

Systematic Theology 1.2

The Works of God

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Part One: The Doctrine of God – Section 2: The Works of God

Editorial note

The text has been updated to UK English; gloss boxes have been added to explain technical terms; summaries have been included; and questions for further study have been added. We have also included a master outline with the part represented in this volume shown in bold.

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Berkhof's Systematic Theology: Master Outline

This six-part guide is designed for use at the beginning of each volume. The part represented in this volume is shown in bold.

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I. The Divine Decrees in General

God's decrees are His eternal and wise purpose for all that comes to pass; they express His sovereignty without making Him the author of sin.

A. The Doctrine of the Decrees in Theology.

GLOSS Divine decrees: God's eternal and unchanging purpose, by which He wisely ordains all that comes to pass while creatures remain responsible for their actions.

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

In spite of this fact, however, Reformed theology stands practically alone in its emphasis on the doctrine of the decrees. Lutheran theology is less theological and more anthropological. It does not consistently take its starting point in God and consider all things as divinely pre-determined, but reveals a tendency to consider things from below rather than from above. And in so far as it does believe in pre-determination, it is inclined to limit this to the good that is in the world, and more particularly to the blessings of salvation. It is a striking fact that many Lutheran theologians are silent, or all but silent, respecting the doctrine of the decrees of God in general and discuss only the doctrine of pre-destination, and regard this as *conditional* rather than absolute. In the doctrine of predestination Lutheran theology shows strong affinity with Arminianism. Krauth (an influential leader of the Lutheran Church in our country) even says: "The views of Arminius himself, in regard to the five points, were formed under Lutheran influences, and do not differ essentially from those of the Lutheran Church; but on many points in the developed system now known as Arminianism, the Lutheran Church has no affinity whatever with it, and on these points would sympathize far more with Calvinism, though she has never believed that in order to escape from Pelagianism, it is necessary to run into the doctrine of absolute predestination. The 'Formula of Concord' touches the five points almost purely on their practical sides, and on them arrays itself against Calvinism, rather by the negation of the inferences which result logically from that system, than by express condemnation of its fundamental theory in its abstract form." [*The Conservative*

Reformation and Its Theology, pp. 127f.] In so far as Lutheran theologians include the doctrine of predestination in their system, they generally consider it in connection with Soteriology.

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

B. Scriptural Names for the Divine Decrees.

GLOSS *Opera ad intra*: God's inward works or eternal counsel, distinguished from His outward works in creation, providence, and redemption.

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

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

2. NEW TESTAMENT TERMS. The New Testament also contains a number of significant terms. The most general word is *boule*, designating the decree in general, but also pointing to

the fact that the purpose of God is based on counsel and deliberation, Acts 2:23; 4:28; Heb. 6:17. Another rather general word is *thelema*, which, as applied to the counsel of God, stresses the volitional rather than the deliberative element, Eph. 1:11. The word *eudokia* emphasizes more particularly the freedom of the purpose of God, and the delight with which it is accompanied, though this idea is not always present, Matt. 11:26; Luke 2:14; Eph. 1:5,9. Other words are used more especially to designate that part of the divine decree that pertains in a very special sense to God's moral creatures, and is known as predestination. These terms will be considered in connection with the discussion of that subject.

C. The Nature of the Divine Decrees.

GLOSS Divine counsel: God's perfect and sovereign plan, formed in His own wisdom and not dependent upon information, advice, or constraint outside Himself.

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

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

2. THE RELATION OF THE DECREE TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. The decree of God bears the closest relation to the divine knowledge. There is in God, as we have seen, a necessary knowledge, including all possible causes and results. This knowledge furnishes the material for the decree; it is the perfect fountain out of which God drew the thoughts which He desired to objectify. Out of this knowledge of all things possible He chose, by an act of His perfect will, led by wise considerations, what He wanted to bring to realization, and thus formed His eternal purpose. The decree of God is, in turn, the foundation of His free knowledge or *scientia libera*. It is the knowledge of things as they are realised in the course of history. While the necessary knowledge of God logically precedes the decree, His free knowledge logically follows it. This

must be maintained over against all those who believe in a conditional predestination (such as Semi-Pelagians and Arminians), since they make the pre-determinations of God dependent on His foreknowledge. Some of the words used to denote the divine decree point to an element of deliberation in the purpose of God. It would be a mistake, however, to infer from this that the plan of God is the result of any deliberation which implies short-sightedness or hesitation, for it is simply an indication of the fact that there is no blind decree in God, but only an intelligent and deliberate purpose.

3. THE DECREE RELATES TO BOTH GOD AND MAN. The decree has reference, first of all, to the works of God. It is limited, however, to God's *opera ad extra* or transitive acts, and does not pertain to the essential Being of God, nor to the immanent activities within the Divine Being which result in the trinitarian distinctions. God did not decree to be holy and righteous, nor to exist as three persons in one essence or to generate the Son. These things are as they are *necessarily*, and are not dependent on the optional will of God. That which is essential to the inner Being of God can form no part of the contents of the decree. This includes only the *opera ad extra* or *exeuntia*. But while the decree pertains primarily to the acts of God Himself, it is not limited to these, but also embraces the actions of His free creatures. And the fact that they are included in the decree renders them absolutely certain, though they are not all effectuated in the same manner. In the case of some things God decided, not merely that they would come to pass, but that He Himself would bring them to pass, either immediately, as in the work of creation, or through the mediation of secondary causes, which are continually energized by His power. He Himself assumes the responsibility for their coming to pass. There are other things, however, which God included in His decree and thereby rendered certain, but which He did not decide to effectuate Himself, as the sinful acts of His rational creatures. The decree, in so far as it pertains to these acts, is generally called God's permissive decree. This name does not imply that the futurity of these acts is not certain to God, but simply that He permits them to come to pass by the free agency of His rational creatures. God assumes no responsibility for these sinful acts whatsoever.

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

D. The Characteristics of the Divine Decree.

GLOSS Sovereignty: God's absolute right and power to govern His creation according to His holy wisdom, justice, goodness, and purpose.

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

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

3. IT IS EFFICACIOUS. This does not mean that God has determined to bring to pass Himself by a direct application of His power all things which are included in His decree, but only that what He has decreed will certainly come to pass; that nothing can thwart His purpose. Says Dr. A. A. Hodge: "The decree itself provides in every case that the event shall be effected by causes acting in a manner perfectly consistent with the nature of the event in question. Thus in the case of every free act of a moral agent the decree provides at the same time – (a) That the agent shall be a free agent. (b) That his antecedents and all the antecedents of the act in question shall be what they

are. (c) That all the present *conditions* of the act shall be what they are. (d) That the act shall be perfectly spontaneous and free on the part of the agent. (e) That it shall be certainly future. Ps. 33:11; Prov. 19:21; Isa. 46:10.”[*Outlines of Theology*, p. 203.]

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

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

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

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

E. Objections to the Doctrine of the Decrees.

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

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

Moreover, it should be borne in mind that God has not decreed *to effectuate by His own direct action* whatsoever must come to pass. The divine decree only brings certainty into the events, but does not imply that God will actively effectuate them, so that the question really resolves itself into this, whether previous certainty is consistent with free agency. Now experience teaches us that we can be reasonably certain as to the course a man of character will pursue under certain circumstances, without infringing in the least on his freedom. The prophet Jeremiah predicted that the Chaldeans would take Jerusalem. He knew the coming event as a certainty, and yet the Chaldeans freely followed their own desires in fulfilling the prediction. Such certainty is indeed inconsistent with the Pelagian liberty of indifference, according to which the will of man is not determined in any way, but is entirely indeterminate, so that in every volition it can decide in opposition, not only to all outward inducements, but also to all inward considerations and judgments, inclinations and desires, and even to the whole character and inner state of man. But it is now generally recognised that such freedom of the will is a psychological fiction. However, the decree is not necessarily inconsistent with human freedom in the sense of rational self-determination, according to which man freely acts in harmony with his previous thoughts and

judgments, his inclinations and desires, and his whole character. This freedom also has its laws, and the better we are acquainted with them, the more sure we can be of what a free agent will do under certain circumstances. God Himself has established these laws. Naturally, we must guard against all determinism, materialistic, pantheistic, and rationalistic, in our conception of freedom in the sense of rational self-determination.

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

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

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

inducement to courageous and persevering efforts. On the very basis of the decree Scripture urges us to be diligent in using the appointed means, Phil. 2:13; Eph. 2:10.

3. IT MAKES GOD THE AUTHOR OF SIN. This, if true, would naturally be an insuperable objection, for God cannot be the author of sin. This follows equally from Scripture, Ps. 92:15; Eccl. 7:29; Jas. 1:13; I John 1:5, from the law of God which prohibits all sin, and from the holiness of God. But the charge is not true; the decree merely makes God the author of free moral beings, who are themselves the authors of sin. God decrees to sustain their free agency, to regulate the circumstances of their life, and to permit that free agency to exert itself in a multitude of acts, of which some are sinful. For good and holy reasons He renders these sinful acts certain, but He does not decree to work evil desires or choices efficiently in man. The decree respecting sin is not an efficient but a permissive decree, or a decree to permit, in distinction from a decree to produce, sin by divine efficiency. No difficulty attaches to such a decree which does not also attach to a *mere* passive permission of what He could very well prevent, such as the Arminians, who generally raise this objection, assume. The problem of God's relation to sin remains a mystery for us, which we are not able to solve. It may be said, however, that His decree to permit sin, while it renders the entrance of sin into the world certain, does not mean that He takes delight in it; but only that He deemed it wise, for the purpose of His self-revelation, to permit moral evil, however abhorrent it may be to His nature.

II. Predestination

Predestination concerns God's eternal purpose in salvation, including election to life and the place of reprobation in His righteous judgment.

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

A. The Doctrine of Predestination in History.

GLOSS Predestination: God's eternal purpose concerning the final destiny of rational creatures, especially His gracious election of sinners in Christ.

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

Augustine's view found a great deal of opposition, particularly in France, where the semi-Pelagians, while admitting the need of divine grace unto salvation, reasserted the doctrine of a predestination based on foreknowledge. And they who took up the defence of Augustine felt constrained to yield on some important points. They failed to do justice to the doctrine of a double predestination. Only Gottschalk and a few of his friends maintained this, but his voice was soon silenced, and Semi-Pelagianism gained the upper hand at least among the leaders of the Church. Toward the end of the Middle Ages it became quite apparent that the Roman Catholic Church would allow a great deal of latitude in the doctrine of predestination. As long as its teachers maintained that God willed the salvation of all men, and not merely of the elect, they could with Thomas Aquinas move in the direction of Augustinianism in the doctrine of predestination, or with Molina follow the course of Semi-Pelagianism, as they thought best. This means that even in the case of those who, like Thomas Aquinas, believed in an absolute and double predestination, this doctrine could not be carried through consistently, and could not be made determinative of the rest of their theology.

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

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

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

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

B. Scriptural Terms for Predestination.

GLOSS Election: God's gracious choice of particular sinners for salvation in Christ, grounded in His mercy rather than in their foreseen merit.

The following terms come into consideration here:

1. THE HEBREW WORD *yada'* AND THE GREEK WORDS *ginoskein*, *proginoskein*, AND *prognosis*. The word *yada'* may simply mean "to know" or "to take cognizance" of someone or something, but may also be used in the more pregnant sense of "taking knowledge of one with loving care," or "making one the object of loving care or elective love." In this sense it serves the idea of election, Gen. 18:19; Amos 3:2; Hos. 13:5. The meaning of the words *proginoskein* and *prognosis* in the New Testament is not determined by their usage in the classics, but by the special meaning of *yada'*. They do not denote simple intellectual foresight or prescience, the mere taking knowledge of something beforehand, but rather a selective knowledge which regards one with favour and makes one an object of love, and thus approaches the idea of foreordination, Acts 2:23 (comp. 4:28); Rom. 8:29; 11:2; I Peter 1:2. These passages simply lose their meaning, if the words be taken in the sense of simply taking knowledge of one in advance, for God foreknows all men in that sense. Even Arminians feel constrained to give the words a more determinative meaning, namely, to foreknow one with absolute assurance in a certain state or condition. This includes the absolute certainty of that future state, and for that very reason comes very close to the idea of predestination. And not only these words, but even the simple

ginoskein has such a specific meaning in some cases, I Cor. 8:3; Gal. 4:9; II Tim. 2:19.[Cf. Article of C. W. Hodge on "Foreknow, Foreknowledge" in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*.]

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

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

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

C. The Author and Objects of Predestination.

GLOSS Reprobation: God's righteous decision to pass by some sinners and to leave them to the judgment their sin deserves; it is never arbitrary or unjust.

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

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

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

b. *The angels, both good and evil.* The Bible speaks not only of holy angels, Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26, and of wicked angels, which kept not their first estate, II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; but also makes explicit mention of elect angels, I Tim. 5:21, thereby implying that there were also non-elect angels. The question naturally arises, How are we to conceive of the predestination of angels? According to some it simply means that God determined in general that the angels which remained holy would be confirmed in a state of bliss, while the others would be lost. But this is not at all in harmony with the Scriptural idea of predestination. It rather means that God decreed, for reasons sufficient unto Himself, to give some angels, in addition to the grace with which they were endowed by creation and which included ample power to remain holy, a special grace of perseverance; and to withhold this from others. There are points of difference between the predestination of men and that of the angels: (1) While the predestination of men may be conceived of as infralapsarian, the predestination of the angels can only be understood as supralapsarian. God did not choose a certain number out of the fallen mass of angels. (2) The angels were not elected or predestined in Christ as Mediator, but in Him as Head, that is, to stand in a ministerial relation to Him.

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

D. The Parts of Predestination.

GLOSS Infralapsarianism: the Reformed view that God's decree of election considers humanity as fallen, placing salvation against the background of sin and mercy.

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

a. *The Biblical Idea of Election.* The Bible speaks of election in more than one sense. There is (1) the election of Israel as a people for special privileges and for special service, Deut. 4:37; 7:6-8; 10:15; Hos. 13:5. (2) The election of individuals to some office, or to the performance of some special service, as Moses, Ex. 3, the priests, Deut. 18:5; the kings, I Sam. 10:24; Ps. 78:70, the prophets, Jer. 1:5, and the apostles, John 6:70; Acts 9:15. (3) The election of individuals to be children of God and heirs of eternal glory, Matt. 22:14; Rom. 11:5; I Cor. 1:27,28; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 1:4; I Pet. 1:2; II Pet. 1:10. The last is the election that comes into consideration here as a

part of predestination. It may be defined as *that eternal act of God whereby He, in His sovereign good pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, chooses a certain number of men to be the recipients of special grace and of eternal salvation*. More briefly it may be said to be God's eternal purpose to save some of the human race in and by Jesus Christ.

b. *The characteristics of election*. The characteristics of election are identical with the characteristics of the decrees in general. The decree of election: (1) *Is an expression of the sovereign will of God, His divine good pleasure*. This means among other things that Christ as Mediator is not the impelling, moving, or meritorious cause of election, as some have asserted. He may be called the mediate cause of the realization of election, and the meritorious cause of the salvation unto which believers are elected, but He is not the moving or meritorious cause of election itself. This is impossible, since He is Himself an object of predestination and election, and because, when He took His mediatorial work upon Him in the Counsel of Redemption, there was already a fixed number that was given unto Him. Election logically precedes the Counsel of Peace. The elective love of God precedes the sending of the Son, John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; II Tim. 1:9; I John 4:9. By saying that the decree of election originates in the divine good pleasure the idea is also excluded that it is determined by anything in man, such as foreseen faith or good works, Rom. 9:11; II Tim. 1:9. (2) *It is immutable, and therefore renders the salvation of the elect certain*. God realises the decree of election by His own efficiency, by the saving work which He accomplishes in Jesus Christ. It is His purpose that certain individuals should believe and persevere unto the end, and He secures this result by the objective work of Christ and the subjective operations of the Holy Spirit, Rom. 8:29,30; 11:29; II Tim. 2:19. It is the firm foundation of God which standeth, "having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His." And as such it is the source of rich comfort for all believers. Their final salvation does not depend on their uncertain obedience, but has its guarantee in the unchangeable purpose of God. (3) *It is eternal, that is, from eternity*. This divine election should never be identified with any *temporal* selection, whether it be for the enjoyment of the special grace of God in this life, for special privileges and responsible services, or for the inheritance of glory hereafter, but must be regarded as eternal, Rom. 8:29,30; Eph. 1:4,5. (4) *It is unconditional*. Election does not in any way depend on the foreseen faith or good works of man, as the Arminians teach, but exclusively on the sovereign good pleasure of God, who is also the originator of faith and good works, Rom. 9:11; Acts 13:48; II Tim. 1:9; I Pet. 1:2. Since all men are sinners and have forfeited the blessings of God, there is no basis for such a distinction in them; and since even the faith and good works of the believers are the fruit of the grace of God, Eph. 2:8,10; II Tim. 2:21, even these, as foreseen by God, could not furnish such a basis. (5) *It is irresistible*. This does not mean that man cannot oppose its execution to a certain degree, but it does mean that his opposition will not prevail. Neither does it mean that God in the execution of His decree overpowers the human will in a manner which is inconsistent with man's free agency. It does mean, however, that God can and does exert such an influence on

the human spirit as to make it willing, Ps. 110:3; Phil. 2:13. (6) *It is not chargeable with injustice.* The fact that God favors some and passes by others, does not warrant the charge that He is guilty of injustice. We can speak of injustice only when one party has a claim on another. If God owed the forgiveness of sin and eternal life to all men, it would be an injustice if He saved only a limited number of them. But the sinner has absolutely no right or claim on the blessings which flow from divine election. As a matter of fact he has forfeited these blessings. Not only have we no right to call God to account for electing some and passing others by, but we must admit that He would have been perfectly just, if He had not saved any, Matt. 20:14,15; Rom. 9:14,15.

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

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

a. *Statement of the doctrine.* Reprobation may be defined as *that eternal decree of God whereby He has determined to pass some men by with the operations of His special grace, and to punish them for their sins, to the manifestation of His justice.* The following points deserve special emphasis: (1) *It contains two elements.* According to the most usual representation in Reformed theology the decree of reprobation comprises two elements, namely, *preterition* or the

determination to pass by some men; and *condemnation* (sometimes called *precondemnation*) or the determination to punish those who are passed by for their sins. As such it embodies a twofold purpose: (a) to pass by some in the bestowal of regenerating and saving grace; and (b) to assign them to dishonor and to the wrath of God for their sins. The Belgic Confession mentions only the former, but the Canons of Dort name the latter as well. Some Reformed theologians would omit the second element from the decree of reprobation. Dabney prefers to regard the condemnation of the wicked as the foreseen and intended result of their preterition, thus depriving reprobation of its positive character; and Dick is of the opinion that the decree to condemn ought to be regarded as a separate decree, and not as a part of the decree of reprobation. It seems to us, however, that we are not warranted in excluding the second element from the decree of reprobation, nor to regard it as a different decree. The positive side of reprobation is so clearly taught in Scripture as the opposite of election that we cannot regard it as something purely negative, Rom. 9:21,22; Jude 4. However, we should notice several points of distinction between the two elements of the decree of reprobation: (a) Preterition is a sovereign act of God, an act of His mere good pleasure, in which the demerits of man do not come into consideration, while precondemnation is a judicial act, visiting sin with punishment. Even Supralapsarians are willing to admit that in condemnation sin is taken into consideration. (b) The reason for preterition is not known by man. It cannot be sin, for all men are sinners. We can only say that God passed some by for good and wise reasons sufficient unto Himself. On the other hand the reason for condemnation is known; it is sin. (c) Preterition is purely passive, a simple passing by without any action on man, but condemnation is efficient and positive. Those who are passed by are condemned on account of their sin. (2) We should guard against the idea, however, that as election and reprobation both determine with absolute certainty the end unto which man is predestined and the means by which that end is realised, they also imply that in the case of reprobation as well as in that of election God will bring to pass by His own direct efficiency whatsoever He has decreed. This means that, while it can be said that God is the author of the regeneration, calling, faith, justification, and sanctification, of the elect, and thus by direct action on them brings their election to realization, it cannot be said that He is also the responsible author of the fall, the unrighteous condition, and the sinful acts of the reprobate by direct action on them, and thus effects the realization of their reprobation. God's decree undoubtedly rendered the entrance of sin into the world certain, but He did not predestinate some unto sin, as He did others unto holiness. And as the holy God He cannot be the author of sin. The position which Calvin takes on this point in his Institutes is clearly indicated in the following deliverances found in Calvin's *Articles on Predestination*:

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

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

“They act ignorantly and calumniously who say that God is made the author of sin, if all things come to pass by His will and ordinance; because they make no distinction between the depravity of men and the hidden appointments of God.”[Quoted by Warfield, *Studies in Theology*, p. 194.]

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

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

E. Supra- and Infralapsarianism.

The doctrine of predestination has not always been presented in exactly the same form. Especially since the days of the Reformation two different conceptions of it gradually emerged, which were designated during the Arminian controversy as Infra- and Supralapsarianism. Already existing differences were more sharply defined and more strongly accentuated as the results of the theological disputes of that day. According to Dr. Dijk the two views under consideration were in their original form simply a difference of opinion respecting the question, whether the fall of man was also included in the divine decree. Was the first sin of man, constituting his fall, predestinated, or was this merely the object of divine foreknowledge? In their original form Supralapsarianism held the former, and Infralapsarianism, the latter. In this sense of the word Calvin was clearly a Supralapsarian. The later development of the difference between the two began with Beza, the successor of Calvin at Geneva. In it the original point in dispute gradually retires into the background, and other differences are brought forward, some of which turn out to

be mere differences of emphasis. Later Infralapsarians, such as Rivet, Walaeus, Mastricht, Turretin, à Mark, and de Moor, all admit that the fall of man was included in the decree; and of the later Supralapsarians, such as Beza, Gomarus, Peter Martyr, Zanchius, Ursinus, Perkins, Twisse, Trigland, Voetius, Burmannus, Witsius and Comrie, at least some are quite willing to admit that in the decree of Reprobation God in some way took sin into consideration. We are concerned at present with Supra- and Infralapsarianism in their more developed form.

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

a. *Negatively, the difference is not found:* (1) *In divergent views respecting the temporal order of the divine decrees.* It is admitted on all hands that the decree of God is one and in all its parts equally eternal, so that it is impossible to ascribe any temporal succession to the various elements which it includes. (2) *In any essential difference as to whether the fall of man was decreed or was merely the object of divine foreknowledge.* This may have been, as Dr. Dijk says, the original point of difference; but, surely, anyone who asserts that the fall was not decreed but only foreseen by God, would now be said to be moving along Arminian rather than Reformed lines. Both Supra- and Infralapsarians admit that the fall is included in the divine decree, and that preterition is an act of God's sovereign will. (3) *In any essential difference as to the question, whether the decree relative to sin is permissive.* There is some difference of emphasis on the qualifying adjective. Supralapsarians (with few exceptions) are willing to admit that the decree relative to sin is permissive, but hasten to add that it nevertheless makes the entrance of sin into the world a certainty. And Infralapsarians (with few exceptions) will admit that sin is included in God's decree, but hasten to add that the decree, in so far as it pertains to sin, is permissive rather than positive. The former occasionally over-emphasize the positive element in the decree respecting sin, and thus expose themselves to the charge that they make God the author of sin. And the latter sometimes over-emphasize the permissive character of the decree, reducing it to a bare permission, and thus expose themselves to the charge of Arminianism. As a whole, however, Supralapsarians emphatically repudiate every interpretation of the decree that would make God the author of sin; and Infralapsarians are careful to point out explicitly that the permissive decree of God relative to sin makes sin certainly future. (4) *In any essential difference as to the question, whether the decree of reprobation takes account of sin.* It is sometimes represented as if God destined some men for eternal destruction, simply by an act of His sovereign will, without taking account of their sin; as if, like a tyrant, He simply decided to destroy a large number of His rational creatures, purely for the manifestation of His glorious virtues. But Supralapsarians abhor the idea of a tyrannical God, and at least some of them explicitly state that, while preterition is an act of God's sovereign will, the second element of reprobation, namely, condemnation, is an act of justice and certainly takes account of sin. This proceeds on the supposition that logically preterition precedes the decree to create and to permit the fall, while condemnation follows this.

The logic of this position may be questioned, but it at least shows that the Supralapsarians who assume it, teach that God takes account of sin in the decree of reprobation. *p > <p>b. Positively, the difference does concern: (1) The extent of predestination.* Supralapsarians include the decree to create and to permit the fall in the decree of predestination, while Infralapsarians refer it to the decree of God in general, and exclude it from the special decree of predestination. According to the former, man appears in the decree of predestination, *not as created and fallen, but as certain to be created and to fall*; while according to the latter, he appears in it as already created and fallen. (2) *The logical order of the decrees.* The question is, whether the decrees to create and to permit the fall were means to the decree of redemption. Supralapsarians proceed on the assumption that in planning the rational mind passes from the end to the means in a retrograde movement, so that what is first in design is last in accomplishment. Thus they determine upon the following order: (a) The decree of God to glorify Himself, and particularly to magnify His grace and justice in the salvation of some and the perdition of other rational creatures, which exist in the divine mind as yet only as possibilities. (b) The decree to create those who were thus elected and reprobated. (c) The decree to permit them to fall. (d) The decree to justify the elect and to condemn the non-elect. On the other hand the Infralapsarians suggest a more historical order: (a) The decree to create man in holiness and blessedness. (b) The decree to permit man to fall by the self-determination of his own will. (c) The decree to save a certain number out of this guilty aggregate. (d) The decree to leave the remainder in their self-determination in sin, and to subject them to the righteous punishment which their sin deserves. (3) *The extension of the personal element of predestination to the decrees to create and to permit the fall.* According to Supralapsarians God, even in the decree to create and permit the fall, had His eye fixed on His elect individually, so that there was not a single moment in the divine decree, when they did not stand in a special relation to God as His beloved ones. Infralapsarians, on the other hand, hold that this personal element did not appear in the decree till after the decree to create and to permit the fall. In these decrees themselves the elect are simply included in the whole mass of humanity, and do not appear as the special objects of God's love.

2. THE SUPRALAPSARIAN POSITION.

a. *Arguments in favour of it:* (1) It appeals to all those passages of Scripture which emphasize the absolute sovereignty of God, and more particularly His sovereignty in relation to sin, such as Ps. 115:3; Prov. 16:4; Isa. 10:15; 45:9; Jer. 18:6; Matt. 11:25,26; 20:15; Rom. 9:17,19-21. Special emphasis is laid on the figure of the potter, which is found in more than one of these passages. It is said that this figure not merely stresses the sovereignty of God in general, but more especially His sovereignty in determining the quality of the vessels at creation. This means that Paul in Rom. 9 speaks from a pre-creation standpoint, an idea that is favoured (a) by the fact that the potter's work is frequently used in Scripture as a figure of creation; and (b) by the fact that the potter determines each vessel for a certain use and gives it a corresponding quality, which might cause

the vessel to ask, though without any right, Why didst Thou make me thus? (2) Attention is called to the fact that some passages of Scripture suggest that the work of nature or of creation in general was so ordered as to contain already illustrations of the work of redemption. Jesus frequently derives His illustrations for the elucidation of spiritual things from nature, and we are told in Matt. 13:35 that this was in fulfilment of the words of the prophet, "I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world." Comp. Ps. 78:2. This is taken to mean that they were *hidden in nature*, but were brought to light in the parabolic teachings of Jesus. Ephesians 3:9 is also considered as an expression of the idea that the design of God in the creation of the world was directed to the manifestation of His wisdom, which would issue in the New Testament work of redemption. But the appeal to this passage seems, to say the least, very doubtful. (3) The order of the decrees, as accepted by the Supralapsarians, is regarded as the more ideal, the more logical and unified of the two. It clearly exhibits the rational order which exists between the ultimate end and the intermediate means. Therefore the Supralapsarians can, while the Infralapsarians cannot, give a specific answer to the question why God decreed to create the world and to permit the fall. They do full justice to the sovereignty of God and refrain from all futile attempts to justify God in the sight of men, while the Infralapsarians hesitate, attempt to prove the justice of God's procedure, and yet in the end must come to the same conclusion as the Supralapsarians, namely, that, in the last analysis, the decree to permit the fall finds its explanation only in the sovereign good pleasure of God.[Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* II, p. 400.] (4) The analogy of the predestination of the angels would seem to favour the Supralapsarian position, for it can only be conceived as supralapsarian. God decreed, for reasons sufficient to Himself, to grant some angels the grace of perseverance and to withhold this from others; and to connect with this righteously the confirmation of the former in a state of glory, and the eternal perdition of the latter. This means, therefore, that the decree respecting the fall of the angels forms a part of their predestination. And it would seem impossible to conceive of it in any other way.

b. *Objections to it:* Notwithstanding its seeming pretensions, it does not give a solution of the problem of sin. It would do this, if it dared to say that God decreed to bring sin into the world *by His own direct efficiency*. Some Supralapsarians, it is true, do represent the decree as the efficient cause of sin, but yet do not want this to be interpreted in such a way that God becomes the author of sin. The majority of them do not care to go beyond the statement that God willed to permit sin. Now this is no objection to the Supralapsarian in distinction from the Infralapsarian, for neither one of them solves the problem. The only difference is that the former makes greater pretensions in this respect than the latter. (2) According to its representations man appears in the divine decree first as *creabilis et labilis* (certain to be created and to fall). The objects of the decree are first of all men considered as mere possibilities, as non-existent entities. But such a decree necessarily has only a provisional character, and must be followed by another decree. After the election and reprobation of these possible men follows the decree to create them and to permit

them to fall, and this must be followed by another decree respecting these men whose creation and fall have now been definitely determined, namely, the decree to elect some and to reprobate the rest of those who now appear in the divine purpose as real men. Supralapsarians claim that this is no insuperable objection because, while it is true that on their position the actual existence of men has not yet been determined when they are elected and reprobated, they do exist in the divine idea. (3) It is said that Supralapsarianism makes the eternal punishment of the reprobate an object of the divine will in the same sense and in the same manner as the eternal salvation of the elect; and that it makes sin, which leads to eternal destruction, a means unto this end in the same manner and in the same sense as the redemption in Christ is a means unto salvation. If consistently carried through, this would make God the author of sin. It should be noted, however, that the Supralapsarian does not, as a rule, so represent the decree, and explicitly states that the decree may not be so interpreted as to make God the author of sin. He will speak of a predestination unto the grace of God in Jesus Christ, but not of a predestination unto sin. (4) Again, it is objected that Supralapsarianism makes the decree of reprobation just as absolute as the decree of election. In other words, that it regards reprobation as purely an act of God's sovereign good pleasure, and not as an act of punitive justice. According to its representation sin does not come into consideration in the decree of reprobation. But this is hardly correct, though it may be true of some Supralapsarians. In general, however, it may be said that, while they regard preterition as an act of God's sovereign good pleasure, they usually regard precondemnation as an act of divine justice which does take sin into consideration. And the Infralapsarian himself cannot maintain the idea that reprobation is an act of justice pure and simple, contingent on the sin of man. In the last analysis, he, too, must declare that it is an act of God's sovereign good pleasure, if he wants to avoid the Arminian camp. (5) Finally, it is said that it is not possible to construe a serviceable doctrine of the covenant of grace and of the Mediator on the basis of the Supralapsarian scheme. Both the covenant and the Mediator of the covenant can only be conceived as infralapsarian. This is frankly admitted by some Supralapsarians. Logically, the Mediator appears in the divine decree only after the entrance of sin; and this is the only point of view from which the covenant of grace can be construed. This will naturally have an important bearing on the ministry of the Word.

3. THE INFRALAPSARIAN POSITION.

a. *Arguments in favour of it.* (1) Infralapsarians appeal more particularly to those passages of Scripture in which the objects of election appear as in a condition of sin, as being in close union with Christ, and as objects of God's mercy and grace, such as Matt. 11:25,26; John 15:19; Rom. 8:28,30; 9:15,16; Eph. 1:4-12; II Tim. 1:9. These passages would seem to imply that in the thought of God the fall of man preceded the election of some unto salvation. (2) It also calls attention to the fact that in its representation the order of the divine decrees is less philosophical and more natural than that proposed by Supralapsarians. It is in harmony with the historical order in the

execution of the decrees, which would seem to reflect the order in the eternal counsel of God. Just as in the execution, so there is in the decree a causal order. It is more modest to abide by this order, just because it reflects the historical order revealed in Scripture and does not pretend to solve the problem of God's relation to sin. It is considered to be less offensive in its presentation of the matter and to be far more in harmony with the requirements of practical life.[Cf. Edwards, *Works* II, p. 543.] (3) While Supralapsarians claim that their construction of the doctrine of the decrees is the more logical of the two, Infralapsarians make the same claim for their position. Says Dabney: "The Supralapsarian (scheme) under the pretense of greater symmetry, is in reality the more illogical of the two." [*Syst. and Polem. Theol.*, p. 233.] It is pointed out that the supralapsarian scheme is illogical in that it makes the decree of election and preterition refer to non-entities, that is, to men who do not exist, except as bare possibilities, even in the mind of God; who do not yet exist in the divine decree and are therefore not contemplated as created, but only as creatable. Again, it is said that the supralapsarian construction is illogical in that it necessarily separates the two elements in reprobation, placing preterition before, and condemnation after, the fall. (4) Finally, attention is also called to the fact that the Reformed Churches in their official standards have always adopted the infralapsarian position, even though they have never condemned, but always tolerated, the other view. Among the members of the Synod of Dort and of the Westminster Assembly there were several Supralapsarians who were held in high honour (the presiding officer in both cases belonging to the number), but in both the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Confession the infralapsarian view finds expression.

b. *Objections to it.* The following are some of the most important objections raised against Infralapsarianism: (1) It does not give, nor does it claim to give a solution of the problem of sin. But this is equally true of the other view, so that, in a comparison of the two, this cannot very well be regarded as a real objection, though it is sometimes raised. The problem of the relation of God to sin has proved to be insoluble for the one as well as for the other. (2) While Infralapsarianism may be actuated by the laudable desire to guard against the possibility of charging God with being the author of sin, it is, in doing this, always in danger of overshooting the mark, and some of its representatives have made this mistake. They are averse to the statement that God *willed* sin, and substitute for it the assertion that He *permitted it*. But then the question arises as to the exact meaning of this statement. Does it mean that God merely took cognizance of the entrance of sin, without in any way hindering it, so that the fall was in reality a frustration of His plan? The moment the Infralapsarian answers this question in the affirmative, he enters the ranks of the Arminians. While there have been some who took this stand, the majority of them feel that they cannot consistently take this position, but must incorporate the fall in the divine decree. They speak of the decree respecting sin as a *permissive decree*, but with the distinct understanding that this decree rendered the entrance of sin into the world certain. And if the question be raised, why God decreed to permit sin and thus rendered it certain, they can only point to the divine

good pleasure, and are thus in perfect agreement with the Supralapsarian. (3) The same tendency to shield God reveals itself in another way and exposes one to a similar danger. Infralapsarianism really wants to explain reprobation as an act of God's justice. It is inclined to deny either explicitly or implicitly that it is an act of the mere good pleasure of God. This really makes the decree of reprobation a conditional decree and leads into the Arminian fold. But infralapsarians on the whole do not want to teach a conditional decree, and express themselves guardedly on this matter. Some of them admit that it is a mistake to consider reprobation purely as an act of divine justice. And this is perfectly correct. Sin is not the ultimate cause of reprobation any more than faith and good works are the cause of election, for all men are by nature dead in sin and trespasses. When confronted with the problem of reprobation, Infralapsarians, too, can find the answer only in the good pleasure of God. Their language may sound more tender than that of the Supralapsarians, but is also more apt to be misunderstood, and after all proves to convey the same idea. (4) The Infralapsarian position does not do justice to the unity of the divine decree, but represents the different members of it too much as disconnected parts. First God decrees to create the world for the glory of His name, which means among other things also that He determined that His rational creatures should live according to the divine law implanted in their hearts and should praise their Maker. Then He decreed to permit the fall, whereby sin enters the world. This seems to be a frustration of the original plan, or at least an important modification of it, since God no more decrees to glorify Himself by the voluntary obedience of *all* His rational creatures. Finally, there follow the decrees of election and reprobation, which mean only a partial execution of the original plan.

4. From what was said it would seem to follow that we cannot regard Supra- and Infralapsarianism as absolutely antithetical. They consider the same mystery from different points of view, the one fixing its attention on the ideal or teleological; the other, on the historical, order of the decrees. To a certain extent they can and must go hand in hand. Both find support in Scripture. Supralapsarianism in those passages which stress the sovereignty of God, and Infralapsarianism in those which emphasize the mercy and justice of God, in connection with election and reprobation. Each has something in its favour: the former that it does not undertake to justify God, but simply rests in the sovereign and holy good pleasure of God; and the latter, that it is more modest and tender, and reckons with the demands and requirements of practical life. Both are necessarily inconsistent; the former because it cannot regard sin as a progression, but must consider it as a disturbance of creation, and speaks of a *permissive* decree; and the latter, since in the last analysis it must also resort to a *permissive decree*, which makes sin certain. But each one of them also emphasizes an element of truth. The true element in Supralapsarianism is found in its emphasis on the following: that the decree of God is a unit; that God had *one* final aim in view; that He willed sin in a certain sense; and that the work of creation was immediately adapted to the recreative activity of God. And the true element in Infralapsarianism is, that there is

a certain diversity in the decrees of God; that creation and fall cannot be regarded merely as means to an end, but also had great independent significance; and that sin cannot be regarded as an element of progress, but should rather be considered as an element of disturbance in the world. In connection with the study of this profound subject we feel that our understanding is limited, and realise that we grasp only fragments of the truth. Our confessional standards embody the infralapsarian position, but do not condemn Supralapsarianism. It was felt that this view was not necessarily inconsistent with Reformed theology. And the conclusions of Utrecht, adopted in 1908 by our Church, state that, while it is not permissible to represent the supralapsarian view as *the* doctrine of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, it is just as little permissible to molest any one who cherishes that view for himself.

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

III. Creation in General

God freely created all things by His word, distinct from Himself and wholly dependent upon His sustaining power.

The discussion of the decrees naturally leads on to the consideration of their execution, and this begins with the work of creation. This is not only first in order of time, but is also a logical *prius*. It is the beginning and basis of all divine revelation, and consequently also the foundation of all ethical and religious life. The doctrine of creation is not set forth in Scripture as a philosophical solution of the problem of the world, but in its ethical and religious significance, as a revelation of the relation of man to his God. It stresses the fact that God is the origin of all things, and that all things belong to Him and are subject to Him. The knowledge of it is derived from Scripture only and is accepted by faith (Heb. 11:3), though Roman Catholics maintain that it can also be gathered from nature.

A. The Doctrine of Creation in History.

GLOSS **Creation ex nihilo:** creation “out of nothing”: God brought the universe into being by His word, without using eternal pre-existing material.

While Greek philosophy sought the explanation of the world in a dualism, which involves the eternity of matter, or in a process of emanation, which makes the world the outward manifestation of God, the Christian Church from the very beginning taught the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* and as a *free* act of God. This doctrine was accepted with singular unanimity from the start. It is found in Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and others. Theophilus was the first Church Father to stress the fact that the days of creation were literal days. This seems to have been the view of Irenaeus and Tertullian as well, and was in all probability the common view in the Church. Clement and Origen thought of creation as having been accomplished *in a single indivisible moment*, and conceived of its description as the work of several days merely as a literary device to describe the origin of things in the order of their worth or of their logical connection. The idea of an eternal creation, as taught by Origen, was commonly rejected. At the same time some of the Church Fathers expressed the idea that God was always Creator, though the created universe began in time. During the trinitarian controversy some of them emphasized the fact that, in distinction from the generation of the Son, which was a *necessary* act of the Father, the creation of the world was a *free* act of the triune God. Augustine dealt with the work of creation more in detail than others did. He argues that creation was eternally in the will of God, and therefore brought no change in Him. There was no time before creation, since the world was brought into being *with* time rather than *in* time. The question what God did in the many ages before creation is based on a misconception of eternity. While the Church in general still seems to have held that the world was created in six ordinary days, Augustine suggested a somewhat different view. He strongly defended the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, but distinguished two moments of creation: the production of matter and spirits out of nothing, and the organisation of the material universe. He found it difficult to say what kind of days the days of Genesis were, but was evidently inclined to think that God created all things *in a moment of time*, and that the thought of days was simply introduced to aid the finite intelligence. The Scholastics debated a great deal about the possibility of eternal creation; some, such as, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventura, Albertus Magnus, Henry of Ghent, and the great majority of the Scholastics denying this; and others, such as Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Durandus, Biel, and others affirming it. Yet the doctrine of creation with or in time carried the day. Erigena and Eckhart were exceptional in teaching that the world originated by emanation. Seemingly the days of creation were regarded as ordinary days, though Anselm suggested that it might be necessary to conceive of them as different from our present days. The Reformers held firmly to the doctrine of creation out of nothing by a free act of God in or with time, and regarded the days of creation as six literal days. This view is also generally maintained in the Post-Reformation literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though a few theologians (as Maresius) occasionally speak of *continuous creation*. In the eighteenth century, however, under the dominating influence of Pantheism and Materialism, science launched an attack on the Church's doctrine of creation. It substituted the idea of evolution or development for that of absolute origination by a divine fiat. The world was

often represented as a necessary manifestation of the Absolute. Its origin was pushed back thousands and even millions of years into an unknown past. And soon theologians were engaged in various attempts to harmonize the doctrine of creation with the teachings of science and philosophy. Some suggested that the first chapters of Genesis should be interpreted allegorically or mythically; others, that a long period elapsed between the primary creation of Gen. 1:1,2 and the secondary creation of the following verses; and still others, that the days of creation were in fact long periods of time.

B. Scriptural Proof for the Doctrine of Creation.

GLOSS Creator-creature distinction: the basic biblical difference between the self-existent God and everything He has made, which depends entirely on Him.

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

C. The Idea of Creation.

GLOSS Secondary causes: created means through which God ordinarily works in the world, without surrendering His sovereign rule over them.

The faith of the Church in the creation of the world is expressed in the very first article of the *Apostolic Confession of Faith*, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." This is an expression of the faith of the early Church, that God by His almighty power brought forth the universe out of nothing. The words "Maker of heaven and earth" were not contained in the original form of the creed, but represent a later addition. It ascribes to the Father, that is, to the first person in the Trinity, the origination of all things. This is in harmony with the representation of the New Testament that all things are of the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. The word "Maker" is a rendering of the word *poiēten*, found in the Greek form of the Apostolic Confession, while the Latin form has *creatorem*. Evidently, it is to be understood as a synonymous term for "Creator." "To create" was understood in the early Church in the strict sense of "to bring forth something out of nothing." It should be noted that Scripture does not always use the Hebrew word *bara'* and the Greek term *ktizein* in that absolute sense. It also employs these terms to denote a secondary creation, in which God made use of material that was already in existence but could not of itself have produced the result indicated, Gen. 1:21,27; 5:1; Isa. 45:7,12; 54:16; Amos 4:13; I Cor. 11:9; Rev. 10:6. It even uses them to designate that which comes into existence under the providential guidance of God, Ps. 104:30; Isa. 45:7,8; 65:18; I Tim. 4:4. Two other terms are used synonymously with the term "to create," namely, "to make" (Heb., *'asah*; Greek, *poiein*) and "to form" (Heb. *yatsar*; Greek, *plasso*). The former is clearly used in all the three senses indicated in the preceding: of primary creation in Gen. 2:4; Prov. 16:4; Acts 17:24; more frequently of secondary creation, Gen. 1:7,16,26; 2:22; Ps. 89:47; and of the work of providence in Ps. 74:17. The latter is used similarly of primary creation, Ps. 90:2 (perhaps the only instance of this use); of secondary creation, Gen. 2:7,19; Ps. 104:26; Amos 4:13; Zech. 12:1; and of the work of providence, Deut. 32:18; Isa. 43:1,7,21; 45:7. All three words are found together in Isa. 45:7. Creation in the strict sense of the word may be defined as *that free act of God whereby He, according to His sovereign will and for His own glory, in the beginning brought forth the whole visible and invisible universe, without the use of preexistent material, and thus gave it an existence, distinct from His own and yet always dependent on Him*. In view of the Scriptural data indicated in the preceding, it is quite evident, however, that this definition applies only to what is generally known as primary or immediate creation, that is, the creation described in Gen. 1:1. But the Bible clearly uses the word "create" also in cases in which God did make use of pre-existing materials, as in the creation of sun, moon, and stars, of the animals and of man. Hence many theologians add an element to the definition of creation. Thus Wollebius defines: "Creation is that act by which God produces the world and all that is in it, partly out of nothing and partly out of material that is

by its very nature unfit, for the manifestation of the glory of His power, wisdom, and goodness."

Even so, however, the definition does not cover those cases, also designated in Scripture as creative work, in which God works through secondary causes, Ps. 104:30; Isa. 45:7,8; Jer. 31:22; Amos 4:13, and produces results which only He could produce. The definition given includes several elements which call for further consideration.

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

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

3. CREATION IS A TEMPORAL ACT OF GOD.

a. *The teaching of Scripture on this point.* The Bible begins with the very simple statement, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," Gen. 1:1. As addressed to all classes of

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

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

c. *Suggested solutions of the problem.* (1) *The theory of eternal creation.* According to some, such as Origen, Scotus Erigena, Rothe, Dorner, and Pfleiderer, God has been creating from all eternity, so that the world, though a creature and dependent, is yet just as eternal as God Himself. This has been argued from the omnipotence, the timelessness, the immutability, and the love of God; but neither one of these necessarily imply or involve it. This theory is not only contradicted by Scripture, but is also contrary to reason, for (a) creation from eternity is a contradiction in terms; and (b) the idea of eternal creation, as applied to the present world, which is subject to the law of time, is based on an identification of time and eternity, while these two are essentially different. (2) *The theory of the subjectivity of time and eternity.* Some speculative philosophers, such as Spinoza, Hegel, and Green, claim that the distinction of time and eternity is purely subjective and due to our finite position. Hence they would have us rise to a higher point of

vantage and consider things *sub specie aeternitatis* (from the point of view of eternity). What exists for our consciousness as a time development, exists for the divine consciousness only as an eternally complete whole. But this theory is contradicted by Scripture just as much as the preceding one, Gen. 1:1; Ps. 90:2; 102:25; John 1:3. Moreover, it changes objective realities into subjective forms of consciousness, and reduces all history to an illusion. After all, time-development is a reality; there is a succession in our conscious life and in the life of nature round about us. The things that happened yesterday are not the things that are happening today.[Cf. Orr, *Christian View of God and the World*, p. 130.]

d. *Direction in which the solution should be sought.* In connection with the problem under consideration, Dr. Orr correctly says, "The solution must lie in getting a proper idea of the relation of eternity to time." He adds that, as far as he can see, this has not yet been satisfactorily accomplished. A great deal of the difficulty encountered here is undoubtedly due to the fact that we think of eternity too much as an indefinite extension of time, as, for instance, when we speak of the ages of comparative inaction in God before the creation of the world. God's eternity is not indefinitely extended time, but something essentially different, of which we can form no conception. His is a timeless existence, an eternal presence. The hoary past and the most distant future are both present to Him. He acts in all His works, and therefore also in creation, as the Eternal One, and we have no right to draw creation as *an act of God* into the temporal sphere. In a certain sense this can be called an eternal act, but only in the sense in which all the acts of God are eternal. They are all as *acts of God*, works that are done in eternity. However, it is not eternal in the same sense as the generation of the Son, for this is an immanent act of God in the absolute sense of the word, while creation results in a temporal existence and thus terminates in time.[Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* II, p. 452.] Theologians generally distinguish between active and passive creation, the former denoting creation as an act of God, and the latter, its result, the world's being created. The former is not, but the latter is, marked by temporal succession, and this temporal succession reflects the order determined in the decree of God. As to the objection that a creation in time implies a change in God, Wollebius remarks that "creation is not the Creator's but the creature's passage from potentiality to actuality." [Quoted by Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, p. 294.]

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

a. *The doctrine of creation is absolutely unique.* There has been a great deal of speculation about the origin of the world, and several theories have been proposed. Some declared the world to be eternal, while others saw in it the product of an antagonistic spirit (Gnostics). Some maintained that it was made out of pre-existing matter which God worked up into form (Plato); others held that it originated by emanation out of the divine substance (Syrian Gnostics,

Swedenborg); and still others regarded it as the phenomenal appearance of the Absolute, the hidden ground of all things (Panthemism). In opposition to all these vain speculations of men the doctrine of Scripture stands out in grand sublimity: "In the beginning God *created* the heavens and the earth."

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

c. *Meaning of the term "creation out of nothing."* The expression "to create or bring forth out of nothing" is not found in Scripture. It is derived from one of the Apocrypha, namely, II. Macc. 7:28. The expression *ex nihilo* has been both misinterpreted and criticized. Some even considered the word *nihilum* (nothing) as the designation of a certain matter out of which the world was created, a matter without qualities and without form. But this is too puerile to be worthy of serious consideration. Others took the expression "to create out of nothing" to mean that the world came into being without a cause, and proceeded to criticize it as conflicting with what is generally regarded as an axiomatic truth, *ex nihilo nihil fit* (out of nothing comes nothing). But this criticism is entirely unwarranted. To say that God created the world out of nothing is not equivalent to saying that the world came into being without a cause. God Himself or, more specifically, the will of God is the cause of the world. Martensen expresses himself in these words: "The nothing out of which God creates the world are the eternal possibilities of His will, which are the sources of all the actualities of the world." [*Christian Dogmatics*, p. 116.] If the Latin phrase "*ex nihilo nihil fit*" be taken to mean that no effect can be without a cause, its truth may be admitted, but it cannot be regarded as a valid objection against the doctrine of creation out of nothing. But if it be understood to express the idea that nothing can originate, except out of previously existing material, it certainly cannot be regarded as a self-evident truth. Then it is rather a purely arbitrary assumption which, as Shedd points out, does not even hold true of man's thoughts and volitions,

which are *ex nihilo*. [Dogm. Theol. I, p. 467.] But even if the phrase does express a truth of common experience as far as human works are concerned, this does not yet prove its truth with respect to the work of the almighty power of God. However, in view of the fact that the expression “creation out of nothing” is liable to misunderstanding, and has often been misunderstood, it is preferable to speak of creation without the use of pre-existing material.

d. *Scriptural basis for the doctrine of creation out of nothing.* Gen. 1:1 records the beginning of the work of creation, and it certainly does not represent God as bringing the world forth out of pre-existent material. It was creation out of nothing, creation in the strict sense of the word, and therefore the only part of the work recorded in Gen. 1 to which Calvin would apply the term. But even in the remaining part of the chapter God is represented as calling forth all things by the word of His power, by a simple divine fiat. The same truth is taught in such passages as Ps. 33:6,9 and 148:5. The strongest passage is Heb. 11:3, “By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear.” Creation is here represented as a fact which we apprehend only by faith. By faith we understand (perceive, not comprehend) that the world was framed or fashioned by the word of God, that is, the word of God’s power, the divine fiat, so that the things which are seen, the visible things of this world, were not made out of things which do appear, which are visible, and which are at least occasionally seen. According to this passage the world certainly was not made out of anything that is palpable to the senses. Another passage that may be quoted in this connection is Rom. 4:7, which speaks of God, “who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were” (Moffatt: “who makes the dead alive and calls into being what does not exist”). The apostle, it is true, does not speak of the creation of the world in this connection, but of the hope of Abraham that he would have a son. However, the description here given of God is general and is therefore also of a general application. It belongs to the very nature of God that He is able to call into being what does not exist, and does so call it into being.

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

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

world, Isa. 42:5; Acts 17:24; (2) speak of the immutability of God, Ps. 102:27; Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17; (3) draw a comparison between God and the creature, Ps. 90:2; 102:25-27; 103:15-17; Isa. 2:21; 22:17, etc.; and (4) speak of the world as lying in sin or sinful, Rom. 1:18-32; I John 2:15-17, etc.

b. *The world is always dependent on God.* While God gave the world an existence distinct from His own, He did not withdraw from the world after its creation, but remained in the most intimate connection with it. The universe is not like a clock which was wound up by God and is now allowed to run off without any further divine intervention. This deistic conception of creation is neither biblical nor scientific. God is not only the transcendent God, infinitely exalted above all His creatures; He is also the immanent God, who is present in every part of His creation, and whose Spirit is operative in all the world. He is *essentially*, and not merely *per potentiam*, present in all His creatures, but He is not present in every one of them in the same manner. His immanence should not be interpreted as boundless extension throughout all the spaces of the universe, nor as a partitive presence, so that He is partly here and partly there. God is Spirit, and just because He is Spirit He is everywhere present as a *whole*. He is said to fill heaven and earth, Ps. 139:7-10; Jer. 23:24, to constitute the sphere in which we live and move and have our being, Acts 17:28, to renew the face of the earth by His Spirit, Ps. 104:30, to dwell in those that are of a broken heart, Ps. 51:11; Isa. 57:15, and in the Church as His temple, I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 2:22. Both transcendence and immanence find expression in a single passage of Scripture, namely, Eph. 4:6, where the apostle says that we have "one God and Father of all, who is *over all*, and *through all*, and *in all*." The doctrine of divine immanence has been stretched to the point of Pantheism in a great deal of modern theology. The world, and especially man, was regarded as the phenomenal manifestation of God. At present there is a strong reaction to this position in the so-called "theology of crisis." It is sometimes thought that this theology, with its emphasis on the "infinite qualitative difference" between time and eternity, on God as the "wholly Other" and the hidden God, and on the distance between God and man, naturally rules out the immanence of God. Brunner gives us the assurance, however, that this is not so. Says he, "Much nonsense has been talked about the 'Barthian theology' having perception only for the transcendence of God, not for His immanence. As if we too were not aware of the fact that God the Creator upholds all things by His power, that He has set the stamp of His divinity on the world and created man to be His own image." [*The Word and the World*, p. 7.] And Barth says, "Dead were God Himself if He moved His world only from the outside, if He were a 'thing in Himself' and not the One in all, the Creator of all things visible and invisible, the beginning and the ending." [*The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p. 291.] These men oppose the modern pantheistic conception of the divine immanence, and also the idea that, in virtue of this immanence, the world is a luminous revelation of God.

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

a. *The happiness of man or of humanity.* Some of the earlier philosophers, such as Plato, Philo, and Seneca, asserted that the goodness of God prompted Him to create the world. He desired to communicate Himself to His creatures; their happiness was the end He had in view. Though some Christian theologians chimed in with this idea, it became prominent especially through the Humanism of the Reformation period and the Rationalism of the eighteenth century. This theory was often presented in a very superficial way. The best form in which it is stated is to the effect that God could not make Himself the end of creation, because He is sufficient unto Himself and could need nothing. And if He could not make Himself the end, then this can be found only in the creature, especially in man, and ultimately in his supreme happiness. The teleological view by which the welfare or happiness of man or humanity is made the final end of creation, was characteristic of the thinking of such influential men as Kant, Schleiermacher, and Ritschl, though they did not all present it in the same way. But this theory does not satisfy for several reasons: (1) Though God undoubtedly reveals His goodness in creation, it is not correct to say that His goodness or love could not express itself, if there were no world. The personal relations within the triune God supplied all that was necessary for a full and eternal life of love. (2) It would seem to be perfectly self-evident that God does not exist for the sake of man, but man for the sake of God. God only is Creator and the supreme Good, while man is but a creature, who for that very reason cannot be the end of creation. The temporal finds its end in the eternal, the human in the divine, and not *vice versa*. (3) The theory does not fit the facts. It is impossible to subordinate all that is found in creation to this end, and to explain all in relation to human happiness. This is perfectly evident from a consideration of all the sufferings that are found in the world.

b. *The declarative glory of God.* The Church of Jesus Christ found the true end of creation, not in anything outside of God, but in God Himself, more particularly in the external manifestation of His inherent excellency. This does not mean that God's receiving glory from others is the final end. The receiving of glory through the praises of His moral creatures, is an end included in the supreme end, but is not itself that end. God did not create first of all to receive glory, but to make His glory extant and manifest. The glorious perfections of God are manifested in His entire creation; and this manifestation is not intended as an empty show, a mere exhibition to be admired by the creatures, but also aims at promoting their welfare and perfect happiness. Moreover, it seeks to attune their hearts to the praises of the Creator, and to elicit from their souls the expression of their gratefulness and love and adoration. The supreme end of God in creation, the manifestation of His glory, therefore, includes, as subordinate ends, the happiness and salvation of His creatures, and the reception of praise from grateful and adoring hearts. This doctrine is supported by the following considerations: (1) It is based on the testimony of

Scripture, Isa. 43:7; 60:21; 61:3; Ezek. 36:21,22; 39:7; Luke 2:14; Rom. 9:17; 11:36; I Cor. 15:28; Eph. 1:5,6,9,12,14; 3:9,10; Col. 1:16. (2) The infinite God would hardly choose any but the highest end in creation, and this end could only be found in Himself. If whole nations, as compared with Him, are but as a drop in a bucket and as the small dust of the balance, then, surely, His declarative glory is intrinsically of far greater value than the good of His creatures, Isa. 40:15,16. (3) The glory of God is the only end that is consistent with His independence and sovereignty. Everyone is dependent on whomsoever or whatsoever he makes his ultimate end. If God chooses anything in the creature as His final end, this would make Him dependent on the creature to that extent. (4) No other end would be sufficiently comprehensive to be the true end of all God's ways and works in creation. It has the advantage of comprising, in subordination, several other ends. (5) It is the only end that is actually and perfectly attained in the universe. We cannot imagine that a wise and omnipotent God would choose an end destined to fail wholly or in part, Job 23:13. Yet many of His creatures never attain to perfect happiness.

c. *Objections to the doctrine that the glory of God is the end of creation.* The following are the most important of these: (1) *It makes the scheme of the universe a selfish scheme.* But we should distinguish between selfishness and reasonable self-regard or self-love. The former is an undue or exclusive care for one's own comfort or pleasure, regardless of the happiness or rights of others; the latter is a due care for one's own happiness and well-being, which is perfectly compatible with justice, generosity, and benevolence towards others. In seeking self-expression for the glory of His name, God did not disregard the well-being, the highest good of others, but promoted it. Moreover, this objection draws the infinite God down to the level of finite and even sinful man and judges Him by human standards, which is entirely unwarranted. God has no equal, and no one can claim any right as over against Him. In making His declarative glory the end of creation, He has chosen the highest end; but when man makes himself the end of all his works, he is not choosing the highest end. He would rise to a higher level, if he chose the welfare of humanity and the glory of God as the end of his life. Finally, this objection is made primarily in view of the fact that the world is full of suffering, and that some of God's rational creatures are doomed to eternal destruction. But this is not due to the creative work of God, but to the sin of man, which thwarted the work of God in creation. The fact that man suffers the consequences of sin and insurrection does not warrant anyone in accusing God of selfishness. One might as well accuse the government of selfishness for upholding its dignity and the majesty of the law against all wilful transgressors. (2) *It is contrary to God's self-sufficiency and independence.* By seeking His honour in this way God shows that He needs the creature. The world is created to glorify God, that is, to add to His glory. Evidently, then, His perfection is wanting in some respects; the work of creation satisfies a want and contributes to the divine perfection. But this representation is not correct. The fact that God created the world for His own glory does not mean that He needed the world. It does not hold universally among men, that the work which they do not perform for others, is

necessary to supply a want. This may hold in the case of the common laborer, who is working for his daily bread, but is scarcely true of the artist, who follows the spontaneous impulse of his genius. In the same way there is a good pleasure in God, exalted far above want and compulsion, which artistically embodies His thoughts in creation and finds delight in them. Moreover, it is not true that, when God makes His declarative glory the final end of creation, He aims primarily at receiving something. The supreme end which He had in view, was not to receive glory, but to manifest His inherent glory in the works of His hands. It is true that in doing this, He would also cause the heavens to declare His glory, and the firmament to show His handiwork, the birds of the air and the beasts of the field to magnify Him, and the children of men to sing His praises. But by glorifying the Creator the creatures add nothing to the perfection of His being, but only acknowledge His greatness and ascribe to Him the glory which is due unto Him.

D. Divergent Theories Respecting the Origin of the World.

GLOSS Evolutionism: a family of explanations for the development of life; Berkhof evaluates it in relation to the biblical confession of God as Creator.

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

1. THE DUALISTIC THEORY. Dualism is not always presented in the same form, but in its most usual form posits two self-existent principles, God and matter, which are distinct from and co-eternal with each other. Original matter, however, is regarded as but a negative and imperfect substance (sometimes regarded as evil), which is subordinate to God and is made the instrument of His will (Plato, Aristotle, the Gnostics, the Manichaeans). According to this theory God is not the creator, but only the framer and artificer of the world. This view is objectionable for several reasons. (a) It is wrong in its fundamental idea that there must have been some substance out of which the world was created, since *ex nihilo nihil fit*. This maxim is true only as an expression of the idea that no event takes place without a cause, and is false if it means to assert that nothing can ever be made except out of pre-existing material. The doctrine of creation does not dispense with a cause, but finds the all-sufficient cause of the world in the sovereign will of God. (b) Its representation of matter as eternal is fundamentally unsound. If matter is eternal, it must be infinite for it cannot be infinite in one way (duration) and finite in other respects. But it is impossible that two infinities or absolutes should exist side by side. The absolute and the relative may exist simultaneously, but there can be only one absolute and self-existent being. (c) It is unphilosophical to postulate two eternal substances, when one self-existent cause is perfectly adequate to account for all the facts. For that reason philosophy does not rest satisfied with a dualistic explanation of the world, but seeks to give a monistic interpretation of the universe. (d) If the theory assumes – as it does in some of its forms – the existence of an eternal principle of evil,

there is absolutely no guarantee that good will triumph over evil in the world. It would seem that what is eternally necessary is bound to maintain itself and can never go down.

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

3. THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION. The theory of evolution is sometimes spoken of as if it could be a substitute for the doctrine of creation. But this is clearly a mistake. It certainly cannot be a substitute for creation in the sense of absolute origination, since it presupposes something that evolves, and this must in the last resort be either eternal or created, so that, after all, the evolutionist must choose between the theory of the eternity of matter and the doctrine of creation. At best, it might conceivably serve as a substitute for what is called secondary creation, by which the substance already in existence is given a definite form. (a) Some evolutionists, as, for instance, Haeckel, believe in the eternity of matter, and ascribe the origin of life to spontaneous generation. But belief in the eternity of matter is not only decidedly un-Christian and even atheistic; it is also generally discredited. The idea that matter, with force as its universal and inseparable property, is quite sufficient for the explanation of the world, finds little favour to-day in scientific circles. It is felt that a material universe, composed of finite parts (atoms, electrons, and so on) cannot itself be infinite; and that that which is subject to constant change cannot be eternal. Moreover, it has become increasingly clear that blind matter and force or energy cannot account for life and personality, for intelligence and free will. And the idea of spontaneous generation is a pure hypothesis, not only unverified, but practically exploded. The general law of nature seems to be "*omne vivum e vivo*" or "*ex vivo*." (b) Other evolutionists advocate what they call theistic evolution. This postulates the existence of God back of the universe, who works in it, as a rule according to the unalterable laws of nature and by physical forces only, but in some

cases by direct miraculous intervention, as, for instance, in the case of the absolute beginning, the beginning of life, and the beginning of rational and moral existence. This has often been called derisively a “stop-gap” theory. It is really a child of embarrassment, which calls God in at periodic intervals to help nature over the chasms that yawn at her feet. It is neither the Biblical doctrine of creation, nor a consistent theory of evolution, for evolution is defined as “a series of gradual progressive changes *effected by means of resident forces*” (Le Conte). In fact, theistic evolution is a contradiction in terms. It is just as destructive of faith in the Biblical doctrine of creation as naturalistic evolution is; and by calling in the creative activity of God time and again it also nullifies the evolutionary hypothesis. Besides these two views we may also mention Bergson’s Creative evolution, and C. Lloyd Morgan’s Emergent evolution. The former is a vitalistic pantheist, whose theory involves the denial of the personality of God; and the latter in the end comes to the conclusion that he cannot explain his so-called emergents without positing some ultimate factor which might be called “God.”

IV. Creation of the Spiritual World

God created angels as spiritual servants who carry out His will; some remained faithful while others fell into rebellion.

A. The Doctrine of the Angels in History.

GLOSS Angelology: the doctrine of angels: created spiritual beings who serve God and minister according to His command.

There are clear evidences of belief in the existence of angels from the very beginning of the Christian era. Some of them were regarded as good, and others as evil. The former were held in high esteem as personal beings of a lofty order, endowed with moral freedom, engaged in the joyful service of God, and employed by God to minister to the welfare of men. According to some of the early Church Fathers they had fine ethereal bodies. The general conviction was that all angels were created good, but that some abused their freedom and fell away from God. Satan, who was originally an angel of eminent rank, was regarded as their head. The cause of his fall was found in pride and sinful ambition, while the fall of his subordinates was ascribed to their lusting after the daughters of men. This view was based on what was then the common interpretation of Gen. 6:2. Alongside of the general idea that the good angels ministered to the needs and welfare of believers, the specific notion of guardian angels for individual churches and individual men was cherished by some. Calamities of various kinds, such as sicknesses, accidents, and losses, were frequently ascribed to the baneful influence of evil spirits. The idea of a hierarchy of angels

already made its appearance (Clement of Alexandria), but it was not considered proper to worship any of the angels.

As time went on the angels continued to be regarded as blessed spirits, superior to men in knowledge, and free from the encumbrance of gross material bodies. While some still ascribed to them fine ethereal bodies, there was an ever increasing uncertainty as to whether they had any bodies at all. They who still clung to the idea that they were corporeal did this, so it seems, in the interest of the truth that they were subject to spatial limitations. Dionysius the Areopagite divided the angels into three classes: the first class consisting of Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim; the second, of Might, Dominions, and Powers; and the third, of Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. The first class is represented as enjoying the closest communion with God; the second, as being enlightened by the first; and the third, as being enlightened by the second. This classification was adopted by several later writers. Augustine stressed the fact that the good angels were rewarded for their obedience by the gift of perseverance, which carried with it the assurance that they would never fall. Pride was still regarded as the cause of Satan's fall, but the idea that the rest of the angels fell as the result of their lusting after the daughters of men, though still held by some, was gradually disappearing under the influence of a better exegesis of Gen. 6:2. A beneficent influence was ascribed to the unfallen angels, while the fallen angels were regarded as corrupting the hearts of men, as stimulating to heresy, and as engendering diseases and calamities. The polytheistic tendencies of many of the converts to Christianity fostered an inclination to worship the angels. Such worship was formally condemned by a council which convened at Laodicea in the fourth century.

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

intuitive, but the latter asserted that it may also be discursive. The idea of guardian angels found considerable favour during the Middle Ages.

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

Up to the present time Roman Catholics generally regarded the angels as pure spirits, while some Protestants, such as Emmons, Ebrard, Kurtz, Delitzsch, and others, still ascribe to them some special kind of bodies. But even the great majority of the latter take the opposite view. Swedenborg holds that all angels were originally men and exist in bodily form. Their position in the angelic world depends on their life in this world. Eighteenth century Rationalism boldly denied the existence of angels and explained what the Bible teaches about them as a species of accommodation. Some modern liberal theologians consider it worthwhile to retain the fundamental idea expressed in the doctrine of the angels. They find in it a symbolic representation of the protecting care and helpfulness of God.

B. The Existence of the Angels.

GLOSS Ministering spirits: the biblical description of angels as spiritual servants sent by God to fulfil His purposes for His people.

All religions recognise the existence of a spiritual world. Their mythologies speak of gods, half-gods, spirits, demons, genii, heroes, and so on. It was especially among the Persians that the doctrine of the angels was developed, and many critical scholars assert that the Jews derived

their angelology from the Persians. But this is an unproved and, to say the least, very doubtful theory. It certainly cannot be harmonized with the Word of God, in which angels appear from the very beginning. Moreover, some great scholars, who made special study of the subject, came to the conclusion that the Persian angelology was derived from that current among the Hebrews. The Christian Church has always believed in the existence of angels, but in modern liberal theology this belief has been discarded, though it still regards the angel-idea as useful, since it imprints upon us "the living power of God in the history of redemption, His *providentia specialissima* for His people, especially for the 'little ones.'" [Foster, *Christianity and Its Modern Expression*, p. 114.] Though such men as Leibnitz and Wolff, Kant and Schleiermacher, admitted the possibility of the existence of an angelic world, and some of them even tried to prove this by rational argumentation, it is quite evident that philosophy can neither prove nor disprove the existence of angels. From philosophy, therefore, we turn to Scripture, which makes no deliberate attempt to prove the existence of angels, but assumes this throughout, and in its historical books repeatedly shows us the angels in action. No one who bows before the authority of the Word of God can doubt the existence of angels.

C. The Nature of the Angels.

GLOSS Spiritual beings: personal, non-corporeal creatures endowed with intelligence and will, yet always finite and wholly dependent on God.

Under this heading several points call for consideration.

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

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

3. THEY ARE RATIONAL, MORAL, AND IMMORTAL BEINGS. This means that they are personal beings endowed with intelligence and will. The fact that they are intelligent beings would seem to follow at once from the fact that they are spirits; but it is also taught explicitly in Scripture, II Sam. 14:20; Matt. 24:36; Eph. 3:10; I Pet. 1:12; II Pet. 2:11. While not omniscient, they are superior to men in knowledge, Matt. 24:36. Moreover, they are possessed of moral natures, and as such are under moral obligation; they are rewarded for obedience, and are punished for disobedience. The Bible speaks of the angels which remained loyal as "holy angels," Matt. 25:31; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; Acts 10:22; Rev. 14:10, and pictures those who fell away as lying and sinning, John 8:44; I John 3:8-10. The good angels are also immortal in the sense that they are not subject to death. In that respect the saints in heaven are said to be like them, Luke 20:35,36. In addition to all this, great power is ascribed to them. They form the army of God, a host of mighty heroes, always ready to do the Lord's bidding, Ps. 103:20; Col. 1:16; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; Heb. 1:14; and the evil angels form the army of Satan, bent on destroying the work of the Lord, Luke 11:21; II Thess. 2:9; I Pet. 5:8.

4. THEY ARE PARTLY GOOD AND PARTLY EVIL. The Bible furnishes very little information respecting the original state of the angels. We read, however, that at the end of His creative work God saw everything that He had made and, behold, it was very good. Moreover, John 8:44; II Pet.

2:4; and Jude 6 presupposes an original good condition of all angels. The good angels are called elect angels in I Tim. 5:21. They evidently received, in addition to the grace with which all angels were endowed, and which was sufficient to enable them to retain their position, a special grace of perseverance, by which they were confirmed in their position. There has been a great deal of useless speculation about the time and character of the fall of the angels. Protestant theology, however, was generally satisfied with the knowledge that the good angels retained their original state, were confirmed in their position, and are now incapable of sinning. They are not only called holy angels, but also angels of light, II Cor. 11:14. They always behold the face of God, Matt. 18:10, are our exemplars in doing the will of God, Matt. 6:10, and possess immortal life, Luke 20:36.

D. The Number and Organization of the Angels.

GLOSS **Fallen angels:** angels who rebelled against God and are now opposed to His kingdom, though they remain under His sovereign authority.

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

2. THEIR ORDERS. Though the angels do not constitute an organism, they are evidently organised in some way. This follows from the fact that, alongside of the general name "angel," the Bible uses certain specific names to indicate different classes of angels. The name "angel," by which we designate the higher spirits generally, is not a *nomen naturae* in Scripture, but a *nomen officii*. The Hebrew word mal'ak simply means messenger, and serves to designate one sent by

men, Job 1:14; I Sam. 11:3, or by God, Hag. 1:13; Mal. 2:7; 3:1. The Greek term *aggelos* is also frequently applied to men, Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24; 9:51; Gal. 4:14. There is no general distinctive name for all spiritual beings in Scripture. They are called sons of God, Job 1:6; 2:1; Ps. 29:1; 89:6, spirits, Heb. 1:14, saints, Ps. 89:5,7; Zech. 14:5; Dan. 8:13, watchers, Dan. 4:13,17,24. There are several specific names, however, which point to different classes of angels.

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

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

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

d. *Gabriel and Michael*. In distinction from all the other angels, these two are mentioned by name. Gabriel appears in Dan. 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19,26. The great majority of commentators regard him as a created angel, but some of these deny that the name Gabriel is a proper name and look upon it as common noun, meaning man of God, a synonym for angel. But this is an untenable position.[Cf. especially Kuyper, *De Engelen Gods*, p. 175.] Some earlier and later commentators see in him an uncreated being, some even suggesting that he might be the third person of the Holy Trinity, while Michael was the second. But a simple reading of the passages in question shows the impossibility of this interpretation. He may be one of the seven angels that are said to stand before God in Rev. 8:2 (comp. Luke 1:19). It seems to have been his special task to mediate and interpret divine revelations.

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

E. The Service of the Angels.

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

1. THEIR ORDINARY SERVICE. This consists first of all in their praising God day and night, Job 38:7; Isa. 6; Ps. 103:20; 148:2; Rev. 5:11. Scripture gives the impression that they do this audibly, as at the birth of Christ, though we can form no conception of this speaking and singing of the angels. Since the entrance of sin into the world they are sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation, Heb. 1:14. They rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, Luke 15:10, watch over believers, Ps. 34:7; 91:11, protect the little ones, Matt. 18:10, are present in the Church, I Cor. 11:10; I Tim. 5:21, learning from her the manifold riches of the grace of God, Eph. 3:10; I Pet. 1:12, and convey believers into the bosom of Abraham, Luke 16:22. The idea that some of them serve as guardians of individual believers finds no support in Scripture. The statement in Matt. 18:10 is too general to prove the point, though it seems to indicate that there is a group of angels who are particularly charged with the care of the little ones. Neither is it proved by Acts 12:15, for this passage merely goes to show that there were some even among the disciples of that early day who believed in guardian angels.

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

F. The Evil Angels.

1. THEIR ORIGIN. Besides the good there also are evil angels, who delight in opposing God and antagonizing His work. Though they are also creatures of God, they were not created as evil angels. God saw everything that He had created, and it was very good, Gen. 1:31. There are two

passages in Scripture which clearly imply that some of the angels did not retain their original position, but fell from the state in which they were created, II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6. The special sin of these angels is not revealed, but has generally been thought to consist in this that they exalted themselves over against God, and aspired to supreme authority. If this ambition played an important part in the life of Satan and led to his downfall, it would at once explain why he tempted man on this particular point, and sought to lure him to his destruction by appealing to a possible similar ambition in man. Some of the early Church Fathers distinguished between Satan and the subordinate devils in explaining the cause of their fall. That of the fall of Satan was found in pride, but that of the more general fall in the angelic world, in fleshly lust, Gen. 6:2. That interpretation of Gen. 6:2 was gradually discarded, however, during the Middle Ages. In view of this it is rather surprising to find that several modern commentators are reiterating the idea in their interpretation of II Pet. 2:4 and Jude 6 as, for instance, Meyer, Alford, Mayor, Wohlenberg. It is an explanation, however, that is contrary to the spiritual nature of the angels, and to the fact that, as Matt. 22:30 would seem to imply, there is no sexual life among the angels. Moreover, on that interpretation we shall have to assume a double fall in the angelic world, first the fall of Satan, and then, considerably later, the fall resulting in the host of devils that now serves Satan. It is much more likely that Satan dragged the others right along with him in his fall.

2. THEIR HEAD. Satan appears in Scripture as the recognised head of the fallen angels. He was originally, it would seem, one of the mightiest princes of the angelic world, and became the leader of those that revolted and fell away from God. The name "Satan" points to him as "the Adversary," not in the first place of man, but of God. He attacks Adam as the crown of God's handiwork, works destruction and is therefore called Apollyon (the Destroyer), and assaults Jesus when He undertakes the work of restoration. After the entrance of sin into the world he became Diabolos (the Accuser), accusing the people of God continually, Rev. 12:10. He is represented in Scripture as the originator of sin, Gen. 3:1,4; John 8:44; II Cor. 11:3; I John 3:8; Rev. 12:9; 20:2,10, and appears as the recognised head of those that fell away, Matt. 25:41; 9:34; Eph. 2:2. He remains the leader of the angelic hosts which he carried with him in his fall, and employs them in desperate resistance to Christ and His Kingdom. He is also called repeatedly "the prince of this (not, "of the") world, John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11, and even "the god of this world," II Cor. 4:4. This does not mean that he is in control of the world, for God is in control, and He has given all authority to Christ, but it does convey the idea that he is in control of this evil world, the world in so far as it is ethically separated from God. This is clearly indicated in Eph. 2:2, where he is called "the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience." He is superhuman, but not divine; has great power, but is not omnipotent; wields influence on a large but restricted scale, Matt. 12:29; Rev. 20:2, and is destined to be cast into the bottomless pit, Rev. 20:10.

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

V. Creation of the Material World

The biblical creation account presents God as the wise Maker of the visible world, ordering all things according to His purpose.

A. The Scriptural Account of Creation.

GLOSS Creation ordinance: the ordered pattern God established for creaturely life, including work, rest, fruitfulness, and human stewardship.

Other nations, as well as the Hebrews, had their accounts respecting the origin of the material universe, and of the way in which the original chaos was changed into a cosmos or habitable world. Some of those accounts reveal traces of similarity with the Biblical record, but contain even more striking dissimilarities. They are as a rule characterized by dualistic or polytheistic elements, represent the present world as the result of a fierce struggle among the gods, and are far removed from the simplicity and sobriety of the Biblical account. It may be advisable to preface our discussion of its details with a few general remarks.

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

understanding of the rest of Scripture as a revelation of redemption. While it does not pretend to give us a complete philosophical cosmogony, it does contain important elements for the construction of a proper cosmogony.

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

3. THE INTERPRETATION OF GEN. 1:1,2. Some regard Gen. 1:1 as the superscription or title of the whole narrative of creation. But this is objectionable for three reasons: (a) because the

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

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

GLOSS Hexaemeron: the six-day work of creation described in Genesis 1, culminating in God’s rest and the sanctification of the seventh day.

After the creation of the universe out of nothing in a moment of time, the existing chaos was gradually changed into a cosmos, a habitable world, in six successive days. Before the work of the separate days is indicated, the question as to the length of the days of creation calls for a brief discussion.

1. CONSIDERATION OF THE THEORY THAT THEY WERE LONG PERIODS OF TIME. Some scholars assume that the days of Gen. 1 were long periods of time, in order to make them harmonize with the geological periods. The opinion that these days were not ordinary days of twenty-four hours was not entirely foreign to early Christian theology, as E. C. Messenger shows in detail in his learned work on *Evolution and Theology*. But some of the Church Fathers, who intimated that these days were probably not to be regarded as ordinary days, expressed the opinion that the whole work of creation was finished in a moment of time, and that the days merely constituted a symbolical frame-work, which facilitated the description of the work of creation in an orderly fashion, so as to make it more intelligible to finite minds. The opinion that the days of creation were long periods came to the foreground again in recent years, not, however, as the result of exegetical studies, but under the influence of the disclosures of science. Previous to the nineteenth century the days of Genesis were most generally regarded as literal

days. But, of course, human interpretation is fallible, and may have to be revised in the light of later discoveries. If traditional exegesis conflicts, not merely with scientific theories – which are themselves interpretations –, but with well established facts, re-thinking and reinterpretation is naturally in order. It can hardly be maintained, however, that the assumed geological periods necessitate a change of front, since they are by no means generally recognised, even in scientific circles, as well established facts. Some Christian scholars, such as Harris, Miley, Bettex, and Geesink, assume that the days of Genesis are geological days, and both Shedd and Hodge call attention to the remarkable agreement between the record of creation and the testimony of the rocks, and are inclined to regard the days of Genesis as geological periods.

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

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

2. CONSIDERATION OF THE VIEW THAT THEY WERE LITERAL DAYS. The prevailing view has always been that the days of Genesis 1 are to be understood as literal days. Some of the early Church Fathers did not regard them as real indications of the time in which the work of creation was completed, but rather as literary forms in which the writer of Genesis cast the narrative of creation, in order to picture the work of creation – which was really completed in a moment of time – in an orderly fashion for human intelligence. It was only after the comparatively new sciences of geology and palæontology came forward with their theories of the enormous age of the earth, that theologians began to show an inclination to identify the days of creation with the long geological ages. To-day some of them regard it as an established fact that the days of Genesis 1 were long geological periods; others are somewhat inclined to assume this position, but show considerable hesitation. Hodge, Sheldon, Van Oosterzee, and Dabney, some of whom are not entirely averse to this view, are all agreed that this interpretation of the days is *exegetically* doubtful, if not impossible. Kuyper and Bavinck hold that, while the first three days may have been of somewhat different length, the last three were certainly ordinary days. They naturally do not regard even the first three days as geological periods. Vos in his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* defends the position that the days of creation were ordinary days. Hepp takes the same position in his *Calvinism and the Philosophy of Nature*. [p. 215.] Noortzij in *Gods Woord en der Eeuwen Getuigenis*, [pp. 79f.] asserts that the Hebrew word *yom* (day) in Gen. 1 cannot possibly designate anything else than an ordinary day, but holds that the writer of Genesis did not attach any importance to the concept “day,” but introduces it simply as part of a frame-work for the narrative of creation, not to indicate historical sequence, but to picture the glory of the creatures in the light of the great redemptive purpose of God. Hence the sabbath is the great culminating point, in which man reaches his real destiny. This view reminds us rather strongly of the position of some of the early Church Fathers. The arguments adduced for it are not very convincing, as Aalders has shown in his *De Eerste Drie Hoofdstukken van Genesis*. [pp. 232-240.] This Old Testament scholar holds, on the basis of Gen. 1:5, that the term *yom* in Gen. 1 denotes simply the period of light, as distinguished from that of darkness; but this view would seem to involve a rather unnatural interpretation of the repeated expression “and there was evening and there was morning.” It must then be interpreted to mean, and there was evening preceded by a morning. According to Dr. Aalders, too, Scripture certainly favors the idea that the days of creation were ordinary days, though it may not be possible to determine their exact length, and the first three days may have differed somewhat from the last three.

The literal interpretation of the term “day” in Gen. 1 is favoured by the following considerations: (a) In its primary meaning the word *yom* denotes a natural day; and it is a good rule in exegesis, not to depart from the primary meaning of a word, unless this is required by the context. Dr. Noortzij stresses the fact that this word simply does not mean anything else than “day,” such as this is known by man on earth. (b) The author of Genesis would seem to shut us up absolutely to the literal interpretation by adding in the case of every day the words, “and there was evening and there was morning.” Each one of the days mentioned has just one evening and morning, something that would hardly apply to a period of thousands of years. And if it should be said that the periods of creation were extraordinary days, each one consisting of one long day and one long night, then the question naturally arises, What would become of all vegetation during the long, long night? (c) In Ex. 20:9-11 Israel is commanded to labour six days and to rest on the seventh, because Jehovah made heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh day. Sound exegesis would seem to require that the word “day” be taken in the same sense in both instances. Moreover the sabbath set aside for rest certainly was a literal day; and the presumption is that the other days were of the same kind. (d) The last three days were certainly ordinary days, for they were determined by the sun in the usual way. While we cannot be absolutely sure that the preceding days did not differ from them at all in length, it is extremely unlikely that they differed from them, as periods of thousands upon thousands of years differ from ordinary days. The question may also be asked, why such a long period should be required, for instance, for the separation of light and darkness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

f. *The sixth day.* This day brings the climax of the work of creation. In connection with the creation of the animals the expression is once more used, "Let the earth bring forth," and this should again be interpreted as was indicated under (c). The animals did not naturally develop out of the earth, but were brought forth by the creative fiat of God. We are told distinctly in the 25th verse that God *made* the beasts of the earth, the cattle and the creeping things of the earth, after their kind. But even if the expression did refer to natural development, it would not be in harmony with the doctrine of evolution, since that does not teach that the animals developed directly out of the mineral world. The creation of man is distinguished by the solemn counsel that precedes it: "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness"; and this is no wonder, since all that preceded was but a preparation for the coming of man, the crowning work of God, the king of creation; and because man was destined to be the image of God. The words *tselem* and *demuth* do not denote exactly the same thing, but are nevertheless used inter-changeably. When it is said that man is created in the image of God, this means that God is the archetype of which man is the ectype; and when it is added that he is created according to the likeness of God, this merely adds the idea that the image is in every way like the original. In his entire being man is the very image of God.

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

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

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

4. NO SECOND ACCOUNT OF CREATION IN GENESIS 2. It is quite common for advanced higher criticism to assume that Gen. 2 contains a second and independent account of creation. The first account is regarded as the work of the Elohist, and the second as that of the Jehovist. The two, it is said, do not agree, but conflict on several points. According to the second account, as

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

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

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

b. *The mythical theory of modern philosophy.* Modern philosophy has advanced beyond the preceding position. It rejects not only the historical narrative of creation, but also the idea of creation, and regards the contents of Genesis 1 as a myth embodying a religious lesson. There is no intentional allegory here, it is said, but only a naive mythical representation with a religious core or nucleus. This is also contrary to the fact that Gen. 1 certainly comes to us with the pretension of being a historical narrative, and in the cross references, referred to above, it certainly is not regarded as a myth.

c. *The restitution theory.* Some theologians attempted to reconcile the narrative of creation with the discoveries of science in the study of the earth by adopting the restitution theory. It was advocated by Chalmers, Buckland, Wisemann, and Delitzsch, and assumes that a long period of time elapsed between the primary creation mentioned in Gen. 1:1 and the secondary creation described in Gen. 1:3-31. This long period was marked by several catastrophic changes, resulting in the destruction supposedly described in the words "waste and void." The second verse should then read, "And the earth became waste and void." This destruction was followed by a restitution, when God changed the chaos into a cosmos, a habitable world for man. This theory might offer

some explanation of the different strata of the earth, but it offers no explanation of the fossils in the rocks, unless it is assumed that there were also successive creations of animals, followed by mass destructions. This theory never found favour in scientific circles, and finds no support in Scripture. The Bible does not say that the earth *became*, but that it *was* waste and void. And even if the Hebrew verb *hayetha* can be rendered "became," the words "waste and void" denote an unformed condition, and not a condition resulting from destruction. Delitzsch combined with this theory the idea that the earth was originally inhabited by the angels, and that the fall in the angelic world was the cause of the destruction which resulted in the chaos referred to in verse 2. For some reason or other this view finds considerable favour among present day dispensationalists, who find support for it in such passages as Isa. 24:1; Jer. 4:23-26; Job. 9:4-7; II Pet. 2:4. But even a careful reading of these passages is sufficient to convince one that they do not prove the point in question at all. Moreover, the Bible clearly teaches us that God created heaven and earth "and all the host of them" in six days, Gen. 2:1; Ex. 20:11.

d. *The concordistic theory.* This seeks to harmonize Scripture and science by assuming that the days of creation were periods of thousands of years. In addition to what was said about this in discussing the days of creation, we may now add that the idea that the earth's strata positively point to long and successive periods of development in the history of its origin, is simply a theory of the geologists, and a theory based on unwarranted generalizations. We would call attention to the following considerations: (1) The science of geology is not only young, but it is still in bondage to speculative thought. It cannot be considered as an inductive science, since it is largely the fruit of a *priori* or deductive reasoning. Spencer called it "Illogical Geology" and ridiculed its methods, and Huxley spoke of its grand hypotheses as "not proven and not provable." [Price, *The Fundamentals of Geology*, pp. 29, 32.] (2) Up to the present time it has done little more than scratch the surface of the earth, and that in a very limited number of places. As a result its conclusions are often mere generalizations, based on insufficient data. Facts observed in some places are contradicted by those found in others. (3) Even if it had explored large areas in all parts of the globe, it could only increase our knowledge of the present condition of the earth, but would never be able to give us perfectly reliable information respecting its past history. You cannot write the history of a nation on the basis of the facts observed in its present constitution and life. (4) Geologists once proceeded on the assumption that the strata of rocks were found in the same order all over the globe; and that by estimating the length of time required by the formation of each it could determine the age of the earth. But (a) it was found that the order of the rocks differs in various localities; (b) the experiments made to determine the time required for the formation of the different strata, led to widely different results; and (c) the uniformitarian theory of Lyell, that the physical and chemical action of today are safe guides in estimating those of all previous times, was found to be unreliable. [Cf. More, *The Dogma of Evolution*, p. 148.] (5) When the attempt to determine the age of the various strata or rocks by their mineral and mechanical

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

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

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

b. *The theory of naturalistic evolution is not in harmony with the narrative of creation.* If evolution does not account for the origin of the world, does it not at least give a rational account of the development of things out of primordial matter, and thus explain the origin of the present species of plants and animals (including man), and also the various phenomena of life, such as sentiency, intelligence, morality, and religion? Does it necessarily conflict with the narrative of creation? Now it is perfectly evident that naturalistic evolution certainly does conflict with the Biblical account. The Bible teaches that plants and animals and man appeared on the scene at the creative fiat of the Almighty; but according to the evolutionary hypothesis they evolved out of the inorganic world by a process of natural development. The Bible represents God as creating plants and animals after their kind, and yielding seed after their kind, that is, so that they would reproduce their own kind; but the theory of evolution points to natural forces, resident in nature, leading to the development of one species out of another. According to the narrative of creation, the vegetable and animal kingdoms and man were brought forth in a single week; but the hypothesis of evolution regards them as the product of a gradual development in the course of

millions of years. Scripture pictures man as standing on the highest plane at the beginning of his career, and then descending to lower levels by the deteriorating influence of sin; the theory of evolution, on the other hand, represents original man as only slightly different from the brute, and claims that the human race has risen, through its own inherent powers, to ever higher levels of existence.

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

The hypothesis of evolution fails at several points. It cannot explain the origin of life. Evolutionists sought its explanation in spontaneous generation, an unproved assumption, which is now discredited. It is a well established fact in science that life can only come from antecedent

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

d. *Theistic evolution is not tenable in the light of Scripture.* Some Christian scientists and theologians seek to harmonize the doctrine of creation, as taught by Scripture, and the theory of evolution by accepting what they call theistic evolution. It is a protest against the attempt to eliminate God, and postulates Him as the almighty worker back of the whole process of development. Evolution is regarded simply as God's method of working in the development of nature. Theistic evolution really amounts to this, that God created the world (the cosmos) by a process of evolution, a process of natural development, in which He does not miraculously intervene, except in cases where this is absolutely necessary. It is willing to admit that the absolute beginning of the world could only result from a direct creative activity of God; and, if it can find no natural explanation, will also grant a direct intervention of God in the origination of life and of man. It has been hailed as Christian evolution, though there is not necessarily anything Christian about it. Many, otherwise opposed to the theory of evolution, have welcomed it, because it recognises God in the process and is supposed to be compatible with the Scriptural doctrine of creation. Hence it is freely taught in churches and Sunday Schools. As a matter of fact, however, it is a very dangerous hybrid. The name is a contradiction in terms, for it is neither theism nor naturalism, neither creation nor evolution in the accepted sense of the terms. And it does not require a great deal of penetration to see that Dr. Fairhurst is right in his conviction "that theistic evolution destroys the Bible as the inspired book of authority as effectively as does atheistic evolution." [*Theistic Evolution*, p. 7.] Like naturalistic evolution it teaches that it required millions of years to produce the present habitable world; and that God did not create the various species of plants and animals, and that, so that they produced their own kind; that man, at least on his physical side, is a descendant of the brute and therefore began his career on a low level; that there has been no fall in the Biblical sense of the word, but only repeated lapses of men in their upward course; that sin is only a weakness, resulting from man's animal instincts and desires, and does not constitute guilt; that redemption is brought about by the ever-increasing control of the

higher element in man over his lower propensities; that miracles do not occur, either in the natural or in the spiritual world; that regeneration, conversion, and sanctification are simply natural psychological changes, and so on. In a word, it is a theory that is absolutely subversive of Scripture truth.

Some Christian scholars of the present day feel that Bergson's theory of *Creative Evolution* commends itself to those who do not want to leave God out of consideration. This French philosopher assumes an *élan vital*, a vital impulse in the world, as the ground and animating principle of all life. This vital principle does not spring from matter, but is rather the originating cause of matter. It pervades matter, overcomes its inertia and resistance by acting as a living force on that which is essentially dying, and ever creates, not new material, but new movements adapted to ends of its own, and thus creates very much as the artist creates. It is directive and purposive and yet, though conscious, does not work according to a preconceived plan, however that may be possible. It determines evolution itself as well as the direction in which evolution moves. This ever creating life, "of which every individual and every species is an experiment," is Bergson's God, a God who is finite, who is limited in power, and who is seemingly impersonal, though Hermann says that "we shall, perhaps, not go far wrong in believing that he will be 'the ideal tendency of things' made personal." [*Eucken and Bergson*, p. 163.] Haas speaks of Bergson as a vitalistic pantheist rather than a theist. At any rate, his God is a God that is wholly within the world. This view may have a special appeal for the modern liberal theologian, but is even less in harmony with the narrative of creation than theistic evolution.

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

VI. Providence

Providence is God's continuing preservation, cooperation, and government of all creatures and events.

Christian theism is opposed to both a deistic separation of God from the world and a pantheistic confusion of God with the world. Hence the doctrine of creation is immediately followed by that of providence, in which the Scriptural view of God's relation to the world is clearly defined. While the term "providence" is not found in Scripture, the doctrine of providence

is nevertheless eminently Scriptural. The word is derived from the Latin *providentia*, which corresponds to the Greek *pronoia*. These words mean primarily prescience or foresight, but gradually acquired other meanings. Foresight is associated, on the one hand, with plans for the future, and on the other hand, with the actual realization of these plans. Thus the word “providence” has come to signify the provision which God makes for the ends of His government, and the preservation and government of all His creatures. This is the sense in which it is now generally used in theology, but it is not the only sense in which theologians have employed it. Turretin defines the term in its widest sense as denoting (1) foreknowledge, (2) foreordination, and (3) the efficacious administration of the things decreed. In general usage, however, it is now generally restricted to the last sense.

A. Providence in General.

GLOSS Providence: God’s wise, holy, and powerful preservation and government of all His creatures and all their actions.

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

follows in the main that of Augustine, and holds that the will of God, as determined by His perfections, preserves and governs all things; while Duns Scotus and such Nominalists as Biel and Occam made everything dependent on the arbitrary will of God. This was a virtual introduction of the rule of chance.

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

2. THE IDEA OF PROVIDENCE. Providence may be defined as *that continued exercise of the divine energy whereby the Creator preserves all His creatures, is operative in all that comes to pass in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end.* This definition indicates that there are three elements in providence, namely, preservation (*conservatio, sustentatio*), concurrence or cooperation (*concursus, co-operatio*), and government (*gubernatio*) Calvin, the Heidelberg Catechism, and some of the more recent dogmatists (Dabney, the Hodges, Dick, Shedd, McPherson) speak of only two elements, namely, preservation and government. This does not mean, however, that they want to exclude the element of concurrence but only that they regard it as included in the other two as indicating the manner in which God preserves and governs the world. McPherson seems to think that only some of the great Lutheran theologians adopted the threefold division; but in this he is mistaken, for it is very common in the works of Dutch dogmatists from the seventeenth century on (Mastricht, à Marck, De Moor, Brakel, Francken, Kuyper, Bavinck, Vos, Honig). They departed from the older division, because they wanted to give the element of concurrence greater prominence, in order to guard against the dangers of both Deism and Pantheism. But while we distinguish three elements in providence, we should remember that these three are never separated in the work of God. While preservation has reference to the *being*, concurrence to the *activity*, and government to the *guidance* of all things, this should never be understood in an exclusive sense. In preservation there is also an element of government, in government an element of concursus, and in concursus an element of

preservation. Pantheism does not distinguish between creation and providence, but theism stresses a twofold distinction: (a) Creation is the calling into existence of that which did not exist before, while providence continues or causes to continue what has already been called into existence. (b) In the former there can be no cooperation of the creature with the Creator, but in the latter there is a concurrence of the first Cause with second causes. In Scripture the two are always kept distinct.

3. MISCONCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE NATURE OF PROVIDENCE.

a. *Limiting it to prescience or prescience plus foreordination.* This limitation is found in some of the early Church Fathers. The fact is, however, that when we speak of the providence of God, we generally have in mind neither His prescience nor His foreordination, but simply His continued activity in the world for the realization of His plan. We realise that this cannot be separated from His eternal decree, but also feel that the two can and should be distinguished. The two have often been distinguished as immanent and transeunt providence.

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

c. *The pantheistic view of divine providence.* Pantheism does not recognise the distinction between God and the world. It either idealistically absorbs the world in God, or materialistically absorbs God in the world. In either case it leaves no room for creation and also eliminates providence in the proper sense of the word. It is true that Pantheists speak of providence, but their so-called providence is simply identical with the course of nature, and this is nothing but the self-revelation of God, a self-revelation that leaves no room for the independent operation of second causes in any sense of the word. From this point of view the supernatural is impossible, or, rather, the natural and the supernatural are identical, the consciousness of free personal self-determination in man is a delusion, moral responsibility is a figment of the imagination, and prayer and religious worship are superstition. Theology has always been quite careful to ward off

the dangers of Pantheism, but during the last century this error succeeded in entrenching itself in a great deal of modern liberal theology under the guise of the doctrine of the immanence of God.[Cf. Randall, *The Making of the Modern Mind*, p. 538.]

4. THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

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

b. *General and special providence.* Theologians generally distinguish between general and special providence, the former denoting God's control of the universe as a whole, and the latter, His care for each part of it in relation to the whole. These are not two kinds of providence, but the same providence exercised in two different relations. The term "special providence," however, may have a more specific connotation, and in some cases refers to God's special care for His rational creatures. Some even speak of a very special providence (*providentia specialissima*) with reference to those who stand in the special relationship of sonship to God. Special providences are special combinations in the order of events, as in the answer to prayer, in deliverance out of trouble, and in all instances in which grace and help come in critical circumstances.

c. *The denial of special providence.* There are those who are willing to admit a general providence, an administration of the world under a fixed system of general laws, but deny that there is also a special providence in which God concerns Himself with the details of history, the affairs of human life, and particularly the experiences of the righteous. Some hold that God is too great to concern Himself with the smaller things of life, while others maintain that He simply cannot do it, since the laws of nature bind His hands, and therefore smile significantly when they hear of God's answering man's prayers. Now it need not be denied that the relation of special providence to the uniform laws of nature constitutes a problem. At the same time it must be said that it involves a very poor, superficial, and un-Biblical view of God to say that He does not and cannot concern Himself with the details of life, cannot answer prayer, give relief in emergencies, or intervene miraculously in behalf of man. A ruler that simply laid down certain general principles and paid no attention to particulars, or a business man who failed to look after the details of his business, would soon come to grief. The Bible teaches that even the minutest details of life are of

divine ordering. In connection with the question, whether we can harmonize the operation of the general laws of nature and special providence, we can only point to the following: (1) The laws of nature should not be represented as powers of nature absolutely controlling all phenomena and operations. They are really nothing more than man's, often deficient, description of the uniformity in variety discovered in the way in which the powers of nature work. (2) The materialistic conception of the laws of nature as a close-knit system, acting independently of God and really making it impossible for Him to interfere in the course of the world, is absolutely wrong. The universe has a personal basis, and the uniformity of nature is simply the method ordained by a personal agent. (3) The so-called laws of nature produce the same effects only if all the conditions are the same. Effects are not generally the results of a single power, but of a combination of natural powers. Even a man can vary the effects by combining one power of nature with some other power or powers, while yet each one of these powers works in strict accordance with its laws. And if this is possible for man, it is infinitely more possible for God. By all kinds of combinations He can bring about the most varied results.

B. Preservation.

GLOSS Preservation: God's continuing upholding of the existence, powers, and order of the world He created.

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

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

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

being and continuance in the will of its Creator. Only He who created the world by the word of His power, can uphold it by His omnipotence.

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

3. ERRONEOUS CONCEPTIONS OF DIVINE PRESERVATION. The nature of this work of God is not always properly understood. There are two views of it which ought to be avoided: (a) *That it is purely negative.* According to Deism divine preservation consists in this, that God does not destroy the work of His hands. By virtue of creation God endowed matter with certain properties, placed it under invariable laws, and then left it to shift for itself, independently of all support or direction from without. This is an unreasonable, irreligious, and an un-Biblical representation. It is unreasonable, because it implies that God communicated self-subsistence to the creature, while self-subsistence and self-sustenance are incommunicable properties, which characterize only the Creator. The creature can never be self-sustaining, but must be upheld from day to day by the almighty power of the Creator. Hence it would not require a positive act of omnipotence on the part of God to annihilate created existences. A simple withdrawal of support would naturally result in destruction. – This view is irreligious, because it removes God so far from His creation that communion with Him becomes a practical impossibility. History plainly testifies to the fact that it uniformly spells death for religion. – It is also un-Biblical, since it puts God altogether outside of His creation, while the Bible teaches us in many passages that He is not only transcendent but also

immanent in the works of His hands. (b) *That it is a continuous creation.* Pantheism represents preservation as a continuous creation, so that the creatures or second causes are conceived as having no real or continuous existence, but as emanating in every successive moment out of that mysterious Absolute which is the hidden ground of all things. Some who were not Pantheists had a similar view of preservation. Descartes laid the basis for such a conception of it, and Malebranche pushed this to the farthest extreme consistent with theism. Even Jonathan Edwards teaches it incidentally in his work on Original Sin, and thus comes dangerously near to teaching Pantheism. Such a view of preservation leaves no room for second causes, and therefore necessarily leads to Pantheism. It is contrary to our original and necessary intuitions, which assure us that we are real, self-determining causes of action, and consequently moral agents. Moreover, it strikes at the very root of free agency, moral accountability, moral government, and therefore of religion itself. Some Reformed theologians also use the term “continuous creation,” [Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* II, p. 654; Heppe, *Dogm.*, p. 190; McPherson, *Chr. Dogm.*, p. 177.] but do not thereby mean to teach the doctrine under consideration. They simply desire to stress the fact that the world is maintained by the same power which created it. In view of the the fact that the expression is liable to misunderstanding, it is better to avoid it.

C. Concurrence.

GLOSS Concurrence: God’s active cooperation with created causes, so that creaturely actions are real while God remains sovereign over every event.

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

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

b. *Scripture proof for divine concurrence.* The Bible clearly teaches that the providence of God pertains not only to the being but also to the actions or operations of the creature. The general

truth that men do not work independently, but are controlled by the will of God, appears from several passages of Scripture. Joseph says in Gen. 45:5 that God rather than his brethren had sent him to Egypt. In Ex. 4:11,12 the Lord says that He will be with Moses' mouth and teach him what to say; and in Jos. 11:6 He gives Joshua the assurance that He will deliver the enemies to Israel. Proverbs 21:1 teaches us that "the king's heart is in the hand of Jehovah. . . . He turneth it whithersoever He will"; and Ezra 6:22, that Jehovah "had turned the heart of the king of Assyria" unto Israel. In Deut 8:18 Israel is reminded of the fact that it was Jehovah that gave it power to get wealth. More particularly, it is also evident from Scripture that there is some kind of divine co-operation in that which is evil. According to II Sam. 16:11 Jehovah bade Shimei to curse David. The Lord also calls the Assyrian "the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation," Isa. 10:5. Moreover, He provided for a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets of Ahab, I Kings 22:20-23.

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

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

b. *That it is of such a nature that man does part of the work and God a part.* The co-operation of God and man is sometimes represented as if it were something like the joint efforts of a team of horses pulling together, each one doing his part. This is a mistaken view of the distribution of the work. As a matter of fact each deed is in its entirety both a deed of God and a deed of the creature. It is a deed of God in so far as there is nothing that is independent of the divine will, and in so far as it is determined from moment to moment by the will of God. And it is a deed of man in so far as God realises it through the self-activity of the creature. There is interpenetration here, but no mutual limitation.

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

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DIVINE CONCURRENCE.

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

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

c. *It is, finally, an immediate concurrence.* In His government of the world God employs all kinds of means for the realization of His ends; but He does not so work in the divine concurrence. When He destroys the cities of the plain by fire, this is an act of divine government in which He

employs means. But at the same time it is His immediate concurrence by which He enables the fire to fall, to burn, and to destroy. So God also works in man in endowing him with power, in the determination of his actions, and in sustaining his activities all along the line.

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

This does not mean, however, that they all agree in answering the question. whether there is a direct, immediate and physical energizing of the active power of the creature, disposing and pre-determining it efficaciously to the specific act, and also enabling it to do that act. Dabney, for instance, while admitting such a physical concurrence in the lower creation, denies it with respect to free agents. The great majority, however, maintain it also in the case of free moral beings. Even Dabney agrees that God's control over all of the acts of His creatures is certain, sovereign, and efficacious; and therefore must, along with the others, face the question as to the responsibility of God for sin. He gives his conclusion in the following words: "This, then, is my picture of the providential evolution of God's purpose as to sinful acts; so to arrange and group events and objects around free agents by his manifold wisdom and power, as to place each soul, at every step, in the presence of those circumstances, which, He knows, will be a sufficient objective inducement to it to do, of its own native, free activity, just the thing called for by God's plan. Thus the act is man's alone, though its occurrence is efficaciously secured by God. And the sin is man's only. God's concern in it is holy, first, because all His personal agency in arranging to secure its occurrence was holy; and second, His ends or purposes are holy. God does not will the sin of the act, for the sake of its sinfulness; but only wills the result to which the act is a means, and that result is always worthy of His holiness." [*Syst. and Polemic Theol.*, p. 288.] The vast majority of Reformed theologians, however, maintain the concursus in question, and seek the solution of the difficulty by distinguishing between the *materia* and the *forma* of the sinful act, and by ascribing the latter exclusively to man. The divine concursus energizes man and determines him efficaciously to the specific act, but it is man who gives the act its formal quality, and who is

therefore responsible for its sinful character. Neither one of these solutions can be said to give entire satisfaction, so that the problem of God's relation to sin remains a mystery.

D. Government.

GLOSS Divine government: God's purposeful direction of all things toward the ends He has ordained, including the final good of His people and the glory of His name.

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

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

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

2. THE EXTENT OF THIS GOVERNMENT. Scripture explicitly declares this divine government to be universal, Ps. 22:28,29; 103:17-19; Dan. 4:34,35; I Tim. 6:15. It is really the execution of His eternal purpose, embracing all His works from the beginning, all that was or is or ever shall be. But while it is general, it also descends to particulars. The most insignificant things, Matt. 10:29-

31, that which is seemingly accidental, Prov. 16:33, the good deeds of men, Phil. 2:13, as well as their evil deeds, Acts 14:16, – they are all under divine control. God is King of Israel, Isa. 33:22, but He also rules among the nations, Ps. 47:9. Nothing can be withdrawn from His government.

E. Extraordinary Providences or Miracles.

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

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

There is undoubtedly a certain uniformity in nature; there are laws controlling the operation of second causes in the physical world. But let us remember that these merely represent God's *usual*

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

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

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