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The Evangelical Quarterly

JULY 14TH, 1934

THE THEOCENTRIC THEOLOGY IMPLICIT IN THE NAME OF THE TRINITY

I

THE NEED FOR A THEOCENTRIC THEOLOGY

THE burning need of the hour is the recognition of God in His sovereignty, centrality and sustaining power. An English philosopher focuses this need thus, "We can never consistently mean by God less than that being whose witness is . . . our whole selves and our whole environment."¹ A noted theologian finds "that the idea of God is a dimension in which is involved every thought we think and every movement we execute; an inevitable and primary relation which . . . is now . . . for the first time being gradually recognized."² Another German scholar adds, "For God is the one without whom nothing exists and nothing occurs, or he is not God. There is no belief in the true and living God without belief in predestination in the hard and undeviating sense in which Paul, Luther and Calvin believed in it."³ Dr. C. Van Til insists that human thought must be cast upon representational lines. Every fact in man's environment receives its significance from its relationship to God. "Accordingly when man faced any fact whatsoever, he would *ipso facto* be face to face with God. It is metaphysically as well as religiously true that man must live and cannot but live *coram Deo* always."⁴ Dr. John L. Girardeau, the Columbia philosopher, writes, "Everything has

¹ Webb, C. J. C., *God and Personality*.

² Heim, Karl, *The New Divine Order*, p. 14.

³ Gogarten, Friedrich, *Ich Glaube an den Dreieinigen Gott*, Jena, 1926, p. 5.

⁴ Van Til, C., Notes on *Calvin's Epistemology*. Cf. Calvin's phrase "mirrors of God", and John of Damascus, as given by R. Seeberg, "everything on earth is a picture of God"; *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Zweiterband, 1923, p. 359.

a tongue that proclaims the being of God, and the union of these tongues makes a chorus of unbroken and perfect harmony."¹

According to Dr. Karl Heussi, the recent German emphasis on the Word of God and on Revelation is characteristic of a theocentric theology.² At least this is an approach to theology from the side of God rather than from the side of man. Perhaps the difference can be indicated by placing Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* over against Barth's *cogitor ergo sum*,³ by contrasting Oman's autonomy with Brunner's heteronomy⁴ (the writer would prefer the word Theonomy), or the Federal Council's anthropocentricity with Barth's theocentricity.⁵

II

THE INADEQUACY OF THE CHRISTOCENTRIC COMPROMISE

Unfortunately, English religious thought does not seem to have arrived even at this first step in a theocentric theology. In America the tendency is to meet overt humanism with a compromise Christocentric formula. This term derives some support from such scholarly names as Philip Schaff and Willis J. Beecher.⁶ Mr. F. G. Lankard describes the improved uniform Sunday School lessons as Christ-centred rather than Bible-centred.⁷ A prominent Presbyterian pastor insists that the Church must become Christ-centred.⁸ A local Bible Institute advertises, "no creed but Christ". The Missionary Message submitted to the Southern Presbyterian *Congress on World*

¹ *Discussions of Philosophical Questions*, p. 305.

² Heussi, K., *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, 1930, p. 477. The writer has been calling attention to this movement for seven years, cf. his *The New Theism*, *Presbyterian Standard*, 7/13/27; *The Theology of Karl Barth*, *Union Seminary Review*, October, 1928; *Unhyphenated Calvinism*, *Union Seminary Review*, July, 1932.

³ Barth, K., *The Resurrection of the Dead*, p. 46. Cf. Gal. iv., 9; and Gogarten, p. 68, 69.

⁴ Oman, *Grace and Personality*, whatever is heteronymous is morally worthless, p. 252; Brunner, *The Word and the World*, "faith is through and through heteronymous," pp. 66, 105.

⁵ Richards, Geo. W., *Palmer and Barth*, the *Christian Century*, 1/10/34.

⁶ Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vii., 544; Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise*, pp. 193-194.

⁷ *The International Journal of Religious Instruction*, May, 1933, p. 39.

⁸ *The Christian Observer*, July 12th, 1933, p. 6.

Missions, February 1931, commended the theology of Martin Luther and the Reformers on the ground that it was Christocentric.¹ Dr. Stanley Jones would save Christianity by shortening its line and insisting on Christ only.

III

HISTORICALLY CONSIDERED

The Christocentric compromise is historically unjustifiable and logically inadequate. There is a primary article in the historic Christian creed prior even to the confession of Christ. The Christian symbol begins, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." Further, neither Martin Luther nor the Reformers were Christocentric. Thurneysen and Barth have rightly shown that the Reformation was a rediscovery of God in His sovereign holy centrality.² The late Dr. A. G. Voight proved to the writer that Luther was not Christocentric by referring to Luther's peculiar Christology. Luther's doctrine of Christ's human nature is meaningless unless one brings to his thought of Christ a prior concept of omnipresence derived from a genuine theism.

According to Dr. Erich Schaeder, the term Christocentric was first used by the disciples of Schleiermacher to describe the system taught by their master. Schaeder further points out that this so-called Christocentric theology has become anthropocentric and egocentric. Schleiermacher made the norm man's religiosity and so shifted the focus from God to man. Ritschl professes a historical theology of revelation, but interposes between the believer and a genuine revelation the psychological acts of the early disciples, that is a mere representation of the historical Christ. Hence man does not treat directly with a revelation from God, nor with the historical Jesus; but only with human thoughts and words in relation to each. Moreover, this human value theology brings God in only as the basis for the fulfilment of man's existence. "We have Him beneath us; we stand above Him." Immediacy of fellowship with the present exalted Redeemer is dismissed as mysticism. Nothing

¹ *Reports of Commissions, Chattanooga, 1931*, p. 16.

² Thurneysen, E., *Das Wesen der Reformation in Das Wort Gottes und die Kirche, Munchen, 1927*. Barth, K., *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie, 1929*, pp. 22, 189, 190, 199.

remains but human experience based on human experience. The Positive School finds the basis of theology in the reborn self, the new "I", which again is egocentric. The German Biblicists represent religion exclusively in terms of justification and hence limit themselves to the sole truth of "God for us". They miss the great truth that we exist for the glory of God. Against these more or less anthropocentric systems Schaefer yearns for the thought of God to come to mastery and pre-eminent value. Little man has too long cast his own shadow over God, curtailing His Lordship and darkening His might. With Calvin God must be recognized as Father and Lord. With Luther He is to be feared and loved.¹

Crossing the Rhine, Dean Doumergue, the great French authority on Calvin, has this to say of the Christocentric compromise :—

If Calvinism is the theology of the honour, or of the sovereignty of God, this theology can have only one technical name : it is Theocentric.

We are just going through a period when one has been maintaining that the Theocentric theology ought to be replaced by a Christocentric theology. This new theology is in the course of issuing in some disconcerting results for superficial spirits. The Christ for whom one has sacrificed everything, who ought to be everything, begins to become of little moment. No longer is there divinity, no longer is there authority either in his acts or in his words. There remains nothing more of him than a conscience, a spirit more and more vague, whose very existence becomes problematic. It can be said that such a new school has sacrificed the First Person in the Trinity, God the Father, and then sacrificed God the Son, preserving nothing more than the Third Person, the Holy Spirit. And yet how shall it preserve even that ?

It is unnecessary to say that Calvinism maintains for Christ another place. For her Christ is the God-man, Christ is the centre and source of salvation. In Calvinism soteriology has a pre-eminent place ; but it is not the whole. The Moravians, indeed, believe in the identity of soteriology and (the whole of) theology. Zinzendorf calls the Calvinistic theology "the theology of God, the Father". Calvinism does not protest that irony. She offers in her vast theocentric theology, of which soteriology is such an important part, an equilibrium which it will be very dangerous—the facts are there to prove it—to impoverish or to compromise.²

In America the history of the Christocentric theology has been traced out by Dr. Winfield Burggraaf in *The Rise and Development of Liberal Theology in America*. Horace Bushnell removed New England Calvinism from her Theocentric moorings in pursuit of a nebulous Christocentric doctrine. This haziness

¹ Schaefer, E., *Theozentrische Theologie*, Erster Teil, Leipzig, 1925.

² Doumergue, E., *Jean Calvin : La Pensée Religieuse de Calvin*, p. 37.

proved the opening wedge in the down-grade to modernism. George Gordon, the intellectual giant of the American "modern" theology, attempted to unite Plato's ideational concept that man, the human race, is the mediator between the idea of the Good and matter, with the Christian concept of a mediator who is the Second Person of the Trinity. Christ becomes "the acknowledged representative of humanity, the accepted revelation of the essential kinship of the divine and the human and the guide to the ultimate meaning of nature." "To affirm that our universe is anthropomorphic is to assert that God is a human God; to discover that it is Christomorphic is to declare that God is a Christian God."¹ *The Christ of To-day* is thus a humanistic interpretation and modification of the historic doctrine of the Trinity.

Overt Modernism ensued with Dr. Fosdick's demand that Christ be construed primarily as man and only God in what sense He can be being assuredly man. This means that nobody should go to Jesus "to his manger and his cross to find the omnipotence that swings Orion and the Pleiades."² In the quoted statement Dr. H. E. Fosdick has set his own doctrine in diametric opposition to the teachings of the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus.³ Another Union (N.Y.) professor, Dr. John Baillie, has gone further in setting forth a psilanthropist Christ diametrically opposite to the doctrine of Athanasius. The Christ of *The Place of Jesus Christ in Modern Christianity* is a human *temporal* ego; the Christ of Athanasius is an *eternal* ego.⁴ Speaking of the future of this modernistic religion, Dr. Harry F. Ward roundly asserts that it is to be man-centred rather than God-centred.⁵ Indeed, this is the issue of "ethical theism" as Dr. A. C. McGiffert had presented it in his *Rise of Modern Religious Ideas*, pp. 222-38, a volume which seems to be normative for American modernism. Dr. Lankard, in the article cited above, makes a naïve admission that a Christocentric theology gravitates downward to anthropocentricity. Immediately after narrating the shift from a Bible-centred to a Christ-centred

¹ Gordon, G., *The Christ of To-day*, pp. 93, 92.

² Fosdick, H. E., *The Modern Use of the Bible*, pp. 253, 258, 269.

³ *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, 2nd Series, XIV, p. 202b.

⁴ *Evangelical Quarterly*, v., 3, p. 279.

⁵ Ward, *Which Way Religion?* p. 215, per contra Chaffee, *The Protestant Churches and the Industrial Crisis*, pp. 224, 225.

curriculum, he states that still newer lessons are pupil-centred. This is the usual down-drift, from Theocentric to Christocentric, from Christocentric to anthropocentric.

IV

LOGICALLY CONSIDERED

There are logical difficulties in the way of making a Christocentric approach truly Theocentric. Christ is a term of historical import, with certain definite connotations of time, space, nation and environment to which it is related. And "time does not carry its meaning in itself". There is a right and a wrong use of history in considering the truth of God. It is impossible to make a relative phenomenon the logical starting-point for a linear deduction which shall arrive at the absolute. *If* this is what is meant, one agrees with Schaefer in commending Barth as the downfall of historicism. "The days of historicism are at an end. Science and scholarship cannot reach the living God."¹ The substance of this difficulty has been recognized and expressed in several ways.

Dr. John L. Girardeau of Columbia Theological Seminary held that theology was a science involving an infinite element. But he recognized that the knowledge of God as Infinite is unattainable by the cognitive reason. "God is the Infinite One who transcending all the categories of thought and mocking the limits of all finite science can only be adored as a Being past finding out."² *Finitum non est capax infiniti*. The fact that God is Infinite is revealed to faith. That is, a valid knowledge of the Infinite God is only given by supernatural revelation and apprehended by faith under the vivific energy of the Holy Ghost. Girardeau did not seek to reason from the finite and arrive at the Infinite; but he recognized the self-revelation of the Infinite as the foundation of theology.³

About the time Girardeau was beginning his ministry, a melancholy Dane was protesting against making the consequence or consequences of a man's life suddenly prove, at a certain point

¹ Schaefer, *ibid*, p. 208.

² *Thornwell's Collected Writings*, I, p. 494; cf. I, p. 139.

³ Robinson, W. C., *Columbia Theological Seminary and the Southern Presbyterian Church*, p. 202.

in the argument, that the man was God. This is committing the logical error of passing over into a different category. "In general, is it at all possible by the consideration of the gradually unfolding consequences of something to arrive at a conclusion different in quality from what we started with? Is it not sheer insanity (providing man is sane) to let one's judgment become so altogether confused as to land in the wrong category . . . (in what is) an altogether different, in fact infinitely different, category?" "Neither I nor anyone else can start with the assumption that Christ was human and end with the conclusion that therefore he was God. Anyone with a bit of logical sense will easily recognize that the whole question about the consequences of Christ's life on earth is incommensurable with the decision that he is God."¹

At the moment of writing the distinction is more usually faced as the difference between time and Eternity.² Commenting on Plato's earlier endeavours to vindicate the immortality of Socrates, Dr. Cornelius Van Til shows that he was reasoning with *inadequate categories*. Then "Plato assumed that it was possible for man to reason with the categories of eternity. This is in the nature of the case impossible for a time-conditioned creature such as man finds himself to be." The time categories having proved insufficient to explain even temporal things, let alone eternal, man is faced with the alternative of an ultimate scepticism or an acceptance of the Christian theistic position. "The only way, then, for man to have any knowledge of either temporal or eternal things is for a God to think for us in eternal categories and reveal to us the measure of truth that we can fathom."³

If it be objected that the contrast between time and eternity savours too much of dialectics, and that one ought to use instead the terms creation and Creator,⁴ one may approach the problem in the terms requested with Dr. Friedrich Gogarten. This dialectic theologian sacrifices even dialectics to the vindication of the difference between Creator and creation. "The duality of the Creator and the creation cannot be shaken. Just on account of this duality there can be no dialectic relationship

¹ Soren Kierkegaard, *The Pause in Selections from Writings of Kierkegaard*, U. of Texas Bulletin, 2,326, pp. 169-170.

² Lowrie, W., *Our Concern with the Theology of Crisis*, p. 63.

³ Unpublished notes on *Epistemology*, p. 37.

⁴ Lewis, Edwin, *Where is Barth Wrong? Christian Century*, 3/22/33, p. 385.

between Creator and creature. For dialectic is only possible where there is in the duality a unity." "This dualism is never to dissolve. For the creature can in no way become the Creator." To think to dissolve the duality is to think of the Creator no longer as Creator and to deny the creation character of the world. The assertion of a unity of both the creation and the Creator is a logical error. "In truth one is then speaking no more of the Creation and the creature, but only of Idea and appearance when one seeks to understand and think the act of Creation with the help of speculation on essences."

In a sense Fichte was right when he declared that "in respect to a religious teaching the assumption of a creation is the first criterion of falsity; the denial of any such creation is the first criterion of the truth of the religious teaching. A creation does not allow itself to be legitimately thought out—that which one properly calls thinking—and there has never been a man who so thought." By orderly thinking, Fichte understood a thought which follows wholly and entirely from man's own legitimate logic, that is univocal reasoning. However, Fichte was wrong in not seeing that in order to think creation human reason must overstep the bounds of creaturehood. One is reminded of Dr. Thornwell's assertion that creation is "a mysterious fact putting the nature and operations of the Supreme Being beyond the category of all finite causes". "The God of contrivance is not the God in whom we live and move." In the same strain Gogarten shows that "God who is the Creator of the world has not the least in common with the thought of God which has been conceived as the legitimate creation of Reason." Between belief in Creation and the effort to understand its reality by speculation, there is no similarity, only an exclusive opposition. "Creation can only be believed, and certainly 'Creation' and 'belief' reciprocally condition one another." "Creation and what is included therein can only be believed", not attained by thought processes.

The correlation between Creation and faith signifies that "the belief in creation, in God the Creator of heaven and earth, as it is stated in the *Apostolicum* is quite certainly no matter of speculation concerning the first primitive condition of this world; it is altogether other than an hypothesis concerning the emergence of the world. Man cannot speculatively perceive

¹ Thornwell, *ibid.*, I, 449.

(excogitate) God the Creator. Man can only *acknowledge* Him." "Man can only *believe* in Creation."¹

In a similar manner Dr. Walter Lowrie interprets Barth's assertion that God is always *the subject*—never an object, never a predicate. "This consideration is appropriate *here* as a warning against the common error of regarding Jesus Christ as *divine*, treating divinity (i.e. God) as an attribute, as a predicate of humanity, which inevitably suggests that there might be a way from man to God." "Starting with the historical Jesus alone, we cannot by any conceivable stretch of the imagination get higher than the idea of a man whose predicate is God." Dr. Lowrie holds that to say Jesus Christ is Lord, even when by Lord one means Jehovah, while allowable in apologetics, is not to express adequately the faith of the Church. "We do *not* say what the early Church meant when we make Lord (Kurios) a predicate of Jesus Christ." Lord should come first. "Lord Jesus Christ is the concise and solemn form of the early confession of faith."² Ere passing on it should be said that this is the Biblical order, first the Creator, then the Christ; and that it is the order of Paul's conversion: "Who art Thou, Lord?" "I (the Lord) am Jesus, whom thou persecutest."

V

ILLUSTRATIONS

Examples of the insufficiency of the Christological approach to assure a theology adequate to the Biblical norm are not lacking. Denying metaphysics and beginning with the sole revelation value of Christ, Ritschlians have consistently failed to do justice to the personal pre-existence of Christ. They have not reasoned from time to eternity. The suggestion of Dr. W. P. Paterson that one can reason from the trustworthiness of Christ to the truth of His pre-existence may be valid on Paterson's premises, but not on Ritschlian premises. To the Ritschlians Christ is a godlike man, not the God-man; a psilanthropist, not the Theanthropic Person.³ On this basis there is

¹ Gogarten, *ibid.*, translations and paraphrases from pp. 41, 43, 44, 53, 54.

² Lowrie, *ibid.*, pp. 140, 144.

³ Schaefer, *ibid.*, 171, 124; Frank-Grützmacher, *Geschichte und Kritik der Neueren Theologia seit Schleiermacher*, 347; Warfield, *Christology and Criticism*, 386-387; Orr, *The Ritschlian Theology*, 130; Paterson, *The Rule of Faith*, 1932, 381-385.

little more in Christ's teaching to command assent to His pre-existence than there is in Plato's or Origen's teaching to constrain assent to their doctrine of the pre-existence of every soul. 'On the other hand, the theist who has been caused to know Christ by the total impress of God's Word and Spirit recognizes that the category of Creator belongs to Him and that His word is the word of that One on whose veracity depends every scintilla of truth.

Even the Chattanooga "Creed", drawn up by men who believe in the Deity of Christ, united with its call for a Christocentric theology an affirmation of Christ's glory that was lamentably lame in stating the doctrine of His eternal pre-existence and cosmic dominion. While the Creed indicates the orthodox faith, nevertheless on the one side it applies to Christ the term humanity more than once and asserts that He was *man* in black type: and on the other side it nowhere either specifically asserts His Deity or applies to Him the word God.¹

Turning to the question of theism one remembers that Schleiermacher, leader of the Christocentric movement, must be described either as a pantheist or as an agnostic. Dr. A. C. McGiffert has endeavoured to represent Christ as the sole God of the early Christians and therewith teaches the doctrine of a non-theistic finite cult Deity in harmony with his own "ethical theism".²

VI

THE THEOCENTRIC THEOLOGY HISTORICALLY GIVEN IN THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

The Church of the Ages found the answer to the need for a theocentric theology in the Trinitarian Faith. Historically, Christianity has ever employed Triadic statements, such as the Apostolic benediction, the baptismal formula, the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds. "The Trinitarian Creed is the distinctive mark of Christian faith."³ Dr. Reinhold Seeberg finds the

¹ If the term Creed be objected to note *Reports of Commissions*, p. 12. "We will set down those which we believe (i.e. credimus) are most essential." On the doctrine of Christ see pp. 15-18. Note the contrast between the use of the great Christological passages from Hebrews and Colossians here and in B. M. Palmer's moderatorial sermon sixty years earlier, *Minutes Assembly*, 1861.

² McGiffert, *The God of the Early Christians*. In opposition to McGiffert's thesis see Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, erster band, 1922; Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*; Scott, *Living Issues in the New Testament*, the last chapter being an exact antithesis to McGiffert's thesis, and *Christianity According to St. Paul*, 278-279; La Piana, Geo., *Ricerche Religiose*, November, 1925.

³ Brunner, *The Word and the World*, 59.

triadic formula overtly and covertly peeping through manifold times in the Apostolic literature ; and, since it is neither expressly presented (however much it may be preadumbrated) in the Old Testament nor in Judaism, reason, as well as the documents of the Gospel of the Forty Days, impels the Berlin theologian to ascribe this triadic faith to the revelation of Christ.¹ A group of Oxford scholars have recently affirmed that “ the doctrine of God is the primary doctrine, that the Church was right to lay stress upon it ”, and “ that the Church was rightly impelled to express and formulate its doctrine of God in the terms of Trinitarianism ”.² Thornwell discerned “ that the worship of the glorious Trinity is the sum and substance of spiritual religion ”³ ; while Bavinck, Barth, and Paterson agree that “ in the doctrine of the Trinity we hear the very heartbeat of the divine revelation for the redemption of mankind ”.⁴

Commenting on the primitive *Apostolicum*, Dr. Seeberg further writes, “ The significance of this oldest triadic confession stands above all else in the theocentric statement of the Christian world of thought. Therein is revealed what is at once the deepest tendency of the triadic thought : That God is the Lord of all the world, that redemption is His work, and that the insertion of the particular persons into the redemptive order is accomplished through God’s activities. These are the three circles of thought which have their common centre in the efficacious revelation of God. Thus there will be a confession to the one God in the manifoldness of His activities. This threefold activity leads now, however, to a confession at the same time of three persons.”⁵

Dr. K. E. Kirk ascribes to the Trinitarian faith a threefold efficacy in maintaining the primacy of God :—

The doctrine of the divine personality of the Spirit emphasizes what has been called the *prevenience* of God in the aspirations of the human heart, as that of the divinity of the Son emphasizes the same *prevenience* in the work of human redemption, and that of the Father—which is the doctrine of the existence of God—His *prevenience* over all the forces and powers of creation and sustenance of the Universe.⁶

¹ Seeberg, R., *Evangelium quadraginta dierum in Aus Religion und Geschichte* and in *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, 1922.

² *Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation*, Rawlinson, et. al, viii.

³ *Thornwell*, II, 363.

⁴ *The Rule of Faith*, 406.

⁵ *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, I, 226.

⁶ *Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation*, p. 233.

Only one prefers the order of the creeds to Dr. Kirk's inversion. Indeed, "the rule of faith" vindicates a theocentric theology in several ways. Starting with the Creator of heaven and earth it at once places Christian knowledge beyond the limits of finite, immature, sinful minds, and casts man in utter dependence upon his Maker for the revelation of truth. Again, it presents God in the absoluteness of His independence of the universe and the universe in the absoluteness of its dependence upon Him. By placing the origin of the whole historical succession in the creative act of God, the Bible teaches that the sovereignty of God is perfect and absolute.¹

This high theism is carried into the second and third articles of the faith. Calvin is only making explicit what is implicit when he asserts for Christ and the Spirit the category of Eternal Creator—the true Jehovah.² The Son and the Holy Spirit are God as the Almighty Father is God. Or in the numerical sameness of essence exist the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Hence, God's activities in redemption and regeneration partake of the absoluteness of His activities in creation. The implication of the historic formularies is a theocentric theology in which man is dependent upon God for knowledge, life, redemption and grace. They presuppose pure revelationism, pure theism, pure religion and pure evangelicalism.³ These presuppositions present a theocentric theology at the very height of that conception: and they prepare one to expect that which Dr. K. E. Kirk has historically discovered:—

Every new revival of Christianity has been a revival of adhesion to fullest Trinitarianism.⁴

VII

IMPLICATIONS OF THEOCENTRIC TRINITARIANISM

A theocentric theology liberates the truth of God in every sphere of Trinitarian activity from the limitations imposed by man's logic, psychology, epistemology and pedagogy. One expects God in whatever way He approaches man to do so as

¹ Elert, W., *An Outline of Christian Doctrine*, Tr. Jacobs, p. 40.

² *Institutes*, I, xiii.

³ Hodge, C. W., *The Significance of the Reformed Theology*.

⁴ *Oxford Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation*.

God the Creator whose thoughts are higher than man's thoughts, even as the heavens are higher than the earth (Isaiah lv. 9; cf. Matt. xi. 27). Plato's mystery of ultimate unity and ultimate plurality becomes the mystery of the Trinity—to man the unknowable mystery *in God*, but just on that account no mystery *for God*. God is “the personal God, whose name we regard with awe and veneration, whose throne is encircled with clouds and darkness, and who must for ever be the unknown God.” “He is the great mystery which once admitted throws light upon everything but the depths of His own being.” What God is in Himself is past finding out; what He is to us He hath made manifest. The acknowledgement of God as “the Eternal Reason”,² “the Absolute Reason”,³ issues in a *Welt und Lebenanschauung* with unity, order, plan, meaning and purpose.

VIII

THEISM

The Creator transcends the system of the finite, relative universe and just on that account the thought of the Creator is the logical prius of all knowledge. The concept of God is the primary category without which there is no such thing as truth. Anselm showed that when truth is affirmed as one and as eternal, God is necessarily affirmed as existing and as the Truth.⁴ Any invariable truth—arithmetic or logic—requires the Eternal God as its source and guarantor. “Bradley tells us that it is impossible to reason except on the basis of identity.”⁵ Dr. Van Til, whose unpublished notes have proven most fruitful in this study, shows that Kant's contention against the traditional arguments for the existence of God requires the concept of an absolute, that is the concept of God, to give it validity. Even Kant called God “the Regulative Ideal of Pure Reason”. The Westminster philosopher insists that the Triune God, in whom the One and the Many are equally ultimate, furnishes the only possible foundation for significant predication.

¹ *Tbormwell*, I, 495: Cf. Heim, K., *ibid*, p. 21; Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, pp. 151-153.

² *Tbormwell*, I, 502.

³ Flint, *Agnosticism*, 618.

⁴ Koyre, Alex., *La Idee de Dieu dans St. Anselm*.

⁵ *Logic*, I, 252, as cited by Dr. Van Til, *Evidences*, p. 31.

Start with Protagoras's "Man is the measure of all things" and there are as many different, divergent and contradictory "truths" as there are men, or as there are multitudinous opinions of different men. Instead of philosophers there are only philodoxers and Sophists, as Plato found. Or if one prefers modern illustrations, the Cartesian foundation of knowledge in the human ego has issued in the empirical scepticism of Hume, and the "transient", "contingent", "relative", "tentative" variability of Dr. John Dewey's instrumental pragmatism.¹ None of this group of "systems" satisfies that something in us to which truth matters, which Eddington has recognized as the foundation of science.

Every great system of philosophy has assumed universal and eternal truths—Plato's ideas, Kant's *a priori*, Lewis's categories. But man is a temporal creature. His assumption of eternal truths is therefore invalid unless he acknowledge God as their source. The issue, as Dr. Valentine Hepp has finely drawn it, is: "Logos, or Myth"! Hepp's own answer is clearly revealed in his variation of Augustine's well known dictum: "Inquieta est cogitatio nostra, donec requiescat in te, solo Deo vero."² Except God be the Light of the understanding and provide the universals of knowledge, words have no substantial content of meaning and human discourse is futile.

The essence of any fact other than God is that this fact belongs to creation and as such has definite relations in the plan of the Creator. To be is to be created and upheld by God. Hence, according to the phenomenological psychology, no fact is known in its essential character unless it is known in its relation to God, that is, known on the basis of the logical priority of the category of the Creator. The simplest subject-object relation in empirical cognition implies the trustworthiness of the functioning of the senses, the validity of the intellectual concepts which interpret the sense data, and a true correlation between the knowing subject and the known object.³ But every item in this statement ultimately rests upon faith in the Creator of senses, conceptual reason, and the relativity of knower and known. God is the ultimate of every science.

¹ Johnson, Wm. H., *Humanism and Christian Theism*, p. 100, ff.

² Hepp, V., *Calvinism and the Philosophy of Nature*, pp. 95, 137.

³ Cf. Kuyper, A., *Calvinism*, edition, 1931, p. 200.

Chronologically one may start with his mind as the proximate guarantor of reality. Augustine, the great theocentric philosopher, turned from the external world to the voice of consciousness in a way that might well have inspired Sir Arthur Eddington's declaration: "I know that I think with a certainty which I cannot attribute to any of my physical knowledge of the world."¹ Augustine reasoned that even doubting proved the existence of the doubter, with a clarity that left nothing for Descartes to add. But ultimately the difference between Augustine and Descartes is greater than that between Copernicus and Ptolemy. Descartes rests the truth of God's existence on the testimony of human consciousness, a scheme of thought which may be compared to an inverted pyramid. Augustine based the trustworthiness of man's consciousness on the veracity of God, thus making God the ultimate guarantor of reality. "In the last analysis God is the surety for the validity of our knowledge." "The ultimate ground of our rectitude becomes our confidence in God." Augustine showed that God had made man in His own image and that "the ideas which are reflections from the Divine mind are always shining into the souls of men unchangeable in the midst of man's multiform changes."²

The writer has elsewhere shown that "in their search for truth the Columbia philosophers (Thornwell and Girardeau) ultimately rested their minds in an act of faith in special revelation and in the veracity of the Creator." "The very principles by which man is capable of knowing anything have their proper termination in God."³ The fount of being is as well the source of knowledge.

Following Augustine, Calvin makes true and substantial knowledge to consist of the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves. Though one provisionally begin with self as that which is immediately evident "no man can take a survey of himself but he must immediately turn to the contemplation of God in whom he lives and moves: since it is evident that our very existence is nothing but a subsistence in God alone."⁴ Continuing this Reformed tradition, Dr. T. C. Johnson of Richmond and Dr. B. B. Warfield of Princeton rest the proof of

¹ Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 258.

² Warfield, B. B., *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine*.

³ *Thornwell*, I, 74-75.

⁴ *Institutes*, I, 1, i.

the existence of God primarily upon an intuition. The latter writes : " The conviction of the existence of God bears the marks of intuitive truth in so far as it is the universal and unavoidable belief of men, and is given in the same act with the idea of self, which is known at once as dependent and responsible and thus implies one on whom it depends and to whom it is responsible."¹

Whether one thinks of the *semen religionis* implanted in the heart, the mirrors of God in nature, history and man, or saving knowledge, the initiative is always with God. The Reformed Faith echoes Paul : " Ye have come to know God, or rather to be known by God " (Gal. iv. 9). Calvin teaches that the instrumental cause of justification is the illumination of the Spirit, that is faith (III, 14, 21). Thornwell writes : " Faith is an intuition awakened by the Holy Ghost " (I, 49 ; III, 401). Kuyper teaches that " although standing in high majesty above the creature God enters into immediate fellowship with the creature as God, the Holy Spirit. . . . There is communion with God, but only in accord with His counsels of peace from all eternity."² With the *Prologium* before him, Barth concludes : " So at the beginning of the knowledge of the seeking and finding of God stands an instructing of man by God Himself, for which Anselm has known himself able only to beg."³

Gogarten specifically combines the thoughts that man's knowledge of himself is a knowledge of his relation as a creature to God and that this knowledge is dependent on God's initiative. " We have said that we only, when we know ourselves as God's creatures, can know of our reality." And " it is the reality in which I am called, and not that which I call forth from myself. In which I also have been called as I." " This I-hood to which only the Thou can call me is the answer of the I to the address of the Thou. It is to be distinguished from Cartesian subjectivism which makes an ' Ich bin ' the primary word, the demand of the self upon the world. The epistemological ultimate is rather, ' Gottes Anspruch und unsere Verantwortung. ' "⁴

Faith is " the meeting of the creature with God, his Creator " (58). It is a crucial halting before God in a specific

¹ Johnston, T. C., *The Existence of God*, printed, not published ; Warfield, B. B., article in Davis' *A Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 264.

² Kuyper, Abraham, *Lectures on Calvinism*.

³ Barth, K., *Prolegomena zur Dogmatik*, Munchen, 1927, p. 98.

⁴ Gogarten, *ibid*, 68, 69, 87.

situation demanding a definite response of the creature to the Creator. This concrete meeting with the Creator establishes the I-Thou relationship, the fact that "I am and that I am as God's creature" (59). "This I-hood is irremovably that I am God's creature, that God is the Creator I recognize in that I say Thou and in that I acknowledge my indissoluble connection to the 'Thou', in that I believe in my unconditional responsibility toward Thee."¹

"Only as we know ourselves as God's creatures do we also know our reality which is always the reality of the creature and nothing else."² Man's knowledge of the creation of God is the knowledge, better the acknowledgement, of being created by God.

When the Creator confronts the creature, time begins for him. To believe in the Creator signifies that the creature lives not in eternity, but in time with all its transitoriness and limitations. Where one realizes a beginning, he affirms an ending. Arche requires Telos, which comes after it. "So only from such a situation the temporality of which is characterized by death is belief in the Creator possible." For before the Beginning and after the Ending there is only the glory of the Eternal. "It is exactly the temporal, visible world and its visible temporal So-sein, through which God speaks to us." "By this visible (world), whose visibility is thereby qualified that one good day it will be no more visible, that that therefore, because it will on that day be past, by this visible (world) to perceive God's invisible essence, that is His eternal power and Godhead, that is to believe in creation."³

Genesis i. led Augustine to a study of time and its distinction from eternity. Dr. Walter Lowrie finds that the realization of the relativity of time to space and the finiteness of the space-time continuum are bringing about a new concern for the Eternal and the Infinite.⁴

The knowledge of God is faith's acknowledgement of the Creator, born of the crisis in which the creature recognizes the Eternal as the implicate of the temporal, the Absolute as the condition of the relative, the Creator as the Maker of heaven and earth.

¹ Gogarten, *ibid*, 58, 59, 49.

² Lowrie, *ibid*, p. 62; cf. Heim, K., *Time and Eternity in The New Divine Order*.

IX

HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

One's doctrine of Christian origins is primarily determined, not by historical evidence, but by his philosophy of history : that is, by the intellectual frame which he brings to the examination of historical data. In the face of an objectively overwhelming weight of evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, " liberal " scholars do not hesitate to declare that, were the evidence fifty times stronger, any hypothesis were more possible than the actual Resurrection.¹

" For the man of antiquity, all temporal happening is a cyclic motion like the periodicity of nature ; it has no beginning and no end. . . . Time has no direction." Recently, history has been treated as a mere medium between evolutionary pre-history and " spiritual " super-history. History has been degraded by Lessing's dictum that historical facts can never become the proof for the eternal verities of reason, and by Kant's assertion that history is for illustration, not for demonstration. Both statements ultimately go back to Plato's distinction between the Heraclitean flux of the sense world and the ideational constants of the " eternal " world. The distinction re-appears as one of the presuppositions of *Re-thinking Missions*, p. 35.

Against this timeless ideology, Gogarten utters a double caveat. Man lives in an actual world of time and space with the conditions and relations and experiences which such a continuum brings. The world of " eternal essences " is a world of abstract speculation far removed from man's concrete concern. Again, man's thought, so far as it consummates itself with concepts abstracted from time and space, still takes its model respecting these " eternal ideas from time and space, and hence that abstraction from space-time is always only an approximation and never succeeds in reaching its goal. It can never step from the Diesseits of space-time into the Jenseits of Eternity. Man's ' abstract, unreal, illusionary speculation as to eternal essences ' will always be temporally conditioned. Man is bound to the temporal factual historical reality." " There is for man no reality which

¹ Orr, Jas., *The Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 46, citing Rashdall and Lake.

² Brunner E., *The Word and the World*, p. 54.

is not historical.”¹ It is eminently proper, therefore, for man to expect a revelation made in *Time*, in history.

To reach man where he lives the Christian religion must have its historical and factual structure. Respect for historical truth is “a necessary factor in our faith”². Max Müller writes, “God does not come to meet mystically isolated and ecstatic souls, but gives Himself in a historical revelation of Himself.” “By ‘factualness’,” says Dr. Vos, “we mean that the religious states of mind have in their subjective aspect not separate existence of their own, but intertwine themselves around the outward acts of God, to which they are a response and by which they are cultivated in continuance.” The subjective “always keeps in closest touch with what God has done outside the subjectivity of the believer.”³

There is an irrevocable feature about history which makes it the appropriate sphere for final acts. A testament is sealed by the death of the testator. The finger of history never goes back and rewrites the record which is past. Perfect indicatives are the fit tenses in which to proclaim a good news that is to be decisive for all time. From its earliest preaching, 1 Cor. xv. 3-4, to the great affirmations at the Jerusalem Congress, historic Christianity has properly revelled in the finality of concrete history.

Rejecting the pseudo-connectives of idealistic speculation, the theocentric theology finds the order, plan, purpose and true monism of history in the plan of God.⁴ The unity of the Divine will “is not the unity of the human reason”. The meaning of history and the importance of any event in history are determined by the plan of God. “History is the creation of the Creator, and, therefore, it is also a whole to which God has set the Beginning and the Ending.” It is “one great single *Geschehnis* because God is the Creator and everything that occurs is His work. To believe in the Creator is to believe that history is the work of God.”⁵

History is that which stretches from creation to consummation, that which lies between the Eternity prior to “in the beginning” and the Eternity subsequent to “Come Lord Jesus”.

¹ Gogarten, *ibid*, pp. 17-39, *Geschichtliche und Ubergeschichtliche*.

² Schweitzer, A., *The Mysticism of St. Paul*, p. 10.

³ Vos, G., *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus*, p. 18.

⁴ Hepp, V., *Calvinism and the Philosophy of Nature*, pp. 132-134.

⁵ Gogarten, pp. 67, 78, 79.

Its meaning is to be read from the End as well as from the Creation. Dr. Vos writes, "when we say that the Biblical religion is an eschatological religion, we mean that it ascribes to the world process a definite goal such as cannot be attained by it in the natural course of events, but will be brought about catastrophically through a divine interposition, and which, when once attained, bears the stamp of eternity."¹ Heim finds that all the Time symbols in the New Testament point to an End.² The direction of every point of Time is derived from this Telos; and its meaning from the higher form of existence ensuing, that is from Eternity. The hour of twelve approaches. Indeed, the urgency of that hour presses upon every existential moment demanding decision *now*. Out of the future the Judge, the Son of Man returning on the clouds of heaven, is our contemporary, promising the resurrection of the dead. If a mixed metaphor be allowed, the building of human history nears the final harvest, the consummation ordained by God.

But a history, which has a unity in that it is the work of the Creator, and that it is moving towards the zero hour He has appointed, may well have one historical fact that is determinative of every other historical fact. An Absolute God implies one historical religion that is true and the true ground of history. Moreover, an adequate doctrine of sin, as that moral evil which is contrary to the law of God, requires an expiation as the ground for the preservation of the sinful creatures. The just Jehovah preserves the guilty creation for the sake of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. With the protevangelium as its text, the Reformed Faith has seen in Christ and in His Cross the Rock of all the Ages, "the Saviour of the world". "The history of mankind is a coherent process with the Cross as its centre." In Forsyth's epigram, "Christ is no mere part of past history, but the soul of the race's total life; no mere starting-point for the ideal; but the living object of each age's faith." Vos writes, "Everywhere in the New Testament the Christ is even as to his humanity an eternalized figure whose redemptive significance is not subject to eclipse."

To summarize: by entering history and by definite actions in space-time, the Christ of the Ages obtained for His people a redemption that is not subject to eclipse. The weight of the

¹ Vos, p. 18.

² Heim, K., *The New Divine Order*, p. 85.

Redeemer's Eternity and the fact that His redemption has been wrought in the category of Messiah—a historic term—give to that redemption unchangeable efficacy. His Advent is the event of absolute significance. The entrance of the Eternal is the turning-point of time, the crisis for every individual, the guarantee of an End when time shall be no more and the Eternal Glory shall be revealed.

Historical considerations might be adduced in confirmation of this conclusion. The writer has elsewhere collated testimonies from Jean Paul Richter, Napoleon, Warfield, Speer, Gwatkin, Kuyper, Moffatt, L. M. Swete, to the centrality of Christ and Christianity for all history. In the same article he has shown that the Lord Christ of the New Testament attests himself by every method by which any historical fact can be attested, namely, by effects, monuments, institutions, and traditions, especially documents; while the naturalistic Jesus has failed to make any attesting marks in history.¹ Professor F. D. Jenkins has demonstrated by valid logic that every denial of the Deity of Jesus is fallacious.² Thus the verdict of history and the force of dialectics support the voice of the Word.

Approaching the question of the entrance of God into history, from the theocentric viewpoint changes other intellectual frames. The Creator may not be expected to assume "the form of a Servant" and serve "in fashion as a man" amid the sins and sufferings of earth in a purely natural manner. Should the Eternal appear in Time, He would come trailing unquenched clouds of heavenly glory. The passage of the loving Lord through this vale of tears will perforce be marked by miracles of mercy. The entrance of the Lord of glory into His temporal creation could not help being miraculous; His departure from it could not fail to be supernatural.

The earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ is not a mere human biography. It is the temporal episode in the experience of an Eternal Person. Hence, the lives of Jesus assiduously wrought out by "liberal" scholars according to the canons of psychology and the pressure of environment necessarily fail. It is the merit of the eschatological school to have demonstrated this failure.³ A true biography of the God-man written from

¹ *The Quest of the Historical Jesus in Evangelical Quarterly*, April, 1932.

² *Is Jesus God?* Princeton Theological Review, 1925-1926.

³ Schweitzer, A., *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.

within, either by a "liberal" or by a conservative, is in the nature of the case impossible. The biographer who tries to explain the inner development of Christ on the basis of the biographer's experience and observation of psychological behaviour can only do so by explaining away those experiences and processes of the Eternal which are beyond the biographer's limit. Every such biographer places himself above his subject; but here the subject is above every biographer. Hence, the tendency of every life of Jesus is to naturalize and humanize, that is, to pervert the portrait of the real Jesus. The only portrait which fits the facts is the portrait inspired by the facts, namely, the self-evidencing portrait given in the New Testament.

Approaching the question of the relation of the Divine and the human in Christ analogies for His two organs of knowledge have been suggested in the two eyes which provide one field of vision, and in the dual psycho-physical nature of man which may well be unthinkable to an angel, as for the opposite reason, it is unthinkable to a Watsonian behaviourist. Doumergue has exquisitely remarked that there are two methods of dealing with this question. One offers a solution and ignores some of the data; the other states the data and offers no solution.¹ Christ's coming in a human nature will be a union of antinomies: Creator and creature; Infinite and finite; Eternal and temporal. Those² who realize something of the complete contrast involved in these terms face with new sympathy the much berated words of Chalcedon. He is made known in two distinct natures³ in one person without amalgamation, without mutation, without separation and without division; the two natures not being confounded in the unity, but rather, with the peculiarities of each preserved, both are united in one person.

X

GRACE AND FAITH

The theocentric approach is essential to the true conception of the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. God's act in regenerating souls is properly a new *creation* (2 Cor. v. 17;

¹ Doumergue, Emile, *Jean Calvin: IV La Pensee Religieuse*, p. 220.

² Barth, *Dogmatik* cited by Lowrie, pp. 136-137.

³ For an exegetical vindication of the two natures see Warfield, *Christology and Criticism*, pp. 259-310.

Gal. vi. 15 ; Eph. ii. 10 ; iv. 24 ; Col. iii. 10 ; Ps. li. 10). It is analogous to the creative fiat which decreed light in place of darkness (Gen. i. 3 ; 2 Cor. iv. 6). A resurrection, a making alive (John v. 21 ; Eph. i. 19-21), a translation (Eph. i. 13) occurs. A new heart replaces the old heart (Ezek. ix. 19 ; Jer. xxxi. 33 ; xxxii. 38). The new man is begotten of God so that he now sees the spiritual things of the kingdom of God (John i. 13 ; iii. 3ff ; 1 John).

Here just as little as in the first creation is man able to explain the process. The thought processes of the creature will never be able to interpret the act of the Creator. The great theocentric theologians, Augustine and Calvin, used the term "irresistible grace", not as an explanation of the inexplicable, but as a declaration that regeneration is the act of the Creator Spirit. The act of creation is not a matter of conference or debate. The Creator speaks ; and what was not is. God giveth life to the dead and calleth the things that are not as though they were (Romans iv. 17).

At this point "humanizing experiments on a divine religion" have ever been "pathological".¹ In an effort to justify the ways of God with men, the action of the Infinite has been construed in terms of finite moulds and the truth thereby perverted. The human logic of Scholasticism changed official Augustinianism into the practical Pelagianism which was taught Martin Luther by the scholastic modernists. When Saumur sought to keep step with the Enlightenment French and English Calvinism capitulated to Cartesian and Kantian Pelagianism.² When New England Calvinism was made psychological affinity with Locke's empiricism the germ was laid which issued in Taylorism. A "Christian nurture" or a religious education which either ignores regeneration or reduces it to pedagogical processes will have no different outcome. Augustinianism is theocentric. Every anthropocentric system, whether moulded by logic, psychology, empiricism, pedagogy or some other "neural pattern" is foredoomed to Pelagianism.

The Institutes open the discussion of the application of redemption with four golden pages showing "what is declared concerning Christ rendered profitable to us by the secret operation

¹ Phrases from Paterson, *ibid*, 418.

² Le Cerf, A., *The Reformed Faith in France ; The Evangelical Quarterly*, IV : 4 ; Sabatier, Auguste, *Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit* ; Oman, John, *Grace and Personality*.

of the Spirit." The inward teacher is the key with which the treasures of heaven are unlocked. The believer's knowledge of his title to life depends exclusively on His witness. He takes the things of Christ and shows them unto us.

An interesting consensus pointing in the direction of Calvin's Word and Spirit theology seems to be appearing. Professor Paterson holds that Frank's Erlangen theology is an advance from the pansubjectivity of Schleiermacher toward the Reformation doctrine of an objective basis in Scripture confirmed by the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*.¹ In the Positive school, Dr. Seeberg, a Lutheran, recognizes the superiority of Calvin's *ordo salutis* to Melancthon's, in the primacy which Calvin gives to the action of the Holy Spirit and hence to the vital experience He initiates.²

While Barth is too severe in describing Erich Schaeder of Breslau as merely a typical neo-Protestant³ and Kattenbusch errs on the other side in classifying him in the consciously Calvinistic tradition,⁴ certainly Schaeder insists on an advance not only beyond Schleiermacher and Ritschl, but also beyond Frank, Seeberg and Heim, toward a Word and Spirit theology. He holds that Schleiermacher's conception of theology as a *Glaubenslehre* may be made adequately objective by heavily underscoring the first word in the compound. Faith lives from God by His Word and Spirit. Its lift is away from egocentricity toward theocentricity. Schaeder insists that Christ is not only historical but superhistorical, living, present with the power of the almighty Spirit. "The Confession of the (Holy) Spirit creates a theocentric theology." This theology turns on the Spirit, on the presence of the *jenseits* God and His *diesseits* inner soul and inner world effects. It is a theology of the unconditioned, mediated by the Spirit of God establishing an inward union with God in faith for the service of God and His Christ.⁵

Barth offers the following order of first principles:—First, the Word of God; secondly, man's being apprehended

¹ Paterson, p. 140.

² *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, IV: 2: p. 550. *Text-book of the History of Doctrines*, II: pp. 394, 360, 401.

³ *Prolegomena zur Dogmatik*, pp. 53, 97, 109.

⁴ *Die Deutsche Evangelische Theologie seit Schleiermacher*, S. 97.

⁵ Schaeder, *Theozentrische Theologie*, Dritte Auflage. With this may be compared Bavinck's consciously Calvinistic statement: "In common with all sciences . . . theology has the subjective starting-point. However, the accusation of subjectivism is justified only in that case when the subjective organ, which is indispensable for the observation of that which exists objectively is raised to the principle of knowledge. The eye may be indispensable as the organ of observation of light, but is nevertheless not the fountain of light." Quoted by Hospers, G. H., *The Reformed Principle of Authority*, p. 68.

by the Word of God ; thirdly, the apprehension of the Word of God by man.¹ In *Komm Schöpfer Geist* he and Thurneysen find the wonder of the Holy Spirit in that He makes Jesus Christ present. He places Christ and His truth in the midst as truth. Pentecost signifies that behind the central point of death there is another focus. "Behind death, the Prince of Life ; behind the transitoriness, Eternity ; behind death, the Resurrection." Where there was once only sin, now there is forgiveness ; where there was formerly only fate, now there is mercy ; where there was only man's wit and wisdom, there is now "the Word of God by which we live".

Gogarten propounds the thesis : "Not that which I call to life from the past, is history or may become history ; but history is only that which as past calls me to present decision, that which, as concrete reality lays its demand upon me, that which as Thou meets me as present and addresses me and binds me indissolubly to itself through this demand."²

This demand that history be both past in its actual concreteness and present as constituting the decisive claim upon me is met in the Word and Spirit theology. Even so broad a Calvinist as Dr. Paterson recognizes the present inward witness of the Spirit to past events touching God and Salvation. In God's plan the Cross is "the hinge of history". The presence of the Holy Spirit maketh the Word of the Cross the power of God unto Salvation. Brunner offers the following as the New Testament doctrine : "It is God Himself who tells you that the Gospel Word, which comes to you from outside, is His Word. He testifies to the truth of the Gospel through the Holy Spirit."³

The stricter Calvinists follow more fully in the path of the great Genevan. They (i.e. *we*) accept the testimony of God, the Holy Spirit, to the infallible truth and Divine authority of the whole Bible. A vigorous defence of the Holy Scriptures on historical grounds issued from American Calvinism, centring for many years in Princeton. Contemporaneously, a Calvinistic revival with particular emphasis upon the testimony of the Holy Spirit arose in Holland. With the former group Dr. W. M. McPheeters of Columbia may properly be classed ; while a Dutch American writer magnifies Dr. James H. Thornwell

¹ Barth, *Prolegomena zur Dogmatik*, p. 109.

² Gogarten, *ibid.*, p. 83.

³ *The Word and the World*, p. 63.

of the same institution as a precursor of the Kuyper emphasis.¹ The two lines are independent and distinct; but since their differences are relative, not absolute, they may be described as complementary.

Calvinism stresses that concrete saving knowledge of Himself which God, by His Word and Spirit, gives to sinners. It reaches behind the Kantian declaration that religious knowledge lacks theoretic certitude in order consciously to re-affirm the Reformation conviction: "Faith is a certainty".² Or to be more specific, the writer deliberately endorses John Calvin's definition of faith. "It is a steady and certain knowledge of the divine benevolence towards us, which being founded on the truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds and confirmed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit."³ In Calvin's apt analogies, the sin-blinded man needs the glasses of God's Word and the inner illumination of His Spirit. Faith rests not on the shifting opinions of man; but is graven on the heart by the finger of the living God. It is the sign of the Eternal in the arena of time.

Analogies may further be found in the simplest experience of sense phenomena. The critical realist affirms that one knows this table by the instrumentality of an idea on the table. The table and the idea are existentially two; but since the idea has revelatory value, the two may be described as cognitively one. The knowledge of the table derived through the idea of the table is valid, according to this epistemological dualism. Applying the analogy, God and His Word are existentially two; but since His Word has revelatory value, one thereby obtains a valid knowledge of the living God. According to His Word God is true, and the true God says He forgives my sins for the sake of Christ's propitiation. When I accept these two propositions as true, I have a valid knowledge of God as my merciful heavenly Father.

Other schools of epistemology insist that there is a com-
presence of the knower and the known. According to the intuitionists and the neo-realists, the knower immediately perceives, or has a direct prehension of the table. In sense perception the datum becomes a mental existent. That toward

¹ Hospers, G. H., *The Reformed Principle of Authority*.

² Hamilton, Patrick, *Places*.

³ Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III: 2: vii.

which epistemological monism is reaching is given the believer in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Wonder of wonders, in His regenerative activity the transcendent Creator Spirit "enters the heart" so that "we are conscious of the *personal* presence of the Holy Ghost."¹ And, as Calvin adds, this is "from the heart rather than the head, and from the affections rather than the understanding" (III, II, viii.). The knowledge which God gives of Himself is validated by analogies drawn from both epistemological methods.

It possesses, moreover, grounds of certitude even over and above those possessed by sensation. In the latter, the knower is active in prehending, and easily becomes a source of error, both for secondary qualities and for inferences concerning the thing revealed in the phenomena. In knowing God the "given" becomes the Giver. He takes the initiative and is the primary and the ultimate Knower. Or in the word which Calvin endorses and Gogarten keeps reiterating, faith is an *acknowledgement* (Col. ii. 2). And, since this acknowledgement is a response to God's knowing of us, it partakes of His certainty. The highest kind of assurance is that which rests on God. "Nor does the mind which attains it comprehend what it perceives, but being persuaded of that which it cannot comprehend, it understands more by the certainty of this persuasion, than it would of any human object by the exercise of its natural capacity." "Hence we conclude that the knowledge of faith consists more in certainty than in comprehension" (III, II, xiv.). "No authority can be higher than the direct testimony of God, and no certainty can be greater than that imparted by the Spirit shining on the Word."²

This certainty is a confidence which issues in self-committal to Jehovah; a conviction which becomes the inspiring impulse "to praise God in the Church and serve Him in the world".³ In Cop's Address it is affirmed that God cannot be worshipped in doubt. In his sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians near the end of his ministry, the Genevan is still insisting that there are two *sine qua non's* of faith and religion. The second of these is that "we be assured of our salvation in order to invoke Him as our Father in full liberty". God makes Himself known to

¹ Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, p. 151. Thornwell, II, 355, cf. pp. 359-364.

² Thornwell, I, 50.

³ Kuyper, *Calvinism*, 1931, p. 57.

evoke the worship of His people.¹ Or as Professor John W. Bowman has somewhat more directly phrased the matter, "true worship is that in which the current flows from the Godward pole of the worship nexus". The Holy Spirit useth the Word of God to bring His glory to the worshipper's consciousness, to call forth adoration and praise, and to stimulate man to conform his will to the Will of God. True worship, as true prayer, is "by (or in) the Spirit of God, Phil. iii. 1; Eph. vi. 18; Gal. v. 25".²

XI

PROVIDENCE AND PERSONALITY

The tortuous question of the relation of Divine sovereignty and moral responsibility can be rightly considered only from the theocentric approach. Man must take God's interpretation or else he will radically misinterpret. In the nature of the case finite man cannot experience the working of the Infinite Sovereignty. At most he can experience a momentary and fragmentary segment of human responsibility. He directly experiences a minute fraction of the human line. He learns somewhat more of this line from history and biography. He is continually drawing wrong inferences even concerning the human factors because other sectors of the field are hidden from his view.

The veteran Southern Calvinist, Dr. S. L. Morris, has recently pointed out³ such an error derived from studying exclusively David's part in numbering Israel, 1 Chron. xxi. Such a narrow view issues in harsh judgments concerning a Providence that punished "innocent" Israel for King David's sin. But 2 Samuel xxiv. 1 shows that Israel was not innocent. In this and in every case, when all the facts are in, the Judge of the whole earth is vindicated as righteous in all His ways and just in all His actions. But only God's eye sees the plan entire. On the other hand, in an "open universe", some individual would certainly infringe upon the free agency and moral responsibility of other individuals.

In every human act, there is a concurrence of two lines, Infinite Sovereignty and human personality. God is the highest

¹ Doumergue, *Jean Calvin*, I: *La Jeunesse*, p. 335.

² Bowman, J. W., *Christian Worship, Evangelical Quarterly*, April, 1933, p. 159.

³ Morris, S. L., *David Numbering the People, Christian Observer*, 2/7/34, p. 5.

cause of everything that happens. In His plan He uses angels, demons, unfallen man with plenary power of contrary choice, fallen and disabled man,¹ regenerate man, nature, miracles, and perhaps other agencies in heaven and earth that are not dreamed of in our philosophies. In His infinite wisdom, He treats every agent according to his own nature, predestining and preserving man's responsibility and accountability. Man is an efficient cause. Every human act, then, has at least two causes, God and man. Mistakes generally come from forgetting one of the two causes, or from changing categories, asserting a premise in one of the two lines and drawing a conclusion in the other line, that is either from the fallacy *non causa pro causa* or from the fallacy *non sequitur*.

Of those who have studied the abstract question of Divine Providence and human personality, Hamilton among the older writers and Professor Foreman among the recent writers have distinguished only two solutions, namely, (1) chance or indeterminism, and (2) fatalism or determinism.² But Dr. James H. Thornwell enumerated three hypotheses: that of the Casualist; that of the Fatalist; that of the Theist. "He held that the extremes of casualism and fatalism are not only inconceivable, but that they are self-contradictory, and, therefore, false. The hypothesis of theism he conceded to be also inconceivable, but he maintained that it is not self-contradictory, and that upon the principle of excluded middle it must be true."³

The limitations of the human mind do not allow man to state the matter in an abstract harmony. However, as one looks back upon concrete cases under the illumination of God's grace, he can see each factor acting in the same event, and each acting according to its own nature, so that neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence done to the will of the creature. Joseph is sold into Egypt by his brethren and by his Maker. "Ye meant it for evil, God meant it for good." Christ was crucified by the wicked hands of men, who accomplished what God's hand and will had before ordained to occur (Acts ii. 39; iv. 27). God is the highest cause of Job's losses, Satan is a lower cause, the

¹ For the Protestant Reformation "Le serf-libre, c'est le centre du centre . . . 'C'est le plus grand different que nous avons avec les papistes'". Calvin, as also Luther and (from the opposite side) Erasmus, cited by Doumergue, *La Pensée Religieuse de Calvin*, p. 155.

² Foreman, K. J., *Some Thoughts on the Unstinkable*, *Union Seminary Review*, October, 1933.

³ Robinson, W. C., *Columbia Theological Seminary and the Southern Presbyterian Church*, pp. 196-197.

Chaldeans are the "second" (i.e. third) cause. Calvin first blames his expulsion from Geneva upon those who opposed his struggle for the independence and the sanctity of the Church; later upon Satan; ultimately, he accepts the will of God as the highest cause. From man's standpoint, a future event is fortuitous, and is accomplished by his self-will; but from God's standpoint its occurrence is certain. And man can often look back and see "the Divinity that shapes our ends". Certainty is not the antithesis to the highest freedom. God, Himself, the only absolutely sovereign person is certain to do right.

Concrete illustrations of this truth must not be understood as an endeavour to strain the problem through the empirical sieve. The writer accepts the truth as and because it is revealed by God. He finds, however, that, because of the limitations of the finite, something more of its meaning can be illustrated than can be abstractly explicated. Long ago Plato justified a similar procedure. One has no hesitation in repeating that every empirical explanation will change the Scriptural truth. On the ground of experience, Professor Donald Mackenzie affirms "defect" in Augustinianism and Calvinism.¹ Dr. John Oman begins with the "enlightened" personality of man. The self-sufficiency of the human reason and the autonomy of the human will lead him to declare that Augustine was on the wrong road from the beginning.² But only the theocentric road is the right road. And, however feeble the writer's steps, he rejoices to find himself on that highway which has been trodden by Calvin, Augustine, Paul and Isaiah; yea (Matt. x. 29; xi. 25-30) by the only person who ever experienced both Divine sovereignty and human responsibility, by those blessed feet which were nailed for our advantage to the bitter Cross.

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¹ Mackenzie, Donald, *Free Will in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, VII, 126.

² Oman, John, *Grace and Personality*, p. 86.