to be regarded as ordinary days, expressed the opinion that the whole work of creation was finished in a moment of time, and that the days merely constituted a symbolical frame-work, which facilitated the description of the work of creation in an orderly fashion, so as to make it more intelligible to finite minds. The opinion that the days of creation were long periods came to the foreground again in recent years, not, however, as the result of exegetical studies, but under the influence of the disclosures of science. Previous to the nineteenth century the days of Genesis were most generally regarded as literal days. But, of course, human interpretation is fallible, and may have to be revised in the light of later discoveries. If traditional exegesis conflicts, not merely with scientific theories — which are themselves interpretations —, but with well established facts, re-thinking and reinterpretation is naturally in order. It can hardly be maintained, however, that the assumed geological periods necessitate a change of front, since they are by no means generally recognized, even in scientific circles, as well established facts. Some Christian scholars, such as Harris, Miley, Bettex, and Geesink, assume that the days of Genesis are geological days, and both Shedd and Hodge call attention to the remarkable agreement between the record of creation and the testimony of the rocks, and are inclined to regard the days of Genesis as geological periods.

The question may be raised, whether it is exegetically possible to conceive of the days of Genesis as long periods of time. And then it

must be admitted that the Hebrew word *yom* does not always denote a period of twenty-four hours in Scripture, and is not always used in the same sense even in the narrative of creation. It may mean daylight in distinction from darkness, Gen. 1:5,16,18; day-light and darkness together, Gen. 1:5,8,13 etc.; the six days taken together, Gen. 2:4; and an indefinite period marked in its entire length by some characteristic feature, as trouble, Ps. 20:1, wrath, Job 20:28, prosperity, Eccl. 7:14, or salvation II Cor. 6:2. Now some hold that the Bible favors the idea that the days of creation were indefinite periods of time, and call attention to the following: (a) The sun was not created until the fourth day, and therefore the length of the previous days could not yet be determined by the earth's relation to the sun. This is perfectly true, but does not prove the point. God had evidently, even previous to the fourth day, established a rhythmic alternation of light and darkness, and there is no ground for the assumption that the days so measured were of longer duration than the later days. Why should we assume that God greatly increased the velocity of the earth's revolutions after the light was concentrated in the sun? (b) The days referred to are God's days, the archetypal days, of which the days of men are merely ectypal copies; and with God a thousand years are as a single day, Ps. 90:4; II Pet. 3:8. But this argument is based on a confusion of time and eternity. God *ad intra* has no days, but dwells in eternity, exalted far above all measurements of time. This is also the idea conveyed by Ps. 90:4; and II Pet. 3:8. The only actual days of which God has knowledge are the days of this time-space world. How does it follow from the fact that God is exalted above the limitations of time, as they exist in this world, where time is measured by days and weeks and months and years, that a day may just as well be a period of 100,000 years as one of twenty-four hours? (c) The seventh day, the day in which God rested from His labours, is said to continue up to the present time, and must therefore be regarded as a period of thousands of years. It is God's sabbath, and that sabbath never ends. This argument represents a similar confusion. The whole idea of God's beginning the work of creation at a certain point of time, and then ceasing it after a period of six days, does not apply to God as He is in Himself,

but only to the temporal results of His creative activity. He is unchangeably the same from age to age. His sabbath is not an indefinitely prolonged period of time; it is eternal. On the other hand, the sabbath of the creation week was a day equal in length to the other days. God not only rested on that day, but He also blessed and hallowed it, setting it aside as a day of rest for man, Ex. 20:11. This would hardly apply to the whole period from the time of creation up to the present day.

2. CONSIDERATION OF THE VIEW THAT THEY WERE LITERAL DAYS. The prevailing view has always been that the days of Genesis 1 are to be understood as literal days. Some of the early Church Fathers did not regard them as real indications of the time in which the work of creation was completed, but rather as literary forms in which the writer of Genesis cast the narrative of creation, in order to picture the work of creation — which was really completed in a moment of time — in an orderly fashion for human intelligence. It was only after the comparatively new sciences of geology and palæontology came forward with their theories of the enormous age of the earth, that theologians began to show an inclination to identify the days of creation with the long geological ages. To-day some of them regard it as an established fact that the days of Genesis 1 were long geological periods; others are somewhat inclined to assume this position, but show considerable hesitation. Hodge, Sheldon, Van Oosterzee, and Dabney, some of whom are not entirely averse to this view, are all agreed that this interpretation of the days is *exegetically* doubtful, if not impossible. Kuyper and Bavinck hold that, while the first three days may have been of somewhat different length, the last three were certainly ordinary days. They naturally do not regard even the first three days as geological periods. Vos in his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* defends the position that the days of creation were ordinary days. Hepp takes the same position in his *Calvinism and the Philosophy of Nature*. [p. 215.] Noortzij in *Gods Woord en der Eeuwen Getuigenis*, [pp. 79f.] asserts that the Hebrew word *yom* (day) in Gen. 1 cannot possibly designate anything else than an ordinary day, but holds that the writer of Genesis did not attach any

importance to the concept “day,” but introduces it simply as part of a frame-work for the narrative of creation, not to indicate historical sequence, but to picture the glory of the creatures in the light of the great redemptive purpose of God. Hence the sabbath is the great culminating point, in which man reaches his real destiny. This view reminds us rather strongly of the position of some of the early Church Fathers. The arguments adduced for it are not very convincing, as Aalders has shown in his *De Eerste Drie Hoofdstukken van Genesis*. [pp. 232-240.] This Old Testament scholar holds, on the basis of Gen. 1:5, that the term *yom* in Gen. 1 denotes simply the period of light, as distinguished from that of darkness; but this view would seem to involve a rather unnatural interpretation of the repeated expression “and there was evening and there was morning.” It must then be interpreted to mean, and there was evening preceded by a morning. According to Dr. Aalders, too, Scripture certainly favors the idea that the days of creation were ordinary days, though it may not be possible to determine their exact length, and the first three days may have differed somewhat from the last three.

The literal interpretation of the term “day” in Gen. 1 is favored by the following considerations: (a) In its primary meaning the word *yom* denotes a natural day; and it is a good rule in exegesis, not to depart from the primary meaning of a word, unless this is required by the context. Dr. Noortzij stresses the fact that this word simply does not mean anything else than “day,” such as this is known by man on earth. (b) The author of Genesis would seem to shut us up absolutely to the literal interpretation by adding in the case of every day the words, “and there was evening and there was morning.” Each one of the days mentioned has just one evening and morning, something that would hardly apply to a period of thousands of years. And if it should be said that the periods of creation were extraordinary days, each one consisting of one long day and one long night, then the question naturally arises, What would become of all vegetation during the long, long night? (c) In Ex. 20:9-11 Israel is commanded to labor six days and to rest on the seventh, because Jehovah made

heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh day. Sound exegesis would seem to require that the word “day” be taken in the same sense in both instances. Moreover the sabbath set aside for rest certainly was a literal day; and the presumption is that the other days were of the same kind. (d) The last three days were certainly ordinary days, for they were determined by the sun in the usual way. While we cannot be absolutely sure that the preceding days did not differ from them at all in length, it is extremely unlikely that they differed from them, as periods of thousands upon thousands of years differ from ordinary days. The question may also be asked, why such a long period should be required, for instance, for the separation of light and darkness.

3. THE WORK OF THE SEPARATE DAYS. We notice in the work of creation a definite gradation, the work of each day leads up to and prepares for the work of the next, the whole of it culminating in the creation of man, the crown of God’s handiwork, entrusted with the important task of making the whole of creation subservient to the glory of God.

a. *The first day.* On the first day the light was created, and by the separation of light and darkness day and night were constituted. This creation of light on the first day has been ridiculed in view of the fact that the sun was not created until the fourth day, but science itself silenced the ridicule by proving that light is not a substance emanating from the sun, but consists of ether waves produced by energetic electrons. Notice also that Genesis does not speak of the sun as light (*or*), but as light-bearer (*ma’or*), exactly what science has discovered it to be. In view of the fact that light is the condition of all life, it was but natural that it should be created first. God also at once instituted the ordinance of the alternation of light and darkness, calling the light day and the darkness night. We are not told, however, how this alternation was effected. The account of each day’s work closes with the words, “and there was evening and there was morning.” The days are not reckoned from evening to evening, but

from morning to morning. After twelve hours there was evening, and after another twelve hours there was morning.

b. *The second day.* The work of the second day was also a work of separation: the firmament was established by dividing the waters above and the waters below. The waters above are the clouds, and not, as some would have it, the sea of glass, Rev. 4:6; 15:2, and the river of life, Rev. 22:1. Some have discredited the Mosaic account on the supposition that it represents the firmament as a solid vault; but this is entirely unwarranted, for the Hebrew word *raqia* does not denote a solid vault at all, but is equivalent to our word “expanse.”

c. *The third day.* The separation is carried still further in the separation of the sea from the dry land, cf. Ps. 104:8. In addition to that the vegetable kingdom of plants and trees was established. Three great classes are mentioned, namely, *deshe'*, that is flowerless plants, which do not fructify one another in the usual way; *'esebh*, consisting of vegetables and grain yielding seed; and *'ets peri* or fruit trees, bearing fruit according to their kind. It should be noted here: (1) That, when God said, “Let the earth put forth grass” etc., this was not equivalent to saying: Let inorganic matter develop *by its own inherent force* into vegetable life. It was a word of power by which God implanted the principle of life in the earth, and thus enabled it to bring forth grass and herbs and trees. That it was a creative word is evident from Gen. 2:9. (2) That the statement, “and the earth brought forth grass, herbs yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after their kind” (vs. 12), distinctly favors the idea that the different species of plants were created by God, and did not develop the one out of the other. Each one brought forth seed after its kind, and could therefore only reproduce its kind. The doctrine of evolution, of course, negatives both of these assertions; but it should be borne in mind that both spontaneous generation and the development of one species from another, are unproved, and now largely discredited, assumptions.[Cf. O'Toole, *The Case Against Evolution*, p. 28.]

d. *The fourth day.* Sun, moon, and stars, were created as light-bearers, to serve a variety of purposes: (1) to divide the day and the night; (2) to be for signs, that is, to indicate the cardinal points, to presage changes of weather conditions, and to serve as signs of important future events and coming judgments; (3) to be for seasons, and for days and years, that is, to serve the purpose of effecting the change of seasons, the succession of years, and the regular recurrence of special festive days; and (4) to serve as lights for the earth and thus to make the development of organic life on earth possible.

e. *The fifth day.* This day brings the creation of the birds and the fishes, the inhabitants of the air and the waters. Birds and fishes belong together, because there is a great similarity in their organic structure. Moreover, they are characterized by an instability and mobility which they have in common with the element in which they move, in distinction from the solid ground. They also agree in their method of procreation. Notice that they, too, were created after their kind, that is, the species were created.

f. *The sixth day.* This day brings the climax of the work of creation. In connection with the creation of the animals the expression is once more used, "Let the earth bring forth," and this should again be interpreted as was indicated under (c). The animals did not naturally develop out of the earth, but were brought forth by the creative fiat of God. We are told distinctly in the 25th verse that God *made* the beasts of the earth, the cattle and the creeping things of the earth, after their kind. But even if the expression did refer to natural development, it would not be in harmony with the doctrine of evolution, since that does not teach that the animals developed directly out of the mineral world. The creation of man is distinguished by the solemn counsel that precedes it: "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness"; and this is no wonder, since all that preceded was but a preparation for the coming of man, the crowning work of God, the king of creation; and because man was destined to be the image of God. The words *tselem* and *demuth*

do not denote exactly the same thing, but are nevertheless used inter-changeably. When it is said that man is created in the image of God, this means that God is the archetype of which man is the ectype; and when it is added that he is created according to the likeness of God, this merely adds the idea that the image is in every way like the original. In his entire being man is the very image of God.

Before passing on to the seventh day it may be well to call attention to the remarkable parallel between the work of the first, and that of the second three days of creation.

1. The creation of light. & 4. The creation of light-bearers.
2. Creation of expanse and separation of waters. & 5. Creation of fowls of the air and fishes of the sea.
3. Separation of waters and dry land, and preparation of the earth as a habitation for man and beast. & 6. Creation of the beasts of the field, the cattle, and all creeping things; and man.

g. The seventh day. The rest of God on the seventh day contains first of all a negative element. God ceased from His creative work. But to this must be added a positive element, namely, that He took delight in His completed work. His rest was as the rest of the artist, after He has completed His masterpiece, and now gazes upon it with profound admiration and delight, and finds perfect satisfaction in the contemplation of His production. "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." It answered the purpose of God and corresponded to the divine ideal. Hence God rejoices in His creation, for in it He recognizes the reflection of His glorious perfections. His radiant countenance shines upon it and is productive of showers of blessings.

4. NO SECOND ACCOUNT OF CREATION IN GENESIS 2. It is quite common for advanced higher criticism to assume that Gen. 2 contains a second and independent account of creation. The first

account is regarded as the work of the Elohist, and the second as that of the Jehovist. The two, it is said, do not agree, but conflict on several points. According to the second account, as distinguished from the first, the earth is dry before the creation of plants; man is created before the animals, and that alone, not as man and woman; then God created the animals, in order to see whether they will be fit companions for man; seeing that they fail in that respect, He creates woman as a helpmeet for man; and, finally, He places man in the garden which He had prepared for him. But this is clearly a complete misunderstanding of the second chapter. Genesis 2 is not, and does not pretend to be, a narrative of creation. The superscription *'eleh toledoth*, which is found ten times in Genesis, never refers to the birth or origin of things, but always to their births, that is, their later history. The expression dates from a time when history still consisted in the description of generations. The second chapter of Genesis begins the description of the history of man, arranges its material to suit this purpose, and only repeats so much of what was said in the previous chapter, without any consideration of chronological order, as is necessary for the author's purpose.

5. ATTEMPTS TO HARMONIZE THE NARRATIVE OF CREATION WITH THE FINDINGS OF SCIENCE.

a. *The ideal or allegorical interpretation.* This gives prominence to the idea rather than to the letter of the narrative. It regards Genesis 1 as a poetic description of the creative work of God, representing this from different points of view. But (1) it is quite evident that the narrative is intended as a record of history, and is clearly so regarded in Scripture, cf. Ex. 20:11; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 33:6,9; 145:2-6; (2) the opening chapter of Genesis "lacks nearly every element of acknowledged Hebrew poetry" (Strong); and (3) this narrative is inseparably connected with the succeeding history, and is therefore most naturally regarded as itself historical.

b. *The mythical theory of modern philosophy.* Modern philosophy has advanced beyond the preceding position. It rejects not only the

historical narrative of creation, but also the idea of creation, and regards the contents of Genesis 1 as a myth embodying a religious lesson. There is no intentional allegory here, it is said, but only a naive mythical representation with a religious core or nucleus. This is also contrary to the fact that Gen. 1 certainly comes to us with the pretension of being a historical narrative, and in the cross references, referred to above, it certainly is not regarded as a myth.

c. *The restitution theory.* Some theologians attempted to reconcile the narrative of creation with the discoveries of science in the study of the earth by adopting the restitution theory. It was advocated by Chalmers, Buckland, Wisemann, and Delitzsch, and assumes that a long period of time elapsed between the primary creation mentioned in Gen. 1:1 and the secondary creation described in Gen. 1:3-31. This long period was marked by several catastrophic changes, resulting in the destruction supposedly described in the words “waste and void.” The second verse should then read, “And the earth became waste and void.” This destruction was followed by a restitution, when God changed the chaos into a cosmos, a habitable world for man. This theory might offer some explanation of the different strata of the earth, but it offers no explanation of the fossils in the rocks, unless it is assumed that there were also successive creations of animals, followed by mass destructions. This theory never found favor in scientific circles, and finds no support in Scripture. The Bible does not say that the earth *became*, but that it *was* waste and void. And even if the Hebrew verb *hayetha* can be rendered “became,” the words “waste and void” denote an unformed condition, and not a condition resulting from destruction. Delitzsch combined with this theory the idea that the earth was originally inhabited by the angels, and that the fall in the angelic world was the cause of the destruction which resulted in the chaos referred to in verse 2. For some reason or other this view finds considerable favor among present day dispensationalists, who find support for it in such passages as Isa. 24:1; Jer. 4:23-26; Job. 9:4-7; II Pet. 2:4. But even a careful reading of these passages is sufficient to convince one that they do not prove the point in question at all. Moreover, the Bible clearly teaches us

that God created heaven and earth “and all the host of them” in six days, Gen. 2:1; Ex. 20:11.

d. *The concordistic theory.* This seeks to harmonize Scripture and science by assuming that the days of creation were periods of thousands of years. In addition to what was said about this in discussing the days of creation, we may now add that the idea that the earth’s strata positively point to long and successive periods of development in the history of its origin, is simply a theory of the geologists, and a theory based on unwarranted generalizations. We would call attention to the following considerations: (1) The science of geology is not only young, but it is still in bondage to speculative thought. It cannot be considered as an inductive science, since it is largely the fruit of *a priori* or deductive reasoning. Spencer called it “Illogical Geology” and ridiculed its methods, and Huxley spoke of its grand hypotheses as “not proven and not provable.”[Price, *The Fundamentals of Geology*, pp. 29, 32.] (2) Up to the present time it has done little more than scratch the surface of the earth, and that in a very limited number of places. As a result its conclusions are often mere generalizations, based on insufficient data. Facts observed in some places are contradicted by those found in others. (3) Even if it had explored large areas in all parts of the globe, it could only increase our knowledge of the present condition of the earth, but would never be able to give us perfectly reliable information respecting its past history. You cannot write the history of a nation on the basis of the facts observed in its present constitution and life. (4) Geologists once proceeded on the assumption that the strata of rocks were found in the same order all over the globe; and that by estimating the length of time required by the formation of each it could determine the age of the earth. But (a) it was found that the order of the rocks differs in various localities; (b) the experiments made to determine the time required for the formation of the different strata, led to widely different results; and (c) the uniformitarian theory of Lyell, that the physical and chemical action of today are safe guides in estimating those of all previous times, was found to be unreliable.[Cf. More, *The Dogma of Evolution*, p.

148.] (5) When the attempt to determine the age of the various strata or rocks by their mineral and mechanical make-up failed, geologists began to make the fossils the determining factor. Palaeontology became the really important subject, and under the influence of the uniformitarian principle of Lyell developed into one of the important proofs of evolution. It is simply assumed that certain fossils are older than others; and if the question is asked on what basis the assumption rests, the answer is that they are found in the older rocks. This is just plain reasoning in a circle. The age of the rocks is determined by the fossils which they contain, and the age of the fossils by the rocks in which they are found. But the fossils are not always found in the same order; sometimes the order is reversed. (6) The order of the fossils as now determined by geology does not correspond to the order which the narrative of creation leads us to expect, so that even the acceptance of the geological theory would not serve the purpose of harmonizing Scripture and science.

6. THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION AND THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION. The question naturally arises in our day, How does the theory of evolution affect the doctrine of creation?

a. *The theory of evolution cannot take the place of the doctrine of creation.* Some speak as if the hypothesis of evolution offered an explanation of the origin of the world; but this is clearly a mistake, for it does no such thing. Evolution is development, and all development presupposes the prior existence of an entity or principle or force, out of which something develops. The non-existent cannot *develop* into existence. Matter and force could not have evolved out of nothing. It has been customary for evolutionists to fall back on the nebular hypothesis, in order to explain the origin of the solar system, though in present day science this is supplanted by the planetesimal hypothesis. But these only carry the problem one step farther back, and fail to solve it. The evolutionist must either resort to the theory that matter is eternal, or accept the doctrine of creation.

b. *The theory of naturalistic evolution is not in harmony with the narrative of creation.* If evolution does not account for the origin of the world, does it not at least give a rational account of the development of things out of primordial matter, and thus explain the origin of the present species of plants and animals (including man), and also the various phenomena of life, such as sentiency, intelligence, morality, and religion? Does it necessarily conflict with the narrative of creation? Now it is perfectly evident that naturalistic evolution certainly does conflict with the Biblical account. The Bible teaches that plants and animals and man appeared on the scene at the creative fiat of the Almighty; but according to the evolutionary hypothesis they evolved out of the inorganic world by a process of natural development. The Bible represents God as creating plants and animals after their kind, and yielding seed after their kind, that is, so that they would reproduce their own kind; but the theory of evolution points to natural forces, resident in nature, leading to the development of one species out of another. According to the narrative of creation, the vegetable and animal kingdoms and man were brought forth in a single week; but the hypothesis of evolution regards them as the product of a gradual development in the course of millions of years. Scripture pictures man as standing on the highest plane at the beginning of his career, and then descending to lower levels by the deteriorating influence of sin; the theory of evolution, on the other hand, represents original man as only slightly different from the brute, and claims that the human race has risen, through its own inherent powers, to ever higher levels of existence.

c. *The theory of naturalistic evolution is not well established and fails to account for the facts.* The conflict referred to in the preceding would be a serious matter, if the theory of evolution were an established fact. Some think it is and confidently speak of the *dogma* of evolution. Others, however, correctly remind us of the fact that evolution is still only a hypothesis. Even so great a scientist as Ambrose Fleming says that “the close analysis of the ideas connected with the term Evolution shows them to be insufficient as a philosophic or scientific solution of the problems of reality and

existence.”[*Evolution or Creation*, p. 29.] The very uncertainty which prevails in the camp of the evolutionists is proof positive that evolution is only a hypothesis. Moreover, it is frankly admitted today by many who still cling to the principle of evolution that they do not understand its method of operation. It was thought at one time that Darwin had furnished the key to the whole problem, but that key is now rather generally discarded. The foundation pillars, on which the Darwinian structure was reared, such as the principle of use and disuse, the struggle for existence, natural selection, and the transmission of acquired characteristics, have been removed one after another. Such evolutionists as Weissmann, De Vries, Mendel, and Bateson, all contributed to the collapse of the Darwinian edifice. Nordenskiöld, in his *History of Biology*, speaks of the “dissolution of Darwinism” as an established fact. Dennert calls us to the deathbed of Darwinism, and O’Toole says, “Darwinism is dead, and no grief of mourners can resuscitate the corpse.” Morton speaks of “the bankruptcy of evolution,” and Price of the “phantom of organic evolution.” Darwinism, then, has admittedly failed to explain the origin of species, and evolutionists have not been able to offer a better explanation. The Mendelian law accounts for variations, but not for the origin of new species. It really points away from the development of new species by a natural process. Some are of the opinion that the mutation theory of De Vries or Lloyd Morgan’s theory of emergent evolution points the way, but neither one of these has proved to be a successful explanation of the origin of species by natural development pure and simple. It is now admitted that the mutants of De Vries are varietal rather than specific, and cannot be regarded as the beginnings of new species. And Morgan feels constrained to admit that he cannot explain his emergents without falling back upon some creative power that might be called God. Morton says: “The fact is that, besides creation, there is not even a theory of origins to hold the field today.”[*The Bankruptcy of Evolution*, p. 182.]

The hypothesis of evolution fails at several points. It cannot explain the origin of life. Evolutionists sought its explanation in spontaneous

generation, an unproved assumption, which is now discredited. It is a well established fact in science that life can only come from antecedent life. Further, it has failed utterly to adduce a single example of one species producing another distinct (organic as distinguished from varietal) species. Bateson said in 1921: "We cannot see how the differentiation in species came about. Variations of many kinds, often considerable, we daily witness, but no origin of species. . . . Meanwhile, though our faith in evolution stands unshaken, we have no acceptable account of the origin of species." [Science, Jan. 20, 1922.] Neither has evolution been able successfully to cope with the problems presented by the origin of man. It has not even succeeded in proving the physical descent of man from the brute. J. A. Thomson, author of *The Outline of Science* and a leading evolutionist, holds that man really never was an animal, a fierce beastly looking creature, but that the first man sprang suddenly, by a big leap, from the primate stock into a human being. Much less has it been able to explain the psychical side of man's life. The human soul, endowed with intelligence, self-consciousness, freedom, conscience, and religious aspirations, remains an unsolved enigma.

d. *Theistic evolution is not tenable in the light of Scripture.* Some Christian scientists and theologians seek to harmonize the doctrine of creation, as taught by Scripture, and the theory of evolution by accepting what they call theistic evolution. It is a protest against the attempt to eliminate God, and postulates Him as the almighty worker back of the whole process of development. Evolution is regarded simply as God's method of working in the development of nature. Theistic evolution really amounts to this, that God created the world (the cosmos) by a process of evolution, a process of natural development, in which He does not miraculously intervene, except in cases where this is absolutely necessary. It is willing to admit that the absolute beginning of the world could only result from a direct creative activity of God; and, if it can find no natural explanation, will also grant a direct intervention of God in the origination of life and of man. It has been hailed as Christian evolution, though there is

not necessarily anything Christian about it. Many, otherwise opposed to the theory of evolution, have welcomed it, because it recognizes God in the process and is supposed to be compatible with the Scriptural doctrine of creation. Hence it is freely taught in churches and Sunday Schools. As a matter of fact, however, it is a very dangerous hybrid. The name is a contradiction in terms, for it is neither theism nor naturalism, neither creation nor evolution in the accepted sense of the terms. And it does not require a great deal of penetration to see that Dr. Fairhurst is right in his conviction “that theistic evolution destroys the Bible as the inspired book of authority as effectively as does atheistic evolution.”[*Theistic Evolution*, p. 7.] Like naturalistic evolution it teaches that it required millions of years to produce the present habitable world; and that God did not create the various species of plants and animals, and that, so that they produced their own kind; that man, at least on his physical side, is a descendant of the brute and therefore began his career on a low level; that there has been no fall in the Biblical sense of the word, but only repeated lapses of men in their upward course; that sin is only a weakness, resulting from man’s animal instincts and desires, and does not constitute guilt; that redemption is brought about by the ever-increasing control of the higher element in man over his lower propensities; that miracles do not occur, either in the natural or in the spiritual world; that regeneration, conversion, and sanctification are simply natural psychological changes, and so on. In a word, it is a theory that is absolutely subversive of Scripture truth.

Some Christian scholars of the present day feel that Bergson’s theory of *Creative Evolution* commends itself to those who do not want to leave God out of consideration. This French philosopher assumes an *élan vital*, a vital impulse in the world, as the ground and animating principle of all life. This vital principle does not spring from matter, but is rather the originating cause of matter. It pervades matter, overcomes its inertia and resistance by acting as a living force on that which is essentially dying, and ever creates, not new material, but new movements adapted to ends of its own, and thus creates very much as the artist creates. It is directive and purposive and yet,

though conscious, does not work according to a preconceived plan, however that may be possible. It determines evolution itself as well as the direction in which evolution moves. This ever creating life, “of which every individual and every species is an experiment,” is Bergson’s God, a God who is finite, who is limited in power, and who is seemingly impersonal, though Hermann says that “we shall, perhaps, not go far wrong in believing that he will be ‘the ideal tendency of things’ made personal.”[*Eucken and Bergson*, p. 163.] Haas speaks of Bergson as a vitalistic pantheist rather than a theist. At any rate, his God is a God that is wholly within the world. This view may have a special appeal for the modern liberal theologian, but is even less in harmony with the narrative of creation than theistic evolution.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY. What is the real alternative to the doctrine of creation? Wherein lies the importance of the doctrine of creation? Should the first chapters of Genesis be allowed to have any bearing on the scientific study of the origin of things? Does the Bible in any way determine the time when the world was created? What extremes should be avoided as to the relation of God and the world to each other? Should the Bible always be interpreted in harmony with widely accepted scientific theories? What is the status of the hypothesis of evolution in the scientific world today? What is the characteristic element in the Darwinian theory of evolution? How do you account for its widespread repudiation at the present time? How does Bergson’s Creative Evolution or the Neo-vitalism of Hans Driesch affect the mechanistic view of the universe? In what respect is theistic evolution an improvement over naturalistic evolution?

LITERATURE. Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* II. pp. 426-543; *ibid.*, *Schepping of Ontwikkeling*; Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm.*, *De Creatione*, pp. 3-127; *De Creaturis* A, pp. 5-54; B. pp. 3-42; *ibid.*, *Evolutie*; Vos *Geref. Dogm.* I, *De Schepping*; Hodge. *Syst. Theol.* I, pp. 550-574; Shedd, *Dogm. Theol.* I, pp. 463-526; McPherson, *Chr. Dogm.*, pp. 163-174; Dabney, *Syst. and Polemic Theol.*, pp. 247-274; Harris, *God, Creator and Lord of All*, I, pp. 463-518; Hepp, *Calvinism and*

the Philosophy of Nature, Chap. V; Honig, *Geref. Dogm.*, pp. 281-324; Noordtzij, *God's Woord en der Eeuwen Getuigenis*, pp. 77-98; Aalders, *De Goddelijke Openbaring in de Eerste Drie Hoofdstukken van Genesis*; Geesink, *Van's Heeren Ordinantiën*, Inleidend Deel, pp. 216-332; various works of Darwin, Wallace, Weissman, Osborne, Spencer, Haeckel, Thomson, and others on Evolution; Dennert, *The Deathbed of Darwinism*; Dawson, *The Bible Confirmed by Science*; Fleming, *Evolution and Creation*; Hamilton, *The Basis of Evolutionary Faith*; Johnson, *Can the Christian Now Believe in Evolution?* McCrady, *Reason and Revelation*; More, *The Dogma of Evolution*; Morton, *The Bankruptcy of Evolution*; O'Toole, *The Case Against Evolution*; Price, *The Fundamentals of Geology*; *ibid.*, *The Phantom of Organic Evolution*; Messenger, *Evolution and Theology*; Rimmer, *The Theory of Evolution and the Facts of Science*.

VI. Providence

Christian theism is opposed to both a deistic separation of God from the world and a pantheistic confusion of God with the world. Hence the doctrine of creation is immediately followed by that of providence, in which the Scriptural view of God's relation to the world is clearly defined. While the term "providence" is not found in Scripture, the doctrine of providence is nevertheless eminently Scriptural. The word is derived from the Latin *providentia*, which corresponds to the Greek *pronoia*. These words mean primarily prescience or foresight, but gradually acquired other meanings. Foresight is associated, on the one hand, with plans for the future, and on the other hand, with the actual realization of these plans. Thus the word "providence" has come to signify the provision which God makes for the ends of His government, and the preservation and government of all His creatures. This is the sense in which it is now generally used in theology, but it is not the only sense in which

theologians have employed it. Turretin defines the term in its widest sense as denoting (1) foreknowledge, (2) foreordination, and (3) the efficacious administration of the things decreed. In general usage, however, it is now generally restricted to the last sense.

A. Providence in General.

1. HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE. With its doctrine of providence the Church took position against both, the Epicurean notion that the world is governed by chance, and the Stoic view that it is ruled by fate. From the very start theologians took the position that God preserves and governs the world. However, they did not always have an equally absolute conception of the divine control of all things. Due to the close connection between the two, the history of the doctrine of providence follows in the main that of the doctrine of predestination. The earliest Church Fathers present no definite views on the subject. In opposition to the Stoic doctrine of fate and in their desire to guard the holiness of God, they sometimes over-emphasized the free will of man, and to that extent manifested a tendency to deny the absolute providential rule of God with respect to sinful actions. Augustine led the way in the development of this doctrine. Over against the doctrines of fate and chance, he stressed the fact that all things are preserved and governed by the sovereign, wise, and beneficent will of God. He made no reservations in connection with the providence of God, but maintained the control of God over the good and the evil that is in the world alike. By defending the reality of second causes, he safeguarded the holiness of God and upheld the responsibility of man. During the Middle Ages there was very little controversy on the subject of divine providence. Not a single council expressed itself on this doctrine. The prevailing view was that of Augustine, which subjected everything to the will of God. This does not mean, however, that there were no dissenting views. Pelagianism limited providence to the natural life, and excluded the ethical life. And Semi-Pelagians moved in the same direction, though they did not all

go equally far. Some of the Scholastics considered the conservation of God as a continuation of His creative activity, while others made a real distinction between the two. Thomas Aquinas' doctrine of divine providence follows in the main that of Augustine, and holds that the will of God, as determined by His perfections, preserves and governs all things; while Duns Scotus and such Nominalists as Biel and Occam made everything dependent on the arbitrary will of God. This was a virtual introduction of the rule of chance.

The Reformers on the whole subscribed to the Augustinian doctrine of divine providence, though they differed somewhat in details. While Luther believed in general providence, he does not stress God's preservation and government of the world in general as much as Calvin does. He considers the doctrine primarily in its soteriological bearings. Socinians and Arminians, though not both to the same degree, limited the providence of God by stressing the independent power of man to initiate action and thus to control his life. The control of the world was really taken out of the hands of God, and given into the hands of man. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries providence was virtually ruled out by a Deism which represented God as withdrawing Himself from the world after the work of creation; and by a Pantheism which identified God and the world, obliterated the distinction between creation and providence, and denied the reality of second causes. And while Deism may now be considered as a thing of the past, its view of the control of the world is continued in the position of natural science that the world is controlled by an iron-clad system of laws. And modern liberal theology, with its pantheistic conception of the immanence of God, also tends to rule out the doctrine of divine providence.

2. THE IDEA OF PROVIDENCE. Providence may be defined as *that continued exercise of the divine energy whereby the Creator preserves all His creatures, is operative in all that comes to pass in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end.* This definition indicates that there are three elements in providence,

namely, preservation (*conservatio, sustentatio*), concurrence or cooperation (*concursus, co-operatio*), and government (*gubernatio*) Calvin, the Heidelberg Catechism, and some of the more recent dogmaticians (Dabney, the Hodges, Dick, Shedd, McPherson) speak of only two elements, namely, preservation and government. This does not mean, however, that they want to exclude the element of concurrence but only that they regard it as included in the other two as indicating the manner in which God preserves and governs the world. McPherson seems to think that only some of the great Lutheran theologians adopted the threefold division; but in this he is mistaken, for it is very common in the works of Dutch dogmaticians from the seventeenth century on (Mastricht, à Marck, De Moor, Brakel, Francken, Kuyper, Bavinck, Vos, Honig). They departed from the older division, because they wanted to give the element of concurrence greater prominence, in order to guard against the dangers of both Deism and Pantheism. But while we distinguish three elements in providence, we should remember that these three are never separated in the work of God. While preservation has reference to the *being*, concurrence to the *activity*, and government to the *guidance* of all things, this should never be understood in an exclusive sense. In preservation there is also an element of government, in government an element of concursus, and in concursus an element of preservation. Pantheism does not distinguish between creation and providence, but theism stresses a twofold distinction: (a) Creation is the calling into existence of that which did not exist before, while providence continues or causes to continue what has already been called into existence. (b) In the former there can be no cooperation of the creature with the Creator, but in the latter there is a concurrence of the first Cause with second causes. In Scripture the two are always kept distinct.

3. MISCONCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE NATURE OF PROVIDENCE.

a. *Limiting it to prescience or prescience plus foreordination.* This limitation is found in some of the early Church Fathers. The fact is,

however, that when we speak of the providence of God, we generally have in mind neither His prescience nor His foreordination, but simply His continued activity in the world for the realization of His plan. We realize that this cannot be separated from His eternal decree, but also feel that the two can and should be distinguished. The two have often been distinguished as immanent and transeunt providence.

b. *The deistic conception of divine providence.* According to Deism God's concern with the world is not universal, special and perpetual, but only of a general nature. At the time of creation He imparted to all His creatures certain inalienable properties, placed them under invariable laws, and left them to work out their destiny by their own inherent powers. Meanwhile He merely exercises a general oversight, not of the specific agents that appear on the scene, but of the general laws which He has established. The world is simply a machine which God has put in motion, and not at all a vessel which He pilots from day to day. This deistic conception of providence is characteristic of Pelagianism, was adopted by several Roman Catholic theologians, was sponsored by Socinianism, and was only one of the fundamental errors of Arminianism. It was clothed in a philosophic garb by the Deists of the eighteenth century, and appeared in a new form in the nineteenth century, under the influence of the theory of evolution and of natural science, with its strong emphasis on the uniformity of nature as controlled by an inflexible system of iron-clad laws.

c. *The pantheistic view of divine providence.* Pantheism does not recognize the distinction between God and the world. It either idealistically absorbs the world in God, or materialistically absorbs God in the world. In either case it leaves no room for creation and also eliminates providence in the proper sense of the word. It is true that Pantheists speak of providence, but their so-called providence is simply identical with the course of nature, and this is nothing but the self-revelation of God, a self-revelation that leaves no room for the independent operation of second causes in any sense of the word. From this point of view the supernatural is impossible, or, rather, the

natural and the supernatural are identical, the consciousness of free personal self-determination in man is a delusion, moral responsibility is a figment of the imagination, and prayer and religious worship are superstition. Theology has always been quite careful to ward off the dangers of Pantheism, but during the last century this error succeeded in entrenching itself in a great deal of modern liberal theology under the guise of the doctrine of the immanence of God.[Cf. Randall, *The Making of the Modern Mind*, p. 538.]

4. THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

a. *The teachings of Scripture on this point.* The Bible clearly teaches God's providential control (1) over the universe at large, Ps. 103:19; Dan. 5:35; Eph. 1:11; (2) over the physical world, Job 37:5,10; Ps. 104:14; 135:6; Matt. 5:45; (3) over the brute creation, Ps. 104:21,28; Matt. 6:26; 10:29; (4) over the affairs of nations, Job 12:23; Ps. 22:28; 66:7; Acts 17:26; (5) over man's birth and lot in life, I Sam. 16:1; Ps. 139:16; Isa. 45:5; Gal. 1:15,16; (6) over the outward successes and failures of men's lives, Ps. 75:6,7; Luke 1:52; (7) over things seemingly accidental or insignificant, Prov. 16:33; Matt. 10:30; (8) in the protection of the righteous, Ps. 4:8; 5:12; 63:8; 121:3; Rom. 8:28; (9) in supplying the wants of God's people, Gen. 22:8,14; Deut. 8:3; Phil. 4:19; (10) in giving answers to prayer, I Sam. 1:19; Isa. 20:5,6; II Chron. 33:13; Ps. 65:2; Matt. 7:7; Luke 18:7,8; and (11) in the exposure and punishment of the wicked, Ps. 7:12,13; 11:6.

b. *General and special providence.* Theologians generally distinguish between general and special providence, the former denoting God's control of the universe as a whole, and the latter, His care for each part of it in relation to the whole. These are not two kinds of providence, but the same providence exercised in two different relations. The term "special providence," however, may have a more specific connotation, and in some cases refers to God's special care for His rational creatures. Some even speak of a very special

providence (*providentia specialissima*) with reference to those who stand in the special relationship of sonship to God. Special providences are special combinations in the order of events, as in the answer to prayer, in deliverance out of trouble, and in all instances in which grace and help come in critical circumstances.

c. The denial of special providence. There are those who are willing to admit a general providence, an administration of the world under a fixed system of general laws, but deny that there is also a special providence in which God concerns Himself with the details of history, the affairs of human life, and particularly the experiences of the righteous. Some hold that God is too great to concern Himself with the smaller things of life, while others maintain that He simply cannot do it, since the laws of nature bind His hands, and therefore smile significantly when they hear of God's answering man's prayers. Now it need not be denied that the relation of special providence to the uniform laws of nature constitutes a problem. At the same time it must be said that it involves a very poor, superficial, and un-Biblical view of God to say that He does not and cannot concern Himself with the details of life, cannot answer prayer, give relief in emergencies, or intervene miraculously in behalf of man. A ruler that simply laid down certain general principles and paid no attention to particulars, or a business man who failed to look after the details of his business, would soon come to grief. The Bible teaches that even the minutest details of life are of divine ordering. In connection with the question, whether we can harmonize the operation of the general laws of nature and special providence, we can only point to the following: (1) The laws of nature should not be represented as powers of nature absolutely controlling all phenomena and operations. They are really nothing more than man's, often deficient, description of the uniformity in variety discovered in the way in which the powers of nature work. (2) The materialistic conception of the laws of nature as a close-knit system, acting independently of God and really making it impossible for Him to interfere in the course of the world, is absolutely wrong. The universe has a personal basis, and the uniformity of nature is simply the method ordained by a personal

agent. (3) The so-called laws of nature produce the same effects only if all the conditions are the same. Effects are not generally the results of a single power, but of a combination of natural powers. Even a man can vary the effects by combining one power of nature with some other power or powers, while yet each one of these powers works in strict accordance with its laws. And if this is possible for man, it is infinitely more possible for God. By all kinds of combinations He can bring about the most varied results.

B. Preservation.

1. BASIS FOR THE DOCTRINE OF PRESERVATION. Proof for the doctrine of preservation is both direct and inferential.

a. *Direct proof.* The divine preservation of all things is clearly and explicitly taught in several passages of Scripture. The following are but a few of the many passages that might be mentioned: Deut. 33:12,25-28; I Sam. 2:9; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 107:9; 127:1; 145:14,15; Matt. 10:29; Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3. Very numerous are the passages that speak of the Lord as preserving His people, such as, Gen. 28:15; 49:24; Ex. 14:29,30; Deut. 1:30,31; II Chron. 20:15,17; Job 1:10; 36:7; Ps. 31:20; 32:6; 34:15,17,19; 37:15, 17,19,20; 91:1,3,4,7,9,10,14; 121:3,4,7,8; 125:1,2; Isa. 40:11; 43:2; 63:9; Jer. 30:7,8,11; Ezek. 34:11,12,15,16; Dan. 12:1; Zech. 2:5; Luke 21:18; I Cor. 10:13; I. Pet. 3:12; Rev. 3:10.

b. *Inferential proof.* The idea of divine preservation follows from the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. This can only be conceived of as absolute; but it would not be absolute, if anything existed or occurred independently of His will. It can be maintained only on condition that the whole universe and all that is in it, is in its being and action absolutely dependent on God. It follows also from the dependent character of the creature. It is characteristic of all that is creature, that it cannot continue to exist in virtue of its own inherent power. It has the ground of its being and continuance in the will of its Creator.

Only He who created the world by the word of His power, can uphold it by His omnipotence.

2. THE PROPER CONCEPTION OF DIVINE PRESERVATION. The doctrine of preservation proceeds on the assumption that all created substances, whether they be spiritual or material, possess real and permanent existence, distinct from the existence of God, and have only such active and passive properties as they have derived from God; and that their active powers have a real, and not merely an apparent, efficiency as second causes, so that they are able to produce the effects proper to them. Thus it guards against Pantheism, with its idea of a continued creation, which virtually, if not always expressly, denies the distinct existence of the world, and makes God the sole agent in the universe. But it does not regard these created substances as self-existent, since self-existence is the exclusive property of God, and all creatures have the ground of their continued existence in Him and not in themselves. From this it follows that they continue to exist, not in virtue of a merely negative act of God, but in virtue of a positive and continued exercise of divine power. The power of God put forth in upholding all things is just as positive as that exercised in creation. The precise nature of His work in sustaining all things in being and action is a mystery, though it may be said that, in His providential operations, He accommodates Himself to the nature of His creatures. With Shedd we say: "In the material world, God immediately works in and through material properties and laws. In the mental world, God immediately works in and through the properties of mind. Preservation never runs counter to creation. God does not violate in providence what He has established in creation." [*Dogm. Theol.* I, p. 528.] Preservation may be defined as *that continuous work of God by which He maintains the things which He created, together with the properties and powers with which He endowed them.*

3. ERRONEOUS CONCEPTIONS OF DIVINE PRESERVATION. The nature of this work of God is not always properly understood. There are two views of it which ought to be

avoided: (a) *That it is purely negative.* According to Deism divine preservation consists in this, that God does not destroy the work of His hands. By virtue of creation God endowed matter with certain properties, placed it under invariable laws, and then left it to shift for itself, independently of all support or direction from without. This is an unreasonable, irreligious, and an un-Biblical representation. It is unreasonable, because it implies that God communicated self-subsistence to the creature, while self-subsistence and self-sustenance are incommunicable properties, which characterize only the Creator. The creature can never be self-sustaining, but must be upheld from day to day by the almighty power of the Creator. Hence it would not require a positive act of omnipotence on the part of God to annihilate created existences. A simple withdrawal of support would naturally result in destruction. — This view is irreligious, because it removes God so far from His creation that communion with Him becomes a practical impossibility. History plainly testifies to the fact that it uniformly spells death for religion. — It is also un-Biblical, since it puts God altogether outside of His creation, while the Bible teaches us in many passages that He is not only transcendent but also immanent in the works of His hands. (b) *That it is a continuous creation.* Pantheism represents preservation as a continuous creation, so that the creatures or second causes are conceived as having no real or continuous existence, but as emanating in every successive moment out of that mysterious Absolute which is the hidden ground of all things. Some who were not Pantheists had a similar view of preservation. Descartes laid the basis for such a conception of it, and Malebranche pushed this to the farthest extreme consistent with theism. Even Jonathan Edwards teaches it incidentally in his work on Original Sin, and thus comes dangerously near to teaching Pantheism. Such a view of preservation leaves no room for second causes, and therefore necessarily leads to Pantheism. It is contrary to our original and necessary intuitions, which assure us that we are real, self-determining causes of action, and consequently moral agents. Moreover, it strikes at the very root of free agency, moral accountability, moral government, and therefore of religion itself. Some Reformed theologians also use the

term “continuous creation,”[Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* II, p. 654; Heppe, *Dogm.*, p. 190; McPherson, *Chr. Dogm.*, p. 177.] but do not thereby mean to teach the doctrine under consideration. They simply desire to stress the fact that the world is maintained by the same power which created it. In view of the the fact that the expression is liable to misunderstanding, it is better to avoid it.

C. Concurrence.

1. THE IDEA OF DIVINE CONCURRENCE AND SCRIPTURAL PROOF FOR IT.

a. *Definition and explanation.* Concurrence may be defined as *the co-operation of the divine power with all subordinate powers, according to the pre-established laws of their operation, causing them to act and to act precisely as they do.* Some are inclined to limit its operation, as far as man is concerned. to human actions that are morally good and therefore commendable; others. more logically, extend it to actions of every kind. It should be noted at the outset that this doctrine implies two things: (1) That the powers of nature do not work by themselves, that is, simply by their own inherent power, but that God is immediately operative in every act of the creature. This must be maintained in opposition to the deistic position. (2) That second causes are real, and not to be regarded simply as the operative power of God. It is only on condition that second causes are real, that we can properly speak of a concurrence or co-operation of the First Cause with secondary causes. This should be stressed over against the pantheistic idea that God is the only agent working in the world.

b. *Scripture proof for divine concurrence.* The Bible clearly teaches that the providence of God pertains not only to the being but also to the actions or operations of the creature. The general truth that men do not work independently, but are controlled by the will of God, appears from several passages of Scripture. Joseph says in Gen. 45:5

that God rather than his brethren had sent him to Egypt. In Ex. 4:11,12 the Lord says that He will be with Moses' mouth and teach him what to say; and in Jos. 11:6 He gives Joshua the assurance that He will deliver the enemies to Israel. Proverbs 21:1 teaches us that "the king's heart is in the hand of Jehovah. . . . He turneth it whithersoever He will"; and Ezra 6:22, that Jehovah "had turned the heart of the king of Assyria" unto Israel. In Deut 8:18 Israel is reminded of the fact that it was Jehovah that gave it power to get wealth. More particularly, it is also evident from Scripture that there is some kind of divine co-operation in that which is evil. According to II Sam. 16:11 Jehovah bade Shimei to curse David. The Lord also calls the Assyrian "the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation," Isa. 10:5. Moreover, He provided for a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets of Ahab, I Kings 22:20-23.

2. ERRORS THAT SHOULD BE AVOIDED. There are several errors against which we should guard in connection with this doctrine.

a. *That it consists merely in a general communication of power, without determining the specific action in any way.* Jesuits, Socinians, and Arminians maintain that the divine concurrence is only a general and indifferent co-operation, so that it is the second cause that directs the action to its particular end. It is common alike to all causes, quickening them into action, but in a way that is entirely indeterminate. While it stimulates the second cause, it leaves this to determine its own particular kind and mode of action. But if this were the situation, it would be in the power of man to frustrate the plan of God, and the First Cause would become subservient to the second. Man would be in control, and there would be no divine providence.

b. *That it is of such a nature that man does part of the work and God a part.* The co-operation of God and man is sometimes represented as if it were something like the joint efforts of a team of horses pulling together, each one doing his part. This is a mistaken

view of the distribution of the work. As a matter of fact each deed is in its entirety both a deed of God and a deed of the creature. It is a deed of God in so far as there is nothing that is independent of the divine will, and in so far as it is determined from moment to moment by the will of God. And it is a deed of man in so far as God realizes it through the self-activity of the creature. There is interpenetration here, but no mutual limitation.

c. That the work of God and that of the creature in concurrence are co-ordinate. This is already excluded by what was said in the preceding. The work of God always has the priority, for man is dependent on God in all that he does. The statement of Scripture, "Without me ye can do nothing," applies in every field of endeavor. The exact relation of the two is best indicated in the following characteristics of the divine concurrence.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DIVINE CONCURRENCE.

a. It is previous and pre-determining, not in a temporal but in a logical sense. There is no absolute principle of self-activity in the creature, to which God simply joins His activity. In every instance the impulse to action and movement proceeds from God. There must be an influence of divine energy before the creature can work. It should be noted particularly that this influence does not terminate on the activity of the creature, but on the creature itself. God causes everything in nature to work and to move in the direction of a pre-determined end. So God also enables and prompts His rational creatures, as second causes, to function, and that not merely by endowing them with energy in a general way, but by energizing them to certain specific acts. He worketh all things in all, I Cor. 12:6, and worketh all things, also in this respect, according to the counsel of His will, Eph. 1:11. He gave Israel power to get wealth, Deut. 8:18, and worketh in believers both to will and to do according to His good pleasure, Phil. 2:13. Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians of all kinds are generally willing to admit that the creature cannot act apart from an

influx of divine power, but maintain that this is not so specific that it determines the character of the action in any way.

b. *It is also a simultaneous concurrence.* After the activity of the creature is begun, the efficacious will of God must accompany it at every moment, if it is to continue. There is not a single moment that the creature works independently of the will and the power of God. It is in Him that we live *and move* and have our being, Acts 17:28. This divine activity accompanies the action of man at every point, but without robbing man in any way of his freedom. The action remains the free act of man, an act for which he is held responsible. This simultaneous concurrence does not result in an identification of the *causa prima* and the *causa secunda*. In a very real sense the operation is the product of both causes. Man is and remains the real subject of the action. Bavinck illustrates this by pointing to the fact that wood burns, that God only causes it to burn, but that formally this burning cannot be ascribed to God but only to the wood as subject. It is evident that this simultaneous action cannot be separated from the previous and pre-determining concurrence, but should be distinguished from it. Strictly speaking it, in distinction from the previous concurrence, terminates, not on the creature, but on its activity. Since it does not terminate on the creature, it can in the abstract be interpreted as having no ethical bearings. This explains that the Jesuits taught that the divine concurrence was simultaneous only, and not previous and pre-determining, and that some Reformed theologians limited the previous concurrence to the good deeds of men, and for the rest satisfied themselves with teaching a simultaneous concurrence.

c. *It is, finally, an immediate concurrence.* In His government of the world God employs all kinds of means for the realization of His ends; but He does not so work in the divine concurrence. When He destroys the cities of the plain by fire, this is an act of divine government in which He employs means. But at the same time it is His immediate concurrence by which He enables the fire to fall, to burn, and to destroy. So God also works in man in endowing him

with power, in the determination of his actions, and in sustaining his activities all along the line.

4. THE DIVINE CONCURRENCE AND SIN. Pelagians, Semi-Pelagians, and Arminians raise a serious objection to this doctrine of providence. They maintain that a *previous* concurrence, which is not merely general *but predetermines man to specific actions*, makes God the responsible author of sin. Reformed theologians are well aware of the difficulty that presents itself here, but do not feel free to circumvent it by denying God's absolute control over the free actions of His moral creatures, since this is clearly taught in Scripture, Gen. 45:5; 50:19,20; Ex. 10:1,20; II Sam. 16:10.11; Isa. 10:5-7; Acts 2:23; 4:27,28. They feel constrained to teach: (a) that sinful acts are under divine control and occur according to God's pre-determination and purpose, but only by divine permission, so that He does not efficiently cause men to sin, Gen. 45:5; 50:20; Ex. 14:17; Isa. 66:4; Rom. 9:22; II Thess. 2:11; (b) that God often restrains the sinful works of the sinner, Gen. 3:6; Job 1:12; 2:6; Ps. 76:10; Isa. 10:15; Acts 7:51; and (c) that God in behalf of His own purpose overrules evil for good, Gen. 50:20; Ps. 76:10; Acts. 3:13.

This does not mean, however, that they all agree in answering the question. whether there is a direct, immediate and physical energizing of the active power of the creature, disposing and pre-determining it efficaciously to the specific act, and also enabling it to do that act. Dabney, for instance, while admitting such a physical concurrence in the lower creation, denies it with respect to free agents. The great majority, however, maintain it also in the case of free moral beings. Even Dabney agrees that God's control over all of the acts of His creatures is certain, sovereign, and efficacious; and therefore must, along with the others, face the question as to the responsibility of God for sin. He gives his conclusion in the following words: "This, then, is my picture of the providential evolution of God's purpose as to sinful acts; so to arrange and group events and objects around free agents by his manifold wisdom and power, as to place each soul, at every step, in the presence of those circumstances,

which, He knows, will be a sufficient objective inducement to it to do, of its own native, free activity, just the thing called for by God's plan. Thus the act is man's alone, though its occurrence is efficaciously secured by God. And the sin is man's only. God's concern in it is holy, first, because all His personal agency in arranging to secure its occurrence was holy; and second, His ends or purposes are holy. God does not will the sin of the act, for the sake of its sinfulness; but only wills the result to which the act is a means, and that result is always worthy of His holiness." [*Syst. and Polemic Theol.*, p. 288.] The vast majority of Reformed theologians, however, maintain the concursus in question, and seek the solution of the difficulty by distinguishing between the *materia* and the *forma* of the sinful act, and by ascribing the latter exclusively to man. The divine concursus energizes man and determines him efficaciously to the specific act, but it is man who gives the act its formal quality, and who is therefore responsible for its sinful character. Neither one of these solutions can be said to give entire satisfaction, so that the problem of God's relation to sin remains a mystery.

D. Government.

1. NATURE OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT. The divine government may be defined as *that continued activity of God whereby He rules all things teleologically so as to secure the accomplishment of the divine purpose.* This government is not simply a part of divine providence but, just as preservation and concurrence, the whole of it, but now considered from the point of view of the end to which God is guiding all things in creation, namely, to the glory of His name.

a. *It is the government of God as King of the universe.* In the present day many regard the idea of God as King to be an antiquated Old Testament notion, and would substitute for it the New Testament idea of God as Father. The idea of divine sovereignty must make place for that of divine love. This is thought to be in harmony with

the progressive idea of God in Scripture. But it is a mistake to think that divine revelation, as it rises to ever higher levels, intends to wean us gradually from the idea of God as King, and to substitute for it the idea of God as Father. This is already contradicted by the prominence of the idea of the Kingdom of God in the teachings of Jesus. And if it be said that this involves merely the idea of a special and limited kingship of God, it may be replied that the idea of the Fatherhood of God in the Gospels is subject to the same restrictions and limitations. Jesus does not teach a universal Fatherhood of God. Moreover, the New Testament also teaches the universal kingship of God in such passages as Matt. 11:25; Acts 17:24; I Tim. 1:17; 6:15; Rev. 1:6; 19:6. He is both King and Father, and is the source of all authority in heaven and on earth, the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

b. *It is a government adapted to the nature of the creatures which He governs.* In the physical world He has established the laws of nature, and it is by means of these laws that He administers the government of the physical universe. In the mental world He administers His government mediately through the properties and laws of mind, and immediately, by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. In the government and control of moral agents He makes use of all kinds of moral influences, such as circumstances, motives, instruction, persuasion, and example, but also works directly by the personal operation of the Holy Spirit on the intellect, the will, and the heart.

2. THE EXTENT OF THIS GOVERNMENT. Scripture explicitly declares this divine government to be universal, Ps. 22:28,29; 103:17-19; Dan. 4:34,35; I Tim. 6:15. It is really the execution of His eternal purpose, embracing all His works from the beginning, all that was or is or ever shall be. But while it is general, it also descends to particulars. The most insignificant things, Matt. 10:29-31, that which is seemingly accidental, Prov. 16:33, the good deeds of men, Phil. 2:13, as well as their evil deeds, Acts 14:16, — they are all under divine control. God is King of Israel, Isa. 33:22, but He also rules

among the nations, Ps. 47:9. Nothing can be withdrawn from His government.

E. Extraordinary Providences or Miracles.

1. THE NATURE OF MIRACLES. A distinction is usually made between *providentia ordinaria* and *providentia extraordinaria*. In the former God works through second causes in strict accordance with the laws of nature, though He may vary the results by different combinations. But in the latter He works immediately or without the mediation of second causes in their ordinary operation. Says McPherson: "A miracle is something done without recourse to the ordinary means of production, a result called forth directly by the first cause without the mediation, at least in the usual way, of second causes." [*Chr. Dogm.*, p. 183. Cf. also Hodge, *Outlines of Theol.*, p. 275.] The distinctive thing in the miraculous deed is that it results from the exercise of the supernatural power of God. And this means, of course, that it is not brought about by secondary causes that operate according to the laws of nature. If it were, it would not be *supernatural* (above nature), that is, it would not be a miracle. If God in the performance of a miracle did sometimes utilize forces that were present in nature, He used them in a way that was out of the ordinary, to produce unexpected results, and it was exactly this that constituted the miracle. [Cf. Mead, *Supernatural Revelation*, p. 110.] Every miracle is above the established order of nature, but we may distinguish different kinds, though not degrees, of miracles. There are miracles which are altogether above nature, so that they are in no way connected with any means. But there are also miracles which are *contra media*, in which means are employed, but in such a way that something results which is quite different from the usual result of those means.

2. THE POSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES. Miracles are objected to especially on the ground that they imply a violation of the laws of

nature. Some seek to escape the difficulty by assuming with Augustine that they are merely exceptions to nature *as we know* it, implying that, if we had a fuller knowledge of nature, we would be able to account for them in a perfectly natural way. But this is an untenable position, since it assumes two orders of nature, which are contrary to each other. According to the one the oil in the cruse would decrease, but according to the other it did not diminish; according to the one the loaves would gradually be consumed, but according to the other they multiplied. It must further suppose that the one system is superior to the other, for if it were not, there would merely be a collision and nothing would result; but if it were, it would seem that the inferior order would gradually be overcome and disappear. Moreover, it robs the miracle of its exceptional character, while yet miracles stand out as exceptional events on the pages of Scripture.

There is undoubtedly a certain uniformity in nature; there are laws controlling the operation of second causes in the physical world. But let us remember that these merely represent God's *usual* method of working in nature. It is His good pleasure to work in an orderly way and through secondary causes. But this does not mean that He cannot depart from the established order, and cannot produce an extraordinary effect, which does not result from natural causes, by a single volition, if He deems it desirable for the end in view. When God works miracles, He produces extraordinary effects in a supernatural way. This means that miracles are *above* nature. Shall we also say that they are contrary to nature? Older Reformed theologians did not hesitate to speak of them as a breach or a violation of the laws of nature. Sometimes they said that in the case of a miracle the order of nature was temporarily suspended. Dr. Bruin maintains that this view is correct in his *Het Christelijk Geloof en de Beoefening der Natuur-wetenschap*, and takes exception to the views of Woltjer, Dennert, and Bavinck. But the correctness of that older terminology may well be doubted. When a miracle is performed the laws of nature are not violated, but superseded at a particular point by a higher manifestation of the will of God. The

forces of nature are not annihilated or suspended, but are only counteracted at a particular point by a force superior to the powers of nature.

3. THE PURPOSE OF THE MIRACLES OF SCRIPTURE. It may be assumed that the miracles of Scripture were not performed arbitrarily, but with a definite purpose. They are not mere wonders, exhibitions of power, destined to excite amazement, but have revelational significance. The entrance of sin into the world makes the supernatural intervention of God in the course of events necessary for the destruction of sin and for the renewal of creation. It was by a miracle that God gave us both, His special verbal revelation in Scripture, and His supreme factual revelation in Jesus Christ. The miracles are connected with the economy of redemption, a redemption which they often prefigure and symbolize. They do not aim at a violation, but rather at a restoration of God's creative work. Hence we find cycles of miracles connected with special periods in the history of redemption, and especially during the time of Christ's public ministry and of the founding of the Church. These miracles did not yet result in the restoration of the physical universe. But at the end of time another series of miracles will follow, which will result in the renewal of nature to the glory of God, — the final establishment of the Kingdom of God in a new heaven and on a new earth.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY. Is the doctrine of divine providence an *articulus purus* or an *articulus mixtus*? Who was the first one of the Church Fathers to develop this doctrine? How do Luther and Calvin differ in their conception of divine providence? What accounts for the fact that the Arminians accept the Socinian position on this point? How must we judge of the assertion of some Reformed theologians that God is the only true cause in the world? What are second causes, and why is it important to maintain that they are real causes? Does the doctrine of divine concursus conflict with the free agency of man? What was Augustine's conception of miracles? Why is it important to maintain the miraculous? Do

miracles admit of a natural explanation? Do they imply a suspension of the laws of nature? What is the special significance of the miracles of the Bible? Can miracles happen even now? Do they still happen? What about the miracles of the Roman Catholic Church?

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