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PREDESTINATION IN CHRIST

I

It has generally been the custom in Reformed theology to treat the doctrine of predestination along with, and indeed in between, the doctrines of the divine decrees and the creation.¹ In other words predestination was understood simply as the *decretum Dei speciale*, a particular part of the *decretum Dei generale* or the *decretum creationis et providentiae*, *h.e. rerum in tempore creandarum, conservandarum et gubernandarum aeterna praefinitio*.² Fundamentally all the decrees of God are one and were not distinguished from God Himself,³ but in our apprehension the decree of predestination was recognised as distinct, having to do with the *consilium Dei de creaturis intelligentibus salvandis aut damnandis*. Thus we have predestination raised to the position of a separate article of Christian theology, one that to a certain extent stands on its own legs. So far as Calvin is concerned this fact has been exaggerated, but there is little doubt that in the period of Protestant scholasticism, predestination was thought of too much as an independent principle, and came very near to being a "Denknotwendigkeit". However, theologians were not unaware of the difficulty, and did not hesitate to say: *periculosa est tractatio*.⁴ Calvin himself, however much or little he may have been influenced by arguments from reason and even experience,⁵ made a vigorous protest against going beyond the Scripture, which he called the *Schola Spiritus Sancti*.⁶

Alongside this we have another, and perhaps a more important, characteristic of Reformed teaching on predestination, the recurring insistence that election has to do very closely with Christ. Common expressions are *in Christo, propter Christum, per Christum*,⁷ etc. This element has often been overlooked or misunderstood by the critics of Calvinism, but that is a grave injustice. Without doubt the urge towards a logical systematisation of theology did foster, formally at any rate, a tendency toward philosophical determinism, but the insistence

on taking predestination *in Christo* acted like a powerful antidote. Here we get their thought at its best. Christ is regarded as *substratum electioni*.⁸ The object of election was said to be *totum Christum mysticum, h.e. Christum cum omnibus suis*.⁹ Again, *Christum ut caput nostrum esse primo electum ac deinde ipsius membra in Christo*.¹⁰ Calvin calls Christ the *Speculum praedestinationis*.¹¹ All this is of the utmost importance because it means that the relation between God and man in the act of predestination is to be thought of in terms of the person of Christ. How does God elect men? Through Christ. Why does He elect them? Because of Christ. Just because Christ is, therefore, the author and the instrument of election, we may not think of it in any deterministic sense, but in terms of the way our Lord treated men when He Himself was on earth. Unless this aspect of the Reformed doctrine of predestination is understood along with the other side, it is not really understood at all. That applies not only to the critics but to many modern champions of Calvinism as well!

These then are the two sides of the Christian doctrine of predestination: that the salvation of the believer goes back to an eternal decree of God, and yet that the act of election is in and through Christ. It would be a mistake, however, to see a duality here or to give one any sort of precedence over the other—and yet it is just there that the weakness of the traditional doctrine lies. Calvin, for example, makes election precede grace.¹² In other words, while Christ is regarded as the instrument and the author of election, He is not regarded as the *ground*. Certainly, as I have said, they talk of election being *propter Christum*, but that means *cum respectu ad meritum Christi*.¹³ The ultimate ground is found in the *arcanum consilium* about which one can only profess a *docta ignorantia*.¹⁴ There ought to be no objection to the final inscrutability of the divine purpose, before which, as Calvin is always saying, we can only remain humble, but the tendency has been to drive a wedge in between the supreme will of God and the existence of Jesus Christ. There is the suspicion of deism attaching to the *arcanum consilium* used in this way. We cannot let go the truth that God has come in person in Jesus Christ, and that in Him we have a full and final revelation of the Father. Thus election *in Christo* must mean that Christ is also the full ground of election, *causa et mater*. The position of the traditional doctrine

here really implies that there is a higher fact than Grace, and that therefore Christ does not fully go bail for God. But that is disastrous, and might well in the end lead to belief in two Gods! Christ is Himself identical with the action of God toward men; He is the full and complete Word of God. There is therefore no higher will than Grace or Christ. There are no dark spots in the character of God which are not covered by the Person of Christ; as the express image of God He covers the whole Face and Heart of the Father. And while election must be grounded in the eternal decree of God, Christian faith cannot allow that to be separated in the very least from the Word. Christ is in His own Person the eternal decree of God¹⁵—it is a false distinction to make Him only the *causa et medium* and not also the full ground of predestination. That is not to say that all the purposes of Christ are not inscrutable. What could be more inscrutable than sheer Grace, than the existence of Jesus Christ? The love of God knows no “why”.¹⁶ Just because we are elected in Christ, we are not elected in ourselves—and no reason outside Christ Himself can be given. But that is not to say that Christ loves and forgives and elects us because of some other higher reason found only in an inscrutable divine counsel. Christ loves us because He loves us—and if we cannot answer “Why”, it is because of the nature of love and not because Christ’s love itself is to be thought of as subordinate to a higher and more comprehensive decree of Providence. True love cannot be grounded on anything else than itself, otherwise it is caused and calculated love.¹⁷ Such love is neither Christ’s nor is it compatible with Grace. Thus the tendency we find in the orthodox doctrine of predestination is ultimately one that must be subversive of Grace itself.

II

It is with this point that a doctrine of predestination must start: *In Christo*. Nor must it ever be allowed to trespass those bounds. There is no higher will in God than Grace. Predestination cannot therefore be made an independent principle of theology or viewed as subordinate to a wider doctrine of Providence.¹⁸ Predestination adds nothing new to the doctrine of salvation by grace alone.¹⁹ Predestination really means that our justification is *sola gratia*, and it adds no more to that

doctrine than the emphasis that our salvation is not the fleeting thought of a moment but a deliberate act of the eternal God, an act therefore grounded in eternity, while nevertheless grounded in Jesus Christ. In other words election *in Christo* is election grounded in the God-Man *sola gratia* and *sola fide*, and must be Christologically understood. If there is a paradox in the fact that election is grounded in Jesus Christ and yet in the eternal decree of God, it is nothing else than the central paradox of the Christian faith, the Incarnation of the Son of God.

It might be said that the danger to be avoided in the doctrine of predestination, is the danger of natural theology. The Reformers all realised this, and that is seen not only in their warning that the bounds of Scripture must not be transgressed. Some words of Luther written to an unknown man troubled about the question of his election, make that very clear. "God has given us His Son Jesus Christ, Whom we should make our example, daily meditating on Him, which will cause God's decrees to assume a most lovely aspect in our eyes. For without Christ everything is vanity, death, and the devil; but with Him all is peace and joy. For if a man is constantly tormenting himself as to the decrees of Providence, he only reaps anxious forebodings. Therefore eschew such thoughts as coming from the serpent in paradise, and instead look at Christ. May God preserve you."²⁰ However this doctrine is construed, the one thing to be avoided is the attempt to go behind the back of Christ to some "other" or "preceding" decree, which is not an "other" and not "preceding". To do so, is to make Christ of none effect. He is the perfect Mediator, and there is no word either of election OR DAMNATION outside Christ. Strangely enough the Reformers tended to find the ground of damnation partly (at any rate, if not wholly) in the sinner himself, which, to say the least, is hardly consistent with their own principles here. But if we are to take seriously the fact that God's action toward men is identical with Jesus Christ, we must think of the ground of damnation also as *in Christo!* But we shall come to that shortly.

The point I wish to insist upon at the moment is that election is through the Word. The sovereignty of God over men is the Sovereignty of His Word.²¹ By His Word the world was created and by His Word men are redeemed. To talk about the sovereignty of God through His Word is another way of

saying what so many have said since Kierkegaard pointed out that God is always Subject.²² But the important thing that this holds for our present discussion, is the fact that God's dealings with men are always supremely personal, that is, through the Word.²³ Now *in Christo* certainly means that. And it is only when a doctrine of predestination becomes disengaged from Christ, that it becomes abstract and savours of determinism. But this abstraction must not be allowed—that is to say, the separation between Grace and the divine decree of election. There is an absolute bond between God and His Word. God is always Subject! Predestination, therefore, far from being anything impersonal, is supremely personal, supremely so, because in Christ the Word. That God has come to us in that way, through Christ, means the acute personalisation of all God's dealings with men, election and damnation not excluded. But that is the difficulty, for in Christ God comes too near, and sinful men are not able or willing to bear the pressure and weight of a personal God—it is far easier to keep things more abstract, and so to keep God at a distance.²⁴ But such impersonal relations with God mean in the end some form of determinism. That is why determinism is always cropping up in Christian theology, because the dialectic of the sinner yields determinism.²⁵ Over against all this, Christian faith must cling to the fact that God encounters us personally in Christ through the Word. Just because He comes to us with and through the Word, it means that He has come not to manipulate human beings, but to bring them to decision. God has not come to elect stocks and stones but to elect human beings and to do it in such a way that He brings their whole beings under the sovereignty of His Word, that He makes them *responsible*,²⁶ and so for the first time truly personal. Before the Cross of Christ, says St. Paul, God in His long-suffering and forbearance “passed by” and “winked at” the transgressions of men perpetrated before Christ, but now in Christ when God encounters men and judges sin, He brings them to full responsibility. He does that, as we shall see, through His Grace, His Self-giving to men on the Cross—but just because of this encounter in the approach of God man is shut up to having personal dealings with God. The relation between God and man is narrowed down to an event that might be described as a *concretissimum*. That is the meaning of predestination, and it involves, not an abstract

impersonal relation between God and man, but the most personal conceivable. It means that man is brought to book, to decision. He is met in the midst of the impersonal life of sin, and made to feel the weight of the Eternal. The Cross proclaims at once the justice of God and the justification of the ungodly, and it is within these bounds that we are to understand the meaning of election and damnation. This needs more explanation, but what I am concerned to make clear at this point is the fact that the encounter of God with man in Christ means the exact antithesis of determinism. It means the acute personalisation of all relations with God in spite of sin, it brings man for the first time to full responsibility in which he must answer to God, but finds that the answer has already been given in the death of Christ for us all. The element of "Word" in all this is very important. It does not mean that we are able to hold God at arm's length and take up a neutral position toward Him before we decide²⁷—that itself is sin—, but it means that while God comes, making a total claim over our lives, He comes not in an immanentist way, but in such a way as to invade the innermost circle of all our choices and decisions. "Word" means personal encounter, and therefore the repudiation of all determinism and indeterminism, indeed their destruction—for the fallen world is a world in bondage.

III

Some commentators and theologians are apt to accuse the Scriptures themselves of determinism, and in particular the famous passage of St. Paul in Romans ix. But this is a fundamental mistake. Determinism is as foreign to both the Old and the New Testaments as is abstract thought.²⁸ The difficulty with the New Testament is that people are apt to read it with Greek eyes, as it is written in Greek. It is a welcome fact that not a few modern New Testament scholars who are at the same time good Hebraists, have scouted this tendency, while from the Jewish side scholars have repudiated the validity of drawing parallels between St. Paul or Hebrews, for example, and Hellenistic Judaism. There can be no doubt about the fact that determinism is quite impossible for classical Hebrew; it is completely foreign to the whole Hebrew mind. That is a point we Westerners do not readily understand because our

language and thought is steeped in a powerful Greek tradition of impersonalism.²⁹ It is small wonder therefore when theologians misunderstand the New Testament in this regard. It is significant that one of the most potent forces in the recovery of "the personal" in our own day, Martin Buber, appears to have drawn his whole argument from the basic structure of the Hebrew language.³⁰ Without doubt, as much as anything else, it is the study of the Old Testament that keeps the thought of predestination healthy. The lapse into determinism is only possible with the employment of abstract categories of thought, such as cause, force, etc. To think of God in this way, through forms of thought that have been shaped through our interpretation of the world, is to drag God down within the abstractions of a fallen world. There is no sense in repudiating abstract thought altogether, for abstract thought has its place. In fact it is just because our world is a fallen world, and its relation toward God has been turned to criticism, that by necessity we think of the world as semi-detached or "planted out", to use a phrase of Tennant. It is within this world whose relation to God is abstracted that we find the validity of such ideas as cause, etc., but we have no right to transpose these to determine our understanding of the relation of God to us. Thus, for example, in the doctrine of "absolute particular predestination" the tendency is to think of God as a "force majeure" bearing down upon particular individuals. That is to operate with a view of omnipotence that has little more significance than an empty mathematical symbol. Omnipotence is not causality absolutised, potence raised to the *n*th degree—it is a different kind of power, and that we only know in revelation. We can never use the omnipotence of God as a major premiss, and argue from it. Omnipotence, as the late Professor H. R. Mackintosh urged so often, is what God does, and it is from His "does" rather than from a hypothetical "can" that we are to understand the meaning of the term.³¹ What God does we see in Christ. He is in His Person and action the Almighty of God—the Almighty of love and holiness. It is in fact a natural theology which, by introducing into the Christian apprehension of God a foreign body, causes all the mischief—and there is no doctrine where natural theology causes more damage than in the doctrine of predestination. We shall see this once or twice again, especially in regard to the meaning of "eternity". Here

we must be quite clear about the fact that predestination is not just the religious form of determinism. It has nothing whatsoever to do with it. It has to do with Grace, the Love of God as related to the divine aseity. And that is the way St. Paul understands it in Romans ix. 11-13. A careful reading of the context from Chapter IX to Chapter XI makes that quite clear. There St. Paul is at pains to point out that Grace is free to all.

The Scriptures lend no countenance to a Jones-Smith theory of predestination, in which one is damned and the other elected simpliciter. Scripture tells us that some men are elected and some are apparently damned, but to understand that to mean that there can be no election without damnation, is to misunderstand it, for it introduces the element of necessity.³² On the other hand the opposition to belief in the fact that some men are damned and some are elected is due to the belief in a free-will that somehow occupies a neutral position. If there were any such thing, the doctrine would be wicked—but actually there is no neutrality here, and it is the conception of neutrality (a figment of the natural imagination!) which causes a good deal of the mischief.³³

Apparently the Reformers often failed to see that the Grace of God is as comprehensive extensively as it is intensively. They all agree that Grace cannot be granted because of merit, but is only in fact granted to demerit. The Holy Spirit has no predilections in regard to merit—but that is true extensively as well. The Holy Spirit has no predilections in regard to who are to be damned and who are to be elected, not even in the *Arcanum Consilium!* Predilection in regard to particular individuals is only apparent—judged on the basis of cause and effect—when one is seen to be taken and the other left.³⁴ No such thought occurs to St. Paul in Romans—it is a cardinal principle with Him that Christ died for all, and that Grace extends freely to every man.

The word "predestination" emphasises the sovereign freedom of Grace. It refers saving Grace to the divine aseity, to the action of the "I am that I am" which is wholly grounded in itself, and whose freedom is not therefore one which has any frontiers with any other. That is no doubt difficult for the finite mind to understand because our freedom *must be* bounded by frontiers. The sovereignty of God, the divine *Arbitrium*, is all comprehensive, even of the creatures whom He has made

with a freedom dependent on His own. It is a false understanding of revelation to think that because our freedom is bounded by God's will, His must be bounded also by ours.³⁵ And so the "pre" in predestination refers neither to a temporal nor to a logical *prius*, but simply to God Himself, the Eternal. To a certain extent, of course, PREdestination is the natural expression of the human mind for its understanding of the "per se" or eternal act of God, which it almost inevitably refracts in apprehension—that is why we naturally tend to think of eternity as strung out in an infinite line with past, present, and future though without beginning and without end, in the form of an elongated circular time! But even when we use such language that savours of such temporal priority, we must add immediately that there is no question of a worldly *prius*, for that is what a temporal *prius* would mean, and therefore also a logical one. Unless that is the case, predestination would be brought within the compass of the temporal-causal series, to be interpreted in terms of cause and effect. But PREdestination is the most vigorous protest against that that Christian theology knows—and therefore the most vigorous protest against determinism. And so the "pre" of predestination cannot be regarded as the *prius* to anything here in space and time; it is not the result of an inference from effect to first cause, or from relative to absolute, or to any world-principle. The "pre" of predestination takes election not out of time (as we shall see, because it is "in Jesus Christ") but grounds it in an act of the Eternal which we can only describe as "per se" or "a se". In other words, it is grounded in the life of the Godhead, that is, in the personal relations of the Trinity. Just because we know God to be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we know the Will of God to be supremely Personal—and it is to that Will that predestination tells us our salvation is to be referred.³⁶ But that is only possible if that Will has first come among us and been made personally known. That has happened (*ἐγένετο*) in Christ, and in Him the act of predestination is seen to be the act of creative Grace in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

IV

Election is the word faith uses to say that God's action in predestination is a choice or decision. Election guarantees to

us the freedom of God. His sovereignty, His omnipotence is not one that acts arbitrarily, nor by necessity, but by personal decision. God is therefore no blind fate, nor immanent force acting under the compulsion of some *prius* or unknown law within His being. A doctrine of election that involves the element of necessity at the human end cannot escape asserting the element of necessity at the divine end. If predestination were determinism, then God would not be God but blind fate, sheer necessity. It is strange that election should generally be construed in terms of determinism when actually it is the exact antithesis of it, and indeed negatives any determinism that there may be in the word. Election means that God exercises His freedom to break the bondage of a sinful world, and to bring Himself into personal relations with man. Election does not only mean that the action of God is personal from His side but also that it is personal from the side of Man.³⁷ Just because election is the act of *God*—who strictly speaking alone is personal—it means also an act which is creative of personal relations. And so the freedom which God exercises in election is a creative freedom, though the freedom which it creates is essentially dependent freedom while the divine freedom is independent, “a se” freedom; the freedom of the Creator as distinguished from the freedom of the creature.³⁸ Another way of putting this, is to say that election is an act of love. Election means that God has chosen us because He loves us, and that He loves us because He loves us. The reason why God loves us is love. To give any other reason for love than love itself, whether it be a reason in God Himself, such as an election according to some divine *prius* that precedes Grace, or whether it be in man, is to deny love, to disrupt the Christian apprehension of God and to condemn the world to chaos!

Just because election is an act of love like that, it is true before we know it to be true, and therefore we are not free to make it true—we can only acknowledge its truth in obedience, or of course deny it by our disobedience. The man who knows himself to be chosen by God cannot say that he himself chose God³⁹—no decision of his can add anything to the fact that God has chosen him already in Christ. No matter what he does or thinks man cannot constitute himself a being under grace, he cannot constitute himself a man loved by God,⁴⁰ he is that already. It is without the scope of human *arbitrium* altogether,

and to bring in the concept of free-will is simply beside the mark.

There is something more we must add to the explanation of the word "election". Just because election involves love and decision, it is not something general and timeless, but something unique⁴¹—and although within the sphere of human choices and decisions, within the realm of contingency, it is not an event in a series, and cannot therefore be understood in terms of anything else. As such it is a decision that is absolutely decisive—but that character is not given to it by man. If it were, then it would be an event in a series, a worldly event, part of the causal continuum. Paradoxically enough, to give man *arbitrium* over the act of his own salvation is to land him in determinism.

It might be said that when everything is boiled down the doctrine of predestination or election comes to this: I am saved by God, by the eternal God. But if I am saved by Eternity, I am saved from all eternity unto all eternity. That certainly represents much of the pith of the matter, but the question is, What do we mean by eternity? And it is perhaps over that that the many controversies, which have not been occasioned simply by differing uses of languages, have been involved. These controversies cannot be set aside as though they were needless hair-splitting.⁴² Most of them did involve important points about which decision must be taken in any discussion of the subject. Against this it can be said that there would have been much less controversy had disputants kept to the point—and the point is, it seems to me, that election is in Christ. It is from here that we may start in the discussion of the meaning of eternity. And after all it is only because of the coming of Christ, His revelation and redemption, that predestination has a place at all in theology. The Incarnation of the Son of God must mean the moving of eternity into time. On the face of it that is an impossible thought for the usual philosophical account of eternity which is so closely bound up with the immutability of God, and the relativity of time. But that is the central fact of the Christian faith. If Christ is God, if God has come into the world in Jesus Christ, that does mean for us an approach of eternity into time. But that means again that Eternity does not treat time as mere appearance, the relative that ultimately disappears before, or is swallowed up by, the absolute. If

eternity moves into time, then that means that time relations do have meaning for eternity. They are not set aside, but are implied and wanted. Eternity invades time right in the midst of all its contingency and its necessity, right in the midst of its choices and freedom, and its bondage, and sets them in a definite relation to Eternity which confronts them. Two things are implied here. The first is that Eternity devaluates time. The axe is laid to the root of the tree. The coming of eternity necessarily means judgment, judgment upon the discontinuity of time with eternity, judgment upon a fallen world. But again it means the setting up of time relations, and it takes these in earnest. In other words with the coming of Christ we have judgment come to the Kingdom of this world, to this present evil age (world), and the bringing in of the Kingdom of God which involves a new heaven and a new earth—a new time!⁴³ Thus while the coming of Christ does mean the judgment of the world—and all judgment is committed unto Him, just because He brings forgiveness—it means too, a recreation of the world, and the accent must be laid upon the recreation. It is in this light that we are to think of predestination. Predestination is the act of Salvation seen to be grounded in the eternal will of God as made known in Jesus Christ—but just because in Jesus Christ is no docetic person but also man and real man, personal and historical, then election must be understood as an act *also in the field of time and history*. It does not mean the repudiation of human freedom but its creation, and the repudiation of bondage. The encounter of Christ with man occurs right in the midst of *his* life with all his freedom of choice and decision, in the midst of his sin and bondage, and it places him under the total claim of God. He is not his own, he is bought with a price. Man is brought to book and for the first time made fully responsible to God when face to face with the Cross, and there he is judged. That applies to all men. But God chooses to judge men only in Christ, that is to say, He judges them supremely by His Grace—by bringing them forgiveness. And forgiveness is only given to those that the forgiver condemns. And thus Christ is in Himself as He works out the salvation of Man on the Cross, the ground, the medium, and the cause of predestination all in One. We are in fact all elected and damned in Him. We shall consider that again shortly, but the point I want to make here is this: that the

approach of God in Christ, and Christ the Word, the invasion of eternity into time, means that God takes seriously the relations of time such as human reactions, choices and decisions, and predestination means that precisely these are brought face to face with the Eternal. Man's will is not overridden. His self-will is certainly judged and forgiven, but it is recreated and determined by love; it is directed in the only path where it can find true freedom—and in all that it is man that wills! God is not elected! Nor is it God that believes!

V

At this point it will be necessary to devote some attention to what is called "free-will". Free-will is really an ambiguous word, and in the history of thought is the correlative of determinism. As a neutral term it is a pure figment, and it is failure to realise that which causes a good deal of the mischief. That is not to say that freedom is imaginary—the question is Freedom for what? And here it may be better to follow Luther's distinction between *arbitrium* and *voluntas*.⁴⁴ There is no sense in denying *voluntas*, which practically amounts to a *contradictio in adjecto*. There is no such thing as a will that does not will in some way or other—while a secret identification of all the operations of will with the all-comprehensive immanent working of Omnipotence is to be utterly repudiated. Man has a *voluntas* dependent to a large extent on the object towards which it is directed, but a real *voluntas* which it is sin to override. Luther makes it quite plain in the *De Servo Arbitrio* that he had no concern to deny the freedom of man in respect of lower things. Man was created with dominion over the things of the world in which he lives, and he still has that, though doubtless that also is impaired. In respect of these things then the human *voluntas* has *arbitrium*, but he has no *arbitrium* toward God and in respect of his salvation. He may direct his *voluntas* in that direction but it will be empty unless God in His *Arbitrium* gives Himself to man. For Luther, strictly speaking, only God has free-will,⁴⁵ for He only is the "I am that I am". But quite as important as that is the fact that when the human *voluntas* is directed towards God it finds itself faced by criticism, by the divine judgment on sin; for as directed toward God the human *voluntas* is not an objectless (neutral) will but one that has self for its

object. There is really no such thing as an objectless will, an empty will. The will of the sinner is free, but it is determined by a usurped freedom which is itself sin. The fundamental imagination of man's heart, to use Luther's language again (here citing the Old Testament), is evil. Man is in bondage to evil already. The only other condition in which he can be, is in bondage to Grace—and as Luther points out that is the fundamental teaching of St. Paul in Romans vi. Strictly speaking therefore man has no *arbitrium* at all. In respect of lower things he is in bondage to sin, in respect of higher things he is the servant of righteousness, the bond-servant of Jesus Christ. He has no *arbitrium*, no power of self-disposal; he is a slave. What we moderns call phenomenal freedom is quite irrelevant to the discussion, and like Aquinas, most of the Schoolmen and the Reformers, Luther never dreamt of denying it.⁴⁶ The real difficulty then in the question of "free-will" is that when man directs his will toward God—and he must do so, because God refuses to forgo His claim over man—he finds it met with a negative on the part of God which really means that the human will instead of finding freedom is hardened in its self-will—this is the teaching of St. Paul in Romans i in regard to the revelation of the wrath of God, or in more particular terms, it is the effect of the Law.⁴⁷ The Law enslaves man all the more. It is thus impossible for man to dispose of himself from the side of self-will; it is impossible for him to appropriate redemption. He can only attempt that with a sinful will and that God must judge, else He were not Holy Love.⁴⁸

Man has usurped his freedom, but as such he has imprisoned himself within himself.⁴⁹ As such he has fallen from God, and the very freedom which he usurped is now his very sin. That is why the Law when it comes presents the illusion: You ought, therefore you can! The "I can" provoked by the Law is itself sin⁵⁰—and it is impossible through this "I can" to appropriate redemption, that is to say, to appropriate it by the basic power of sin! That is why the legal relation is treated by St. Paul as a sinful one.

It is really at this point that Reformed theology breaks most with the tradition of the Schoolmen—in its conception of evil. Under the influence of Plato, particularly from the time of Augustine, evil came to be regarded merely as defection from the good—it was something negative. That has been

followed by most modern theologians. It is only on such a shallow view of sin that the doctrine of universalism is possible.⁵¹ Apart from what Professor Mackintosh used to call the surd-like quality of sin in thwarting the love of God, sin has a positive side inasmuch as it is done *before God*.⁵² Like all our actions in regard to God sin is double-sided—it could only be one-sided if there were some neutral *interregnum* between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of evil! It is the holy resistance of God to sin that makes one of the constitutive factors of sin. If God did not resist evil, there would be no distinction between good and evil, for that would mean that God's nature was such that He did not care whether a man committed murder, for example, or not. On the other side of sin there is the wrath of God, what we experience subjectively as guilt. That means that a sin is not past and gone, but is as ineradicable as the immutable nature of God's holiness. Strictly speaking that applies to the sinner. Therefore man cannot undo his sin. He has no *arbitrium* even in repentance over it, for, as Denney argues, the reality of sin is not exhausted in what it is to him. It is real to God—so real that it meant the Cross. Just because it is real in the universe (not therefore something which in the last resort reduces itself to appearance to which all theories of evil as *defectio boni* must work out), just because it is real to God it is "beyond the sinner's control".⁵³ The sinner has no more *arbitrium* than he has ability to eliminate the Law, for the Law worketh wrath: and that places salvation utterly out of his control. For that reason also man is in bondage, and just because the relationship of God to him is turned to criticism the dialectic of sin is apt to yield determinism.

Predestination means the action of God's Grace to man in spite of and apart from the Law (*χωρίς νόμου*,⁵⁴ and therefore the "pre" in predestination!). Predestination means that God breaks through the impersonal bondage of sin and the Law, and confronts man in Jesus Christ. But just because it is the coming of Grace, the bringing of forgiveness binds man more than ever to his sin. In so far as God had forbearance over man's sin, the relation between man and God tended to be impersonal and to that extent neutral (!) but now God comes in Person to man and encounters him over the issue of sin. Just because God wants to forgive man, man must own up to it, and so we can say that while the Law makes man a sinner,

Grace makes man a far greater sinner.⁵⁵ Even in his sin and in his disobedience to God the sinner's relations with God are intensively personalised⁵⁶—and that is as we shall see the meaning of rejection or damnation. The point I wish to establish here is the fact that man has no *arbitrium* over his sin and salvation just because it is objective as well as subjective, positive as well as negative; just because it means something to God as well as to man. But in spite of all that it means to God, and in spite of the fact that He judges it, He comes to redeem man and to deliver him from bondage. And an important element in that deliverance is the fact that God in Christ fulfils the Law and so apart from the Law comes to justify the ungodly. It is on that ground that Christ confronts man, with forgiveness on His lips; Man comes to know the truth and the truth makes him free. To return to other terminology here which may prove enlightening: here we have the irruption of Eternity into the bondage of time, the confrontation of Freedom with the sinner. And just because the sinner who is bound up in the bondage of this sinful world is now face to face with Eternity, he becomes for the first time free to decide for God. Confronted by eternity, he is as it were, in eternity! Or to make it even more picturesque, we might say that this confrontation takes him for the moment out of the bondage of time, out of the temporal-causal *continuum* where law operates; his fetters are severed and he is free. This is perhaps better stated in verse—for whether it is in the body or out of the body we cannot tell!—

“ It is out of time that my decision is taken
 If you call that decision
 To which my whole being gives entire consent.”⁵⁷

VI

To return to more concrete language, the personal encounter of Christ with forgiveness on His lips, singles out a man (cf. all the miracles), and gives him freedom to say “yes” or “no”. It must not be thought that this freedom is such that it can be pocketed; freedom is only possible face to face with Jesus Christ⁵⁸—the mystery is—and this we shall never fathom—that such a man may commit the sin of Adam all over again. He may usurp that freedom, try to pocket it—but this usurped

freedom becomes his very sin, and the last state of that man is worse than the first. He becomes hardened.

There can be no doubt about it that when confronted with Jesus Christ man makes a decision—but that decision is also a double-sided act. When he decides, he finds that it has been decided already, and it is the divine decision that qualifies his decision and makes it what it is, faith IN GOD. His decision is made faith through the Object of faith to which faith conforms. The possibility and the character of will and of faith do not lie in themselves but in that to which they are directed and that which determines them in that direction. And so here we have real freedom for the first time, because we have will directed by its proper Object, Jesus Christ. When I talk about the Object of faith this is not in any sense to be understood as an impersonalisation of faith, for even here God is always Subject. But the astounding thing is that in Jesus Christ we do have the objectification of God, and without such an objectification we could not have faith in God nor freedom toward Him. It is the objectification of God that is the guarantee of our freedom, the Humanity of Christ which guarantees our humanity, and means the recreation of it. How Christ can be both Object and Subject here, how He can be both Man and God, that is the central fact of the Christian revelation which we can never hope to plumb, but this much we can say that it is the Incarnation of the Son of God that means the acute personalisation of all our relations with God Who is always Subject—but apart from this objectification of the Word before man, there would seem to be no possibility for the human mind or the human will to have freedom toward God, to have a will that was not empty but filled, and so directed into freedom. Just because Christ, the Object of faith and Christian freedom, is also Subject, man's faith and will both are determined by Him. This takes human knowledge of God and human freedom directed toward Him completely out of line with any other kind of knowledge and freedom.⁶⁹ Here God takes the initiative and though He uses as raw material our freedom and mind it is HE who gives them both determination and their shape, and makes them what they are. Apart from that they would not be what they are. This is much more so than in the case of evil where God acts critically toward man; here where God acts positively, it is the word of God which is supremely determinative—and man's freedom,

while real, is one subordinate to God's and only possible because it is determined by God's—that is creaturely freedom as distinguished from the freedom of the Creator.⁶⁰ It is here that fallen man is restored to the lost fellowship with God and regains the freedom of faith and love—only this time it is a filled freedom and a filled love inasmuch as it is in fellowship with Jesus Christ.

To understand that we must think of the meaning of the Cross. There Christ died for us. He did an act which we could not do and over which we have no *arbitrium*. Just because there He took our place, the Cross is the exposure of the claims of self-will; and when we are saved by it we know we have no competence whatsoever which we can align beside the Divine will of Grace. In the Cross we see Christ to be the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world. And in the Cross too we know that God has judged sin, and judged us all in Christ. Here therefore we have what we might call election and damnation in the first place, mercy and judgment. But the important thing to note here is that it is not election *or* damnation in the first place. In Christ we are all judged⁶¹—and in so far as Christ died for all, then are all dead—but in Him we are all chosen by God's Grace. It might be objected that one cannot talk of God's choice (nor of His rejection either) without holding also that His choice when made, necessarily fulfils itself. In other words foresight implies "predestination". But such an argument presupposes that time relations in regard to man do not hold with God, and that is just what the Incarnation denies.⁶² To assert that would mean the evacuation of the whole of the Old Testament of its significance: the relation of promise to fulfilment. God wills to take us seriously as He made us, and so while we are all forgiven and therefore judged in Christ, God encounters us in Him acting upon us, in the midst of our human situation with its reactions and decisions, on the ground of the Cross by way of choice and rejection on persons.⁶³ What we have in the Cross we can describe this way. There we have on the one hand the self-giving of God to men. That is His Love and Grace. The Cross is for all men, and there God gives Himself to us in spite of our sin and in spite of the infinite cost which He undertook by Christ's taking our place. But the Love of God, His Self-giving, means the giving of God, of God Who asserts Himself to be God: I am that I am. The Self-giving of God entails

therefore the giving of the Self-asserting God even in Jesus Christ. God does not cease to be God in the Incarnation. He asserts the rights of His sovereignty and Holiness in Christ as much as in the Law, indeed, as we have seen, more so. God cannot give any other God than just that God to men. And so it is Grace, the complete Self-giving of God to men, that comprises at its heart God's judgment,⁶⁴ the Self-assertion of the divine Holiness over against sin. That is the God we accept in Christ on the Cross. And so we might call the result of the encounter of man with Christ, who died for all, election or damnation in the second place. And here we must say *OR* and not *AND*. "And" is the general word, but "OR" is the acute personalisation of the Cross toward men.⁶⁵ The Salvation of Christ free to all is given to man, but its very giving in forgiveness, brings sin to book, brings judgment, though just because it brings pardon. But that is the difficulty: the Offence of the Cross. Christ Himself is the stumbling-block. "Only when we are confronted by Him is there the possibility of being 'offended'. For there is no Other Who can force men to come to a decision about Him when they are confronted by Him. The Person about Whom it is imperative that we should make a decision, for or against faith, is the Mediator, the One before Whom, in Whom, we decide before God and in the presence of God."⁶⁶ That is why the possibility of election means the possibility of rejection, because the possibility of faith means also the possibility of being offended. When we are brought face to face with decision in this encounter, and answer No or disobey—and God does not allow us to be neutral—then we choose damnation in the second place, that is the Cross of Christ is our judgment only and not our salvation.⁶⁷ When we answer Yes or obey, then we learn that Christ has already answered for us! We are chosen already in Christ. We must say that both election and damnation are in Christ—man cannot damn himself any more than he can elect himself. What constitutes his disobedience damnation is the Cross itself. God's reaction against sin there receives its full weight, and when the sinner repudiates the Cross, he comes under the full weight of the judgment of God. In point of fact man probably never or only very rarely deliberately repudiates the Cross—he evades it and keeps on evading it until it is too late, but it amounts to the same thing in the end.

VII

At this point it might well be asked: But what is the precise relation between the divine decision and the human decision, between Eternity and time, between Subjective and the objective? What is the relation of Grace to human freedom? That is without doubt the final point we must answer—it would be foolish to think that we could answer it except in faith, but just because the only answer we can give is in faith, that means that no psychological explanation can be given—no more than there could be a Psychology of the Holy Spirit, for it is the Holy Spirit in fact Who constitutes the relation between the Divine decision and the human decision.⁶⁸ It might also be added that we can say nothing here in regard to the mystery of evil which by its very nature is beyond any explanation. Evil means discontinuity, such discontinuity as the Cross revealed there was between God and man. Just because it took an infinite act to redeem us, we see that the discontinuity of sin is infinite. In the words of Anselm, because sin is sin against the infinite majesty of God, it is infinite in guilt.⁶⁹ Hence no explanation—which proceeds only on the principle of continuity, explaining A in terms of B, B in terms of C, etc.—can cope with sin without explaining it away. Nor do we have any analogy here which can help us out, and so sin presents to the end a surd-like quality.⁷⁰ But in regard to election we do have an analogy—in the Person of Jesus Christ.⁷¹ If Grace means the personal presence of God to men, then that means concretely, Jesus Christ. Therefore it is in the relation of the deity to the humanity in Jesus Christ that we are to look for our final answer to this question.

Christology must always be the *centrum* of a Christian dogmatic. If therefore it can be said that a systematic treatment of theology will be one in which all the doctrines cohere and dovetail together, as far as that is possible where we are dealing with the interpretation of Miracles, then we may look for certain material dogmatic norms within the body of theology which may act as a kind of interior logic throughout the whole, characterising as well the single doctrines themselves. Without doubt we find that in Christology,⁷² or viewed from another angle one might well say it was the doctrine of Grace.⁷³ How God deals with us in Jesus Christ, that must be the norm for

all our theologising—and not least here in the doctrine of election.

Here in Jesus Christ faith tells us that we are confronted by God. Here we have very God and very Man, deity unimpaired by the presence of humanity, and humanity unimpaired by the presence of deity. In the words of Chalcedon,⁷⁴ the deity and humanity of Christ bearing upon each other are to be thought of as *ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαρέτως, ἀχωρίστως*. In other words, the eternal Word of God united Himself with the Man Jesus Who was created *ex virgine*, in such a way that there was an insoluble union between the two and yet one without any fusion between deity and humanity. Christological heresies have generally taken the form of transubstantiating, as it were, one side of the Person of Christ into the other. Thus for example the ancient docetic heresy transubstantiated the humanity into the divinity, while the ancient ebionite heresy transubstantiated the divinity into humanity. In other words, these heresies amount either to a divinising of humanity or a humanising of divinity. Each makes havoc of the Person of Christ, and each in the end passes over into the opposite.⁷⁵ In opposition to this, faith confesses the perfect humanity of Christ which is our guarantee that that God has actually come to MAN, and confesses the perfect deity of Christ which is our guarantee that we have to do with GOD. How does faith think of the connection between Christ's deity and His humanity? The answer is, Through the Holy Ghost. It is a downright miracle.⁷⁶ That really means that we cannot understand HOW it came about, though we may well understand much of what was involved. God was the actor in the Incarnation, and just because it was the result of a free decision on His part, the Incarnation is ultimately an incomprehensible act. God began with Himself, even in the act in which He descended into the midst of time and worldly continuity. That implies that Christ was not the product of worldly continuity—but nevertheless He was a real man; and no docetic figure. The Incarnation does not mean some kind of metaphysical union between divinity and humanity in general; it was personal (hypostatic); it was the union between the Word and a particular individual, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Mary. But that does not mean that Jesus as Man had any independent existence from the Word; He has no existence apart from the Incarnation.

His existence was grounded solely in the act of God, Who at that one point and at no other, has so come among men.

We must now proceed to draw the analogy. We can say that just as Jesus Christ was *vere homo et vere Deus*, so in the divine encounter we have a really human decision and a really divine one. The human decision has no independent existence apart from the divine, but nevertheless it is a particular and concrete decision; it is personal. How does sheer grace relate itself to the human decision? We must say that there can be no *linear* linking of Grace on to the moral personality (i.e. to "free-will") as such.⁷⁷ To use a German word, there can be no Anknüpfung (or Anschluss) on the part of the natural man. But Grace is a creative act within the midst of our worldly decisions and choices, and the human decision which corresponds to the divine decision is a truly human, worldly act. Following our criterion of the Incarnation we must say that Grace means the real personal Presence of God to man in such a way that the presence of perfect divinity (predestination) is unimpaired by the presence of humanity, and the presence of perfect humanity is unimpaired by the presence of perfect divinity. Now that is quite unthinkable for the natural reason which works with categories of the understanding (in the Kantian sense).⁷⁸ But Scripture does not think of these as being connected through cause and effect, but through a different kind of connection altogether created at the Incarnation, which we have come to call "hypostatic union". It is precisely the doctrine of election that embodies this. And here too we must say ἀχωρίστως and ἀσυγχύτως.⁷⁹ There can be no separation between the divine and the human decisions, nor on the other hand any fusion. Separation or fusion inevitably result in Pelagianism or determinism, which correspond respectively with a docetic and an ebionite Christology, on the one hand, or in a doctrine of mystic infused grace (Cf. Gregory of Nyssa espec. for this in relation to Christology) or a doctrine of synergism, which correspond respectively to a Eutychian and a Nestorian Christology, on the other hand. In point of fact, all of these tend to think of the relation of Grace to man not in the form of Word and faith but in the form of cause and effect, that is why each form of the heresy readily passes over into its opposite. In the end therefore these errors reduce themselves to two

main types in which the extremes are a doctrine of irresistible grace and independent free-will.⁸⁰

In the experience of faith the man who has been chosen by God cannot say that he has chosen God, and yet the act of Grace means that for the first time man has been set free from the bondage of sin, and placed under God's claim for obedience. Just because Grace means the Self-bestowal of God to man, it entails the Self-affirmation of God, that is to say, it entails the bestowal of God Who asserts His will and nature to be sovereign claiming the obedience of faith. Thus it is Grace which is the power of obedience. And so it is Grace that really fulfils the Law; under it man is for the first time thrown upon full responsibility. We must say then that there is a kind of hypostatic union between Grace and faith, through the Holy Spirit, a kind of *communio quaedam consubstantialis!*⁸¹ Faith has no independent existence apart from the initiative of Grace, nor is it in any sense the produce of human activity working independently of the Word. It is WE who believe, and we come to believe in a personal encounter with the living Word. Faith entails a genuine human decision, but at its heart there is a divine decision, which, as it were, catches up and makes it what it is, begotten of the Holy Ghost.

It is in the doctrine of the Virgin birth that we see this most clearly.⁸² It was a real birth. The word became flesh, not through any synergistic activity, but a gracious decision on the part of God (*conceptus de Spiritu Sancto*). That implies that Jesus was not born because of the sovereignty (*arbitrium*) of man, not through the will of the flesh. Jesus was not a product of a causal historical continuity, nevertheless the Incarnation was a coming of God right into the midst of human conditions. Jesus was not created *ex nihilo*, but *ex virgine*, therefore right in the midst of human choices and decisions, right in the midst of human activity: *Ecce ancilla Domini*, but the Anknüpfung lies in the *conceptus de Spiritu Sancti*. And Jesus was no docetic figure; He was a real Man, and really the son of Mary. She gave birth to Him.

Nothing could make the relation between Grace and faith in election more clear. The ultimate act is incomprehensible because it is an act of GOD, that is why election is also predestination. But the divine decision "was made flesh". That is what we have in faith, and just as in the birth of Jesus so in

the generation of faith natural processes are involved. In, under, and with the flesh—to use sacramental terminology—or the human decision, there is a divine decision, apart from which the human decision has no existence at all; indeed would never have been called into being. We have here therefore the repudiation of adoptianism, that is, correspondingly, Pelagianism.⁸³ The virgin birth means that the sovereignty of man (the *κύριος*) has no place. We have the repudiation of docetism, that is, correspondingly, determinism. That is not only seen in the fact that natural causation and generation were broken, but in the fact that Christ Jesus was a real Man. And so we must say with Luther: *Haereo in Christi humanitate. Nullum Deum cognoscendum esse, praeter hunc incarnatum et humanum Deum.*⁸⁴ Nor may we deny the “humanity” of faith in favour of some overriding force from above. We have here also the repudiation of Arianism, that is, correspondingly, synergism. There is no fusion between the two natures, no “Anknüpfungspunkt” (other than the Holy Spirit). There is therefore no *tertium quid* between the two, for while there are two natures, there is ONE PERSON. That Jesus Christ is really God guarantees to us that we have to do with GOD; that He is Man guarantees to us that God has come all the way to US. Predestination *in Christo* is the divine act of *ιδιοποίησις*. And so ultimately we must say that it is the *unio hypostatica*⁸⁵ that supplies us with the necessary category for understanding the much debated relation between Election and human freedom, the Holy Spirit and faith, “Supernature” and “nature”.

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¹ Cf. for example the *Medulla Theologiae Christianae* of John Marck which was once used as a theological text-book in Scotland.

² J. Heidegger, *Corpus Theologiae*, 5.19.20—See Heppe, *Reformierte Dogmatik*, p. 108.

³ Pictet, *Theologia Christiana*, 3.1.7: *Non distinguimus decretum ab ipsa Dei essentia.*

⁴ The words of a 16th cent. Basler Theologian, Hyperius.

⁵ Institutes 3.24.12 and 15, and also the tract *De Praedestinatione.*

⁶ Institutes 3.21.1.

⁷ Institutes 3.22.1; 24.5, etc.

⁸ See Heppe, op. cit., p. 137.

⁹ Peter van Mastricht, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Polan apparently following Augustine, *ibid.*

¹¹ Institutes 3.24.5; and *De Praedestinatione, Corpus Reformatorum*, 8, 306, 318.

¹² Institutes 3.22.1: *Si gratiam Dei, ut idonei ad gloriam futurae vitae obtinendam reddamur, praecedit electio, quid iam reperiet in nobis Deus ipse quo ad nos eligendos.* Of the reformers it was Zwingli who was most, Luther least, guilty here.

¹³ See Heppe, op. cit., p. 137, and Heidegger, op. cit. p. 31 f.

¹⁴ Calvin, Institutes, 3.21.1-3.

The last phrase suggests the influence of Nicolas of Cusa on Calvin on this point!

¹⁵ This is the view of the Scots Confession, articles 7 and 8. See the Gifford Lectures of Karl Barth, p. 68 f.

¹⁶ I think the expression originally may be Brunner's, but see also Karl Barth, *Dogmatik 2/1*, p. 419. Hendry cites a similar word from Luther: "Gottes Wille hat kein Warumbe" (God the Creator, p. 141), but this need not be the same. It might be interpreted in a nominalist sense.

¹⁷ Cf. The thesis of A. Nygren in his book *Agape and Eros*. Cf. also Brunner's book *Eros und Liebe*.

¹⁸ Cf. Polanus: *Syntagma Theologiae Christianae: Praedestinatio est pars providentiae*.

¹⁹ See *Theologische Existenz Heute*, 47: Karl Barth, *Gottes Gnadenwahl*, p. 4 f.

²⁰ *The Letters of Martin Luther*, translated by M. A. Currie, p. 462; cf. also the letter written to a stranger in 1528 on the same subject, p. 177 f.

²¹ Cf. *Theologische Studien*, 5: Karl Barth: *Die Souveränität des Wortes Gottes und die Entscheidung des Glaubens*.

²² See the more recent publication of Brunner: *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, which is really an essay on this point.

²³ Luther says: *Verbum, inquam, et solum verbum est vehiculum gratiae*, "*Luthers Werke*", Weimar Edition, 2, p. 509.

²⁴ Cf. Brunner: "The idea of God never offends anyone," *Mediator*, p. 340. In this respect it is the theology which stresses the immanence of God which keeps Him at a distance; it is the theology which sees that there is no immanence but the immanence of the Transcendent (P. T. Forsyth's words), that is really personal. The question of transcendence is apt to be fundamentally misunderstood in the modern theological debate as something metaphysical. If transcendence is to be metaphysically interpreted, then there can be no transcendence

except the transcendence of the immanent, which does not make much sense! We shall have to recall that in the Bible Transcendence is fundamentally religious—it has to do with the Holiness of God and the sin of man. That is evident not only from the Biblical doctrine of Holiness which entails “separation” but from all those parables of Jesus which speak of “the far country” whether on the part of a prodigal or on the part of a householder. The Bible does not in the last resort make the distinction between the Creator and the creature the ground for a doctrine of *finitum non capax infiniti*, because of its insistence on Grace. But just because it does insist on grace, it teaches also the doctrine *finitum non capax infiniti*—but that must be understood as an “also”! However, if it is the emphasis on the Holiness of God and the sin of man that gives the Bible its emphasis on Transcendence, it is the astounding fact that “Christ was made sin for us” that emphasises, as nothing else does, the real immanence of God. It is liberal theology which refuses to take this thought of the identification of God in Christ with human sin seriously that must be charged with a false transcendence. And so in the last resort it is the humanity of Christ, the Incarnation of *God*, that brings Him so near, near to sinful man, inasmuch as He was “made in the likeness of sinful flesh”. But it is only a Transcendent God, i.e. a God of Grace, who can do that!

²⁵ The sinner feels that God relates Himself to man objectively and not Subjectively. That is also apparent in the legalistic relationship to God. Both legalism and determinism are characteristics of fallen man, of man who lives in abstraction from God. But the sinner is apt to interpret this deistically, that is, give this an ontological interpretation. However, the Old Testament (and so also the New) knows of no such separation between “nature” and “supernature”, and so knows no determinism, and in the last resort no real legalism—for, as St. Paul argues in Galatians, it is the Law misinterpreted, that is repudiated by the Gospel of Grace, not the Law in itself. But there is real ground for this legalistic-deterministic thinking, because God does act critically upon the sinner outside Christ. That is why Luther repudiated natural theology not on metaphysical grounds, but on the ground of the doctrine of the wrath of God. There IS a natural theology, just because man’s relation to God is abstracted, and that natural theology is bound to be deistic—even when it tries to overcome the deism by a secret doctrine of *analogia entis*—but *justificatio impii sola gratia et sola fide* must mean its rejection *in toto*, just as much as it entails the rejection of all natural goodness—and there IS a natural goodness.

²⁶ See here Jacobs: *Prädestination und Ethik bei Calvin*, and also Barth: *Evangelium und Gesetz, Theologische Existenz Heute*, 32. Cf. Brunner's oft repeated expression, Gottes verantwortlich machendes Wort, See Natur und Gnade, Der Mensch im Widerspruch, Wahrheit als Begegnung, etc.

²⁷ Cf. *The World and God*, by Prof. H. H. Farmer, especially Ch. 4.

²⁸ Cf. Brunner: *Wahrheit als Begegnung*: "Nicht das Substantiv, sondern das Verbum ist der biblischen Sprache das Hauptwort. Die altchristliche Theologie hat aus der biblischen Verbum—Theologie eine griechische Substantiv—Theologie gemacht. Das ist das platonische substantialistische Element in ihr. Die Bibel ist nie substantialistisch, sondern immer aktualistisch."

²⁹ See Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God*, p. 291.

³⁰ I refer mainly to his little book, *Ich und Du*, translated by R. G. Smith. However, as an orthodox Jew, Buber is unable to solve the fundamental problem, the solution of which is to be found in the Incarnation. Instead he is forced to take refuge in mysticism, which is in fact, only a half-way house to determinism.

³¹ Cf. Luther: "*De Servo Arbitrio*," 93; *Omnipotentiam vero Dei voco, non illam potentiam, qua multa non facit, quae potest, sed actualem illam, qua potenter omnia in omnibus, quomodo Scriptura vocat eum omnipotentem*. But even Luther wanted to equate omnipotence with foresight.

³² Cf. Calvin, Institutes 2.23.1: *ipsa electio nisi reprobationi opposita non staret*. In German this is sometimes called the Meyer-Müller Theorie.

³³ This is one of the major contentions of Luther against Erasmus throughout the *De Servo Arbitrio*. Luther accuses Erasmus himself of trying to be the "slippery eel".

³⁴ This is the logical conclusion of the doctrine of predestination which operates with an impersonal view of Grace. That is why some form of extreme Augustinianism will always reappear in Catholicism. The same result is seen in the doctrines of baptismal regeneration and the *ex opere operato* view of the sacraments.

³⁵ This can be viewed as parallel to the argument of the neo-Hegelians such as Strauss, and Bauer, and Biedermann, from the intrinsic imperfection of personality as we know it to an impersonal God. Cf. also B. Bosanquet.

³⁶ This has also been a note of traditional Calvinism. Cf. espec. Heidegger, op. cit., 5.8. However, it was not radically thought out. Election is referred to the Son propter sponsonem pro electis, and the Holy Spirit propter obsignationem eorundem.

Bucan seems to go a little further when he says: *Causa princeps electionis—Deus—et Christus, quia non est alius Deus a Patre—et Spiritus Sanctus. Institutiones, 36.16.*

³⁷ Again cf. Brunner: "Gott überrennt den Menschen nicht, er setzt den menschlichen Willen, die Personentscheidung nicht auser Kraft, sondern er nimmt sie in Anspruch. Gott ist der Herr—er ist nicht Kausalität." *Wahrheit als Begegnung, p. 74.*

³⁸ This distinction is not taken seriously enough by most modern theologians. If Creator means one who creates *ex nihilo*, how can a Creator create creators? A Creator is One without origin. To talk of his having been created is simply a *contradictio in adiecto*. It is another thing to talk of "creativity", but even then we must recognise that the word is used somewhat loosely. Cf. Pringle-Pattison, *op. cit.*, p. 288 f.

³⁹ Luther says: "Grace comes so free, that no thought concerning it, or attempt or desire after it, precedes." *De Servo Arbitrio, 155.*

⁴⁰ Cf. Barth: "Dass der Mensch ein begnadeter Mensch ist, das hat er sich nicht selbst genommen." *Gottes Gnadenwahl, p. 9.*

⁴¹ What theologians have recently called "Einmaligkeit".

⁴² For example the controversy between supra- and infralapsarianism. It is sometimes objected to an "absolute particular" doctrine of predestination which claims to come down on the one side or the other, that if salvation is eternally determined, what sense is there in saying that it took place before or after the Fall. But that objection operates on a view of eternity for which the distinctions of time are unreal and docetic, which is even a worse fault than the view of the controversialists who, however distorted their views of eternity and time may have been, did see that time had significance for eternity! It might also be added here that the traditional debate has also suffered from the disability to distinguish between a *totum simul* view of eternity, and a *per se* one. The latter is the Biblical one. The former can only be accepted with certain restrictions.

⁴³ By some critics a doctrine of predestination is linked with what is called "sheer transcendentalism", but such a charge is the opposite of the truth. Just because predestination is "transcendentalist" it entails a new time, a new world. That charge is nowhere more false than when directed against the so-called dialectical theologians, and in particular Barth. More than any other modern theologian, Barth has taken time seriously, and refused to allow its distinctions to be overridden or made unreal by an abstract immanentism. And he has done

that just because he has taken the humanity of Christ so seriously. It is rather significant that those theologians who start off by being Ebionite in their Christology—Cf. Schleiermacher and Harnack, to name only two—almost inevitably end up in docetism! For Barth's discussion of eternity and time see the *Dogmatik* 1/2, p. 50 ff. and 2/1, p. 685 ff.

⁴⁴ See Hendry, *op. cit.*, p. 139. Luther, however, cannot be absolved of the suspicion of determinism. It is significant that that suspicion is never aroused in his less formal writings.

⁴⁵ "Free-will is plainly a divine term, and can be applicable to none but the Divine Majesty only: for He alone 'doth (as the Psalm sings) what He will in Heaven and earth'. Whereas, if it be ascribed unto men, it is not more properly ascribed, than the divinity of God himself would be ascribed unto them: which would be the greatest of all sacrilege. Wherefore, it becomes theologians to refrain from the use of this term altogether, whenever they wish to speak of human ability, and to leave it to be applied to God only." 36. Luther's argument is that free-will is something that acts *per se*. Therefore toward God one cannot think of man as having free-will, though one may well think of it toward things lower than man. But the more important point Luther does not fail to see, that if man has free-will, can do what he likes, that implies that at bottom he is good, at any rate intrinsically good enough to be able to create the right relationship with God. That the Cross denies.

⁴⁶ See the *De Servo Arbitrio*, 26, 41, 161, etc. Luther even attributes freedom to man in respect of "good works" (not toward God) and "the righteousness of the civil or the moral law", 146. For the view of Augustine see the fine discussion by Heinrich Barth: *Die Freiheit der Entscheidung im Denken Augustins*. For the view of Aquinas see espec. *Summa Theol.* c I a—II ae. q. 10: a 4 ad. 3; *Contra Gen.* 3.72. For the Calvinist position see Wolleb, *Compendium*, 19: *Necessitas decretorum Dei non tollit libertatem in creaturis rationalibus. . . . Nec tollit contingentiam in causis secundis*. Cf. also Beza, *Opera* I, 1, 2. Kant who inherited this thought pushed it to the logical conclusion and denied phenomenal freedom, but then had to assert noumenal freedom to escape from determinism, for the denial of phenomenal freedom meant the denial of natural theology!

⁴⁷ It might be argued—as it is to-day in Judaism, and was even in the time of St. Paul—that the giving of the Law is an act of Grace, and the possession of the Law is the guarantee of election! There is truth in that. God does give Himself in the Law, and the Law includes the gift of God; but just

because the gift means the giving of the Holy God to the SINNER, the gift is neutralised, for man cannot receive it. That is the argument of St. Paul. The Law was meant for life, but in point of fact it destroys. There is no way through Law to Grace, or in modern terminology, through moral values to religion. Because of sin the Law can only have negative significance, it hedges man up to Grace, it brings a "glad despair" as Kierkegaard called it.

⁴⁸ This is even more the case because of God's positive action of redemption. Just because Christ has died for us, that means He has taken our redemption out of our hands and placed it in His alone. Thus Luther: "God has put my salvation out of the way of my will, and has taken it under His own, and has promised to save me, not according to my working or manner of life, but according to His own grace and mercy." (*De Servo Arbitrio* 164—this is the way to understand Rom. ix. 15, 16.) Cf. also the argument in the conclusion: "If we believe that Christ redeemed us by His blood, we are compelled to confess, that the *whole* man was lost."

⁴⁹ Cf. Luther's doctrine of the *cor incurvatum in se*.

⁵⁰ This of course is really a delusion when it means that man is able of himself to create the right relationship toward and with God. Thus Luther argues throughout against Erasmus that the Law does not tell men what they can do, but only what they ought to do, in fact what they cannot do. There are very clear statements in the 1535 seq. *Disputationes: Non ergo liberum arbitrium tam a facto esse, quam a debito esse dicitur. . . . A debere ad posse non valet consequentia.*

⁵¹ This applies as well to the repudiation of belief in a devil. If evil is only negative, how can pure evil, i.e. pure negativity, exist? The retort to be made to this—as foolish as is this argument itself!—is, if evil is simply negative, how can it exist at any time? If it can only exist because tied together by some "good", then is not that "good" doubly evil, on the ground of prostitution, because it preserves evil? If not, how can anything be negative, without having enough positive weight in itself to negate? If it is negative in the sense that O is negative, then that means that evil does not exist at all! The *defectio boni* view of evil ignores the elementary logical distinction between the *contrary* and the *contradictory*.

⁵² This is one of the great contributions of Kierkegaard to modern theology. See *Kierkegaard*, by W. Lowrie, p. 413.

⁵³ The Missionary Motive, in the volume, *Missionary Sermons, 1812 to 1924*, p. 235.

⁵⁴ Rom. iii. 21.

⁵⁵ See Lowrie, *Kierkegaard*, p. 399. That is why Luther

tells us that only by faith can a man be a sinner! *Sola fide credendum esse peccatores . . . est enim non naturalis.* He even says, *rarum et arduum est peccatorem fieri*—on Rom. iii. 5 f. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin”, said St. Paul. That is what we are always tending to forget. Sin and grace have been converted, practically without remainder, into anthropological affairs—e.g. in the theology of Tennant. But the doctrine of sin no more than the doctrine of grace can be naturalised.

⁵⁶ I suppose that is the reason why the most forceful personalities in human society are either the saints or the great sinners.

⁵⁷ T. S. Elliot, *Murder in the Cathedral* (F. & F.), p. 73. In this fine play there are many interesting theological suggestions.

⁵⁸ It has been the main fault of the debate over the *imago dei*, to think of it as something permanent or that could be made permanent. That is to misunderstand the nature of God first before it misunderstands the *imago Dei*. The *imago* really consists of a *relation* to God. That is why it can be utterly lost, and yet man can still retain the *humanum*. The *imago dei* is in no sense a *proprietas* which he has once and for all. It is rather the reflection of the glory of God which we attain in fellowship with Him—that is, through the Word, through Christ. See 2 Cor. iii. 18. We can only think of freedom in the same sense. Freedom and the image of God are to be thought of only as correlative to Grace.

⁵⁹ Thus Brunner also in *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, p. 62 f.: “Das Gegenüber ist nicht mehr wie im Denken ein Etwas, ein Bedachtes und Besprochenes, das ich mir durch die Energie meines Denkens erschliesse, sondern eine Person, die selbst spricht und sich erschliesst, die also selbst die Initiative und Führung hat und sozusagen die Rolle übernimmt, die beim Denken ich selbst habe. Es findet also hier Wechsel, eine Vertauschung statt, die im Gebiet des Denkens völlig analogielos ist.” That is the thesis of Kierkegaard so brilliantly argued in the Philosophical Fragments.

⁶⁰ This applies even to the *non posse peccare* freedom, which as such need NOT be divine, though it cannot be had apart from God.

⁶¹ It is usual to think here of the cry of our Lord on the Cross: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Cf. Luther here on Gal. iii. 13.

⁶² We must remember also that God has made His own (*περιποιήσαι*) our humanity which He has taken up for ever into the Godhead. That—so astounding to us—must mean that time relations even mean something for God Himself Who

has so stooped to share our humanity. To Platonise this, as the Alexandrians were wont, not excepting Athanasius, is in the end to anthropologise God, which the Incarnation does not do, for God has become man without ceasing to be God.

⁶³ See Camfield, *Revelation and the Holy Spirit*, p. 92.

⁶⁴ Cf. Barth, *Dogmatik*, 2/1, p. 394 f., 413 f. and also I/2, p. 845 "Nur durch Gottes Gnade sind wir wirklich gerichtet"; p. 433 ff.

⁶⁵ The failure to understand this is the meaning of universalism. In the last resort universalism means an impersonal relation between God and man, and as such it is at heart deterministic. We can hope that all men will be saved, but further than that we cannot go.

⁶⁶ Brunner, *The Mediator*, p. 341.

⁶⁷ What happened in the case of the Law, will happen here. The Cross ordained to life, becomes a man's condemnation. In Christ God still gives Himself to the sinner, even if he disobeys; Christ's death is for all men. But to the unrepentant sinner, that giving of God only means the proximity of Holiness and therefore judgment. It is Hell for an unrepentant sinner to be faced with the Cross. That is why we must say that even damnation or rejection is *in Christo*.

⁶⁸ See again Camfield, *op. cit.*, p. 91 f.

⁶⁹ *Cur Deus Homo*.

⁷⁰ Luther says toward the end of the *De Servo Arbitrio*: *In lumine gratiae est insolubile, quomodo Deum eum damnet, qui non potest aliud ullis suis viribus facere quam peccare et reus esse.*

⁷¹ It was Augustine who first thought of the Incarnation as the prototype of Grace. *De Praedestinatione*, 15, 30-31; Cf. Calvin, *Institutio*, 3.22.1; Aquinas, *Summ. Theol.* 3 Q 2.10; and a modern R.C. exposition by Penido, *Le Rôle de L'Analogie en Théologie Dogmatique* p. 378 f.

⁷² By this I do not mean to exclude soteriology, for the Person of Christ can only be rightly interpreted *functionally*. *Hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia eius cognoscere*. It is very significant that in the book, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, Brunner is concerned to correct a fault of *The Mediator* where he feels he has interpreted the person of Christ too *inductively*. See p. 108 f. (Professor Brunner expressed the same thought in conversation with me two years ago.) This means, apparently, that Brunner is coming nearer to Barth!

⁷³ Luther put the doctrine of justification by faith in the centre. "For all the other articles of the faith are comprehended in it: and if that remain sound, then all the rest are sound. When we teach that men are justified by Christ, that Christ is the conqueror of sin, death, and the everlasting curse,

we witness therewithal that He is naturally and substantially God." On Gal. iii. 13. This really amounts to the same thing, with very heavy weight on the function of Christ.

⁷⁴ Chalcedon of course represents only prolegomena to Christology, but perhaps that is all that can be said!

⁷⁵ That is apparent even more in modern Christology. For example, think of the way many theologians talk of Christ as the Divine Man. In that way they hope to have divinity and yet still retain the humanity of Christ—think of the whole Ritschlian movement whose major problem is to pass from Jesus to God. They can only do that by the doctrine of the Divine Man. But to call Jesus a Divine Man is to deny his humanity. In the last resort liberalism becomes docetic. It transubstantiates Christ into an eternal idea (Cf. Schleiermacher). It is significant that R.C. theology has never got rid of these early heretical tendencies. That is particularly apparent in three ways: (1) In the virtual denial of the complete mediatorial work of Christ, (2) In the doctrine of Grace as a kind of *tertium quid* between God and man joining them together, corresponding to an Arian Christology, (3) And the doctrine of transubstantiation in the sacrament, which means that the presence of Christ there is docetic. To transubstantiate the worldly symbols into something they are not, is virtually to deny the humanity of Christ, and to say that God has not come all the way to our world.

⁷⁶ "*Etsi in unam personam coaluit immensa Verbi essentia cum natura hominis, nullam tamen inclusionem fingimus. Mirabiliter enim e caelo descendit Filius Dei ut caelum tamen non relinqueret; mirabiliter in utero virginis gestari, in terris versari et in cruce pendere voluit, ut semper mundum impleret sicut ab initio.*" Calvin, *Institutio*, 2.13.4.

⁷⁷ The moral personality is as such sinful, and free-will is as such self-will. Grace has to do with the moral personality, but it sets it in crisis and judges it.

⁷⁸ For an interesting view of causality here see Karl Heim, *God Transcendent*, p. 16 f.

⁷⁹ It is *ἀσυγχύτως* which reflects the greatest temptation in theology, apparent in every Greek interpretation of the Logos—cf. espec. the Archbishop of York. But it says most emphatically, No *analogia entis*! The relation between the deity and humanity of Christ cannot be thought of in any ontological way, but only in a sacramental way. Even in the Incarnation God remains God, and man man—and yet the miracle is that there is one Person. But there is no fusion between the deity and the humanity of Christ in such a way that it would be possible to pass automatically from the one

to the other. No one simply by being clever can see God in Jesus Christ. "No man says Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." The doctrine of *analogia entis* applied to Christology inevitably means the humanisation of God—therefore ἀσυγχύτως! Similarly a doctrine of *analogia entis* in Grace and election inevitably means synergism or determinism. It is just because the only analogia we may use is an analogia fidei, that we can still talk analogically—and we cannot talk of God apart from analogies—and anthropomorphically, without humanising God. This analogia fidei we find in the Person of Christ, Who is the only point (the only Anknüpfungspunkt therefore!) where God and man come indissolubly together. It is only in the God-Man that we can get through to God; and we only by becoming conform to that analogy (*imago Dei*!) in faith.

⁸⁰ It is the *damnosa hereditas* of R.C. theology that it operates with a view of Grace which is thought of as the outflow of the nature of God rather than of His free personal decision. Such an immanentist grace always entails cause and effect. Cf. especially the doctrine, *gratiam causare ex opere operato*. That fault is not eliminated either by Przywara's attempt to find a mediating position in which the *analogia entis* is thought of as completing its work in transforming the problem of antitheses into the problem of tensions (see *Polarity*, p. 64), nor by von Hügel's attempt to elaborate a view of alternation between nature and supernature.

⁸¹ Here at any rate the Latin word is not so happy as the Greek. Indeed throughout I should say that "*substantia*" as applied to the personal, at least as regards man, for example in the famous Boethian definition of personality, is a fundamental mistake. Only God's Personality can be *substantia*.

⁸² See the magnificent statement of Barth, *Dogmatik*, 1/2, p. 187 ff.

⁸³ Corresponding to Pelagianism ought to be added also all the heresies against which the Chalcedonians levelled their words ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαίρετως, ἀχωρίστως. That includes most two nature theories.

⁸⁴ On Gal. i. 13 f.

⁸⁵ This of course applies also to the doctrine of the sacraments, where we can allow no transubstantiation nor fusion, to the relation between the Word of God and the word of man, revelation and reason (in faith), the Church as the body of Christ and yet as the *communio sanctorum*, and so indeed probably throughout the whole of the Christian dogmatic.