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## The Principles and Teachings of the Dialectical Theology

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## The Principles and Teachings of the Dialectical Theology.

(Continued.)

The formal principle of the dialectical theology is not that of the Reformation. What about its material principle? The material principle of Lutheran theology is the doctrine of justification through faith, salvation by grace. As in Scripture, so in Lutheran theology this doctrine forms the heart and center. All other doctrines converge toward it or radiate from it. They either show the sinner the need of justification through faith or recount the blessings that flow from it. Take away the doctrine of justification and all the sublimest teachings of Scripture would have no real meaning for us. We cannot know God except as He has revealed Himself to us in this doctrine. Scripture therefore makes everything of it. What do the dialecticalists make of it?

In the first place, while they make much of it, they do not place it in the center of their theology. The dialectical theology, a Reformed growth, has retained the material principle of the old Reformed theology. The doctrine of justification through faith never was the material principle of the Reformed system. The controlling idea in Calvin's theology was not the grace of God in Christ, but the sovereignty of God, as it declared itself particularly in the alleged twofold predestination. The Reformed readily, gladly, admit that. A. Schweitzer declared: "The Reformed Protestantism is the protestation against every deification of the creature and consequently lays its emphasis on the absoluteness of God and the sovereignty of His will. This is its material principle." (See C. P. Krauth, *The Conservative Reformation*, p. 123.) Abraham Kuyper, too, knows his Reformed theology and says: "Under God, it is John Calvin who has made the dogma of God's eternal election the *cor ecclesiae*, that is, 'the heart of the Church.' . . . It was his conviction that the Church had but one choice with respect to this teaching, namely, to make it the very center of our confession. . . . He placed the eternal election in the foreground." (*The Biblical Doctrine of Election*, p. 6 f.) "This doctrine of eternal and unconditional election has sometimes been called the 'heart' of the Reformed Faith," says L. Boettner, a staunch Presbyterian of our day. (*The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, p. 96.) Reformed theology is dominated by the thought of the absolute majesty of God, the sovereignty of His will. The grace of God in Christ is of secondary importance.

And the dialectical theology has not discarded or modified this principle, but has submitted to its sway. It has somewhat modified the parent system (*Neo-Calvinism*), but has retained its essential feature (*Neo-Calvinism*). E. Brunner stands squarely on Calvin's

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platform. "Melanchthon's formula '*Hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia eius cognoscere*' has a shade of meaning which not only could easily lead one astray, but has actually done so. It contains the germ of the whole anthropocentric point of view of later Lutheranism, and this simply means of religious egoism. Man occupies the center of the picture, with his need for salvation, not God and His glory, His revelation; thus God becomes the One who satisfies the needs of man. . . . This is not the view of the Bible. God reveals Himself for His own sake, in order to create His kingdom, in order to manifest His glory, in order to restore His own order, His dominion. The Bible is the book in which the glory of God is the first concern and the salvation of man comes second. . . . Not because Christ brings us *beneficia* is He the Son of God [meaning not clear], but because He reveals God to us, do we know ourselves also as sheltered and healed in Him." (*The Mediator*, p. 407 f.) Whatever else Brunner may mean, he certainly means to say that the benefits of Christ, the grace of God, do not constitute the center of the Gospel. K. Barth takes the same stand. He summons his Reformed brethren back to "the Reformed doctrine of God with its blunt accentuation of God's uniqueness, sovereignty, and liberty; stressing particularly and strongly the polemical cardinal doctrines of the eternal divine predestination and election, doctrines which are concerned not so much with the life and fate of man in itself as rather with the nature of the will and work of God with respect to man." (*Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*, p. 200.) In his *Roemerbrief* he has Isaiah proclaim "the mystery of the twofold predestination" (on Rom. 9, 24—29), and commenting on Rom. 10, 3, he writes: "Zeal for God with knowledge would have meant submission to the righteousness of God, of God Himself, of God alone, the bowing before the mystery of the divine predestination and the love of God enthroned in this mystery, since He alone is the true God. The righteousness of God is the freedom of God to be His own norm. . . . Knowledge of God would be the never-to-be-omitted, never-finished acknowledgment of this sovereignty of God."<sup>1)</sup> "We shall, then, have to set this up

1) Δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ, "the righteousness of God," is made to mean the "freedom of God to be His own norm." See also Barth's interpretation of this term in Rom. 3, 21 f.: "Now, the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested . . ., even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ." "God declares that He is that He is. He justifies Himself to Himself by this, that He is mindful of man and his world and unceasingly cares for him. God's wrath, too, is God's righteousness (1, 18). . . . God is He that He is, the Creator of the world, the Lord of all, Yea and not No. . . . Righteousness of God is the *Nevertheless!* by which He declares Himself to be our God and accounts us as His, and this *Nevertheless!* is incomprehensible, fathomless, founded only in itself, only in God, free from all 'because.' For God's will knows no 'why.' He wills because He is God. Righteousness of God is *forgiveness*, the basal

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as the second criterion of a theology of the Word of God, that its conception of God must not only include in some way the concept of *predestination*, but must place it at the center" (the first criterion being whether a particular theology "is conscious of its relativity and as a consequence practises the necessary patience with other theologies."—*Zwischen den Zeiten*, 1929, p. 346 f.) Barth has even employed this strong language in characterizing the difference between the Reformed and the Lutheran theological principles: "*Die Reformierten kommen nicht her von der spezifischen Moenchsfrage nach dem gnaedigen Gott.*" (*Das Wort Gottes*, etc., p. 207.)—It is not the specific monkish concern about the gracious God which gives the Reformed thought its distinctive nature. The fundamental teaching of dialecticalism no less than of Calvinism is that God deals with man not so much according to His grace as according to the laws of His absolute will.<sup>2)</sup>

Let us point out in passing that this discussion of the divergence in principle of Reformed and Lutheran theology is not a matter of mere theoretical interest. We are dealing with principles by which men live. The question whether God deals with us according to His grace in Christ or according to His sovereignty is asked not only by the mind, but also by the heart, and the answer shapes not only the theology of a man, but also his inner life. The Lutheran Christian, as a Lutheran, looks upon God as his dear Father, the Calvinistic Christian, as a Calvinist, quakes at the thought of God and His dread majesty. Love of God and filial fear of His majesty can come only through the Gospel. (The Reformed Christian loves his God and Father only because he, at heart, repudiates his system of theology and takes refuge in the full Gospel.) As Kattenbusch puts it: "The difference between Calvin and Luther is this: The former would have

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change of the relation between God and man, the declaration that the impiety and rebelliousness and the resulting condition of the world is with Him inconsiderable and does not hinder Him to call us His own, that we might be His own. Righteousness of God is *iustitia forensis, iustitia aliena*; the Judge who is bound to nothing but His own Law is speaking." And what is then said on "*durch seine Treue in Jesus Christus*" is most vague and indefinite. We do not intend to show here that only the Lutheran interpretation of our term ("*die Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt*," the righteousness which God imputes for Christ's sake) fits into St. Paul's thoughts, but we want to point out how well Barth's interpretation fits his material principle. The principle of the sovereignty of God dominates the Calvinistic mind and shapes the Calvinistic exegesis.

2) "Barth has at bottom become more and more simply a renewer of the Calvinistic orthodoxy" (F. Kattenbusch, *Die deutsche evangelische Theologie*, etc., p. X.) "It seems to me that Barthianism is essentially a reprobation of the soul of Calvinism. His emphasis is on God, the Wholly Other; our emphasis is on God come hither in Jesus Christ. The soul of Calvinism is God. The soul of Lutheranism is God's love in Christ." (A. Steimle, in *Luth. Church Quarterly*, 1935, p. 293.) A. E. Garvie: "With Calvinism and with Barthianism I affirm the sovereignty of God." (*The Fatherly Rule of God*, p. 253.)

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us study in Christ 'the love of the majesty,' the latter 'the majesty of love.' To Calvin, God is 'also' love, to Luther 'only.' According to the former, God 'decides' in His sovereignty to love; according to the latter He 'is' Love. Calvin can 'conceive' of God as being without love, Luther cannot." "Luther did not think of a 'mere pleasure of God's will' as the last *ratio* of God. The last '*ratio*' is with God 'love,' *God* of course Himself establishing *what love is* in its concept and operation. As far as I can see, Barth is on this point not a 'Lutheran,' but a *Calvinist*. . . . *Barth kennt, wie Calvin, noch BLOSSES 'Erschrecken' vor Gott, Luther nicht.*" (*Op. cit.*, pp. 69. 129.) And Bishop Zaenker declares: "How infinitely far is the conception of Barth removed from that of Luther, who has taught us to ask of God with all boldness and confidence, as dear children ask their dear father. . . . Where God speaks only in terms of inexorable command, the door is closed to the blissful grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost." (*Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenztg.*, Oct. 18, 1935.)<sup>3</sup>

The dialectical theology has retained the material principle of Calvinism. But, we are told, it has also taken over the material

3) In this connection the discussion of the term *Theology of Crisis* is in place. As used by the dialecticalists, this name aptly describes the leading thought of their theology. First, in what sense is the term *crisis* used? Brunner says: "The word *crisis* has two meanings: first, it signifies the climax of an illness; second, it denotes a turning-point in the progress of an enterprise or a movement. If in these lectures we use the word in its second meaning, it yet retains the distinct color of the first." (*The Theology of Crisis*, p. 1.) "The name 'Theology of Crisis' means something very similar" (to what is expressed by the name dialectical theology, *viz.*: "It is only by means of the contradiction between two ideas—God and man, grace and responsibility, holiness and love—that we can apprehend the contradictory truth that the eternal God enters time"). "What the Word of God does is to expose the contradiction of human existence, then in grace to cover it. Man is placed in the critical position of having to *decide*; and such a situation, just because it is critical, cannot be apprehended by means of any *single* theoretical idea. Theoretical truth seeks the unity of the system; the theology of faith insists on the reality of the existential decision." (*The Word and the World*, p. 7.) Passing over what is not clear to us in this passage, we understand that the crisis spoken of by the dialecticalists refers to the critical situation in which the sinner finds himself and to the necessity for a right *decision*, meaning the decision of faith. This thought is elaborated on page 55 f.: "Faith is the acknowledgment of Christ as the event through which God decides the fate of my life. In this acknowledgment of the deciding fact, faith itself is decision. At the same time the life of every one is taken out of the security which immanent, timeless general truth gives. It is brought to a crisis, to a crisis of life and death; nay, a crisis of eternal life and eternal death. Not only does an event of absolute significance take place in Jesus Christ, but the same turning-point of time which He is takes place in the life of every individual whom He calls to Himself and thereby calls also to that act of turning." Faith the great decision! In *The Mediator* Brunner calls again and again for the decision of faith. Now, in the second place, what is the nature of this crisis, this decision of faith? We find that the material principle of dialecticalism—the idea of the absolute, sovereign, hidden God—has shaped the concept of "crisis,"

of the "decision of faith." We are with the dialecticalists in insisting on the supreme necessity of faith. Faith brings the critical situation of the sinner to a happy end. Faith is indeed the great decision. He who decides to reject the saving grace of God has decided for eternal damnation. He who accepts Jesus as his Savior, he in whom the grace of God has wrought faith, the right decision, escapes death and enters into life. But on the nature of this crisis and of faith, which constitutes the turning-point, we and the dialecticalists are not at all agreed. With us, faith is the firm trust in the objective promise of the Gospel. With us, faith is the joy and comfort springing from the *grace of God in Christ*. What do the crisis theologians make of faith? Brunner describes it in *The Mediator*, p. 335, thus: "Decision ought to mean an act in which the self is left behind, a flying leap, rather than a gliding motion. The act of decision ought to mean a definite move forward, stepping over a boundary-line, the act of leaving our previous experience behind. It should be a venture, an act in which the soul really steps out into the unknown." (Italics ours.) Similarly Barth describes faith as the "*Sprung ins Leere*" (*Roemerbrief*, p. 74). Of course, the basis of faith is lacking, the sure promise in the *Gospel*; the sinner is directed to deal with the absolute God; he certainly steps "into the unknown." Again, a theology the material principle of which is God in His absolute majesty and sovereignty cannot produce the comfort of joyful faith. A writer in the *Presbyterian* has expressed the matter thus: "God remains, in Barth's writings, the 'Totally Other One,' an eternal 'Question,' a 'Possibility,' but at the same time a strictly 'Impossible Possibility,' a 'Presupposition,' a dark and concealed 'Background.' The supreme event in the Christian life is the moment of 'crisis,' or of 'decision,' when through this act of faith a divine despair descends upon the inquiring soul and lays low its human pride, reason, 'will to live.'" (See *Theological Monthly*, 9, p. 148.) There is much of this "divine despair" in the Theology of Crisis,—and there must be much of it in Christian theology,—but less of the joyful faith that follows upon contrition. A writer in the *Churchman* gets the same impression as to what the crisis theologians emphasize. "If there is vouchsafed to us the vision of the Lord exalted upon His throne, the greatest saint can only cry, 'Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.' We may close our eyes to the vision, but the Lord God Omnipotent nevertheless reigneth and judges us by confronting us at every turn. Luther expressed this in Pauline terms by saying that the Law worketh wrath. The Barthians, instead of 'the Law,' prefer to say 'God,'—it really comes to the same thing,—and our constant confrontation by His awful righteousness is what they call 'the crisis.' Life is a continuous crisis; we are evermore face to face with the Infinite, the Wholly Other, and by this very fact our every act is judged and is condemned." (See the *Pastor's Monthly*, 1931, p. 312.) This writer is mistaken in identifying the Theology of Crisis with the theology of Luther ("The Barthian theology is a deliberate and explicit return to the teachings of Martin Luther, and only as such can we understand it"); but he is not mistaken in calling attention to the emphasis (we will say, the overemphasis) which Barthianism places on the *Deus damnans*. Who preached the Law more sternly than Luther? Yet Luther knew when the voice of the Law must be silenced, must give way to the Gospel in its full sweetness. The Barthians do not know that. They do preach the Gospel, but they permit the Law to predominate in their ministry. They cannot do otherwise; for the Absolute God, the sovereignty of His will, dominates their thinking. "The Lord God Omnipotent confronts us at every turn." A writer in the periodical *Luthertum* puts it thus: "The theme of the Barthian theology is: the Word of God. But the material theme is: the permanent crisis of time and eternity. We will have to say here that this theme is *not* the material theme of the Word of God in Holy Scripture which the Church is bound to proclaim and teach. . . . The Church is held to proclaim, not that God is God, but that *God and*

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principle of Lutheran theology; it has in some way combined the two principles. "The work of this dynamic preacher [Barth] has been hailed by a great American scholar as 'in fact a revival of the theology of the Reformation, Calvinistic in its conception of God and Lutheran in its emphasis upon the experience of justification by faith.'" (*Lutheran Companion*, Sept. 14, 1935.) But what Barth is here said to have done is impossible to achieve. On the face of it, if the *dominant* idea in a system of theology is the sovereignty of God, the grace of God cannot be made the *dominant* idea. And looking more closely into the matter, these two principles are of such a nature that they cannot be fused into one. You cannot tell the stricken sinner that he should look for salvation to the grace of God in Christ and tell him at the same time that he must read his fate in the decrees of the absolute will of the sovereignty of God. The stricken sinner will hear only the second part of what you are saying. The gloom of Calvinism hides the glorious light of the Gospel of grace. You cannot operate with both principles. One excludes the other. They have no common feature. The attempt has been made to establish a close relationship between them. Here is A. Keller's attempt: "All the reformers, Luther as well as Zwingli and Calvin, are in full agreement in their belief in the sovereignty of God's grace. In this respect there is no difference between the *sola gratia* of Luther and the *solī Deo gloria* of Calvin. . . . The Lutheran Church lays stress

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*Christ arc one. . . .* The Lutheran material principle comes out of a Church which has recognized the Word of God as a message in the proper sense" (meaning not clear), "which knows that the one concern of God's Word is to *comfort*, that it is spoken only in order to console the sinner. 'Praedicare de gratia Dei, consolari et vivificare, haec propria sunt praedicationis evangelicae.' (F. C., I, V, 10." *Trigl.*, p. 802.) "The material principle of Lutheran dogmatics must show itself in the practical theology of Lutheranism by making it the instrument of the *comfort* in Christ. . . . One can understand that in the present age, where the foundations are crumbling, a Church which has been for some decades ceaselessly preaching the Judgment is making a great impression. But that does not change the fact that a Church which is dominated by such a theology is incapable of hearing and proclaiming the Word of God, the *true, pure* Word of God, bringing to the conscience the comfort in Christ. . . . The Church is poor if the Word administered by it no longer *comforts*. . . . *Ita vult innotescere Deus, ita vult se coli, ut ab ipso accipiamus beneficia, et quidem accipiamus propter ipsius misericordiam, non propter merita nostra. Haec est amplissima consolatio in omnibus afflictionibus.*" (Apol., IV (II), 60. *Trigl.*, p. 136. See *Theo. Quartalschrift*, 1935, p. 292 f.) This writer has confused notions as to the meaning of "Word of God"; but he brings out very clearly the difference between the material principle of Lutheranism and that of dialecticalism. The Gospel of grace, comforting the stricken sinner, is the chief theme of the Bible. God has given us His Word for the purpose of comfort. Even when God is preaching the Law,—which certainly is His Word,—He is preparing the way for the consolation of the Gospel. His one concern, His great command, is: "Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people." Is. 40, 1. That characterizes the Lutheran preaching. The Theology of Crisis emphasizes the Judgment. It preaches the Gospel, too, but all too sparingly. It is the "Theology of *Crisis*."

on the formula *sola fide*, while the Reformed Church emphasizes the formula *soli Deo gloria*; but these formulae represent only two aspects of the same doctrine of God's sovereign grace." (*Religion and Revolution*, p. 27 f.) And Keller then proceeds to tell, from page 38 on, of "the rebirth of the spirit of the Reformation" through "the dialectic theology of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner." That will never do. The "sovereignty of grace" does not represent the common denominator of Lutheranism and Calvinism. In the first place, "sovereignty of grace," as expressive of Calvinism, is a misnomer. The Calvinist does not mean "sovereignty of grace," but "sovereignty of God's absolute will." And, in the second place, the grace of which Calvinism certainly does speak is not the grace of which we speak. The Calvinists mean a grace granted by the absolute will of God; we, the grace of God in Christ; they, a limited grace; we, the universal grace; they, a grace brought through an immediate operation of the Spirit; we, the grace offered and conferred by the means of grace. They commingle, when speaking of *saving* grace, the grace of justification and the grace of sanctification; we instruct men to base their salvation solely and exclusively on the *iustitia imputata*, in no wise on the *iustitia inhaerens*. (Cp. CONC. THEOL. MTHLY., 1935, p. 714 f.) No, the two principles are incompatible.

The dialectical theology does not recognize the doctrine of justification by faith as the material principle of Christian theology. But why quarrel with the dialecticalists on that score since they do teach, after all, that men are justified *sola fide*? Is not all well as long as this doctrine is left intact? The trouble, however, with dialecticalism is that it does not leave this supremely important doctrine intact, does not present it in all its Scriptural relations and implications, but impairs and vitiates it in various ways.

Barth and Brunner and the others make much of the doctrine of justification by faith. They do put strong emphasis on it. Calvinism always has done so, and that has always been recognized and appreciated. We gladly note that Brunner proclaims the "*sola gratia, sola fide*" (p. 295) and declares: We must "take the word *faith* in its fullest sense, and this means faith in justification through faith alone, and thus faith in the Mediator. For this is justification: that we have no good thing in ourselves, but that whatever we have must first of all have been received, that righteousness is not our own, but the righteousness of Christ, which is made our own through the Word of Grace." (P. 608.) We note Barth's strong statement: "*Amisso articulo iustificationis amissa est simul tota doctrina Christiana.*" That is Luther's declaration, adopted by Barth and incorporated in his essay *Die Lehre von den Sakramenten*. (*Zwischen den Zeiten*, 1929, p. 430.—See Luther, St. Louis Ed., IX, 24.) Again: "The doctrine of the purely imputed righteousness must not be



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changed by one iota." (*Das Wort Gottes*, etc., p. 208.) Now, they do not change it as to the bare statement of the doctrine, but they impair its purity and integrity by giving it a false setting and even infusing alien elements into it. For one thing, while they make much of it, they will not make it the chief thing. They have removed it, as has just been shown, from its dominating position in theology, making it of secondary importance, the article of supreme importance being the sovereignty of God's absolute will. That impairs the article of justification. Dislocating the members of a living organism leaves these members in the organism, but they are no longer what they were—they no longer function properly. In the Calvinistic system the article of justification has been despoiled of some of its importance, and by so much its proper functioning is arrested. It cannot do for me what God would have it do if I say with Barth: "The laborious perquisitions of the Augsburg Confession as to whether and in what relation faith and good works do not exclude, but include each other, mean nothing here." (*Op. cit.*, p. 207.) One who can characterize the Lutheran solicitude for the absolute separation of faith and works in the matter of justification as "laborious perquisitions" has not grasped the supreme importance of this article. And he who makes the idea of the sovereignty of God the material principle of his theology denies, as a matter of course, the *supreme* importance of the article of justification. So this is the situation: the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians deny the article of justification by faith and thus keep it from functioning in the least. Calvinism, by robbing it of its full importance, keeps it from functioning to the full.

Another thing: The article of justification by faith becomes useless if it is not linked up at once and inseparably with the article of the means of grace. Scripture binds the two together. The forgiveness of sins gained by Christ is offered and conveyed to the sinner in the Gospel and the Sacraments and nowhere else. The Reformed deny this. And the consistent application of this denial of the *vis dativa* of the means of grace would cut off the sinner's appropriation of the benefits gained by Christ for him. "True, the enthusiasts confess that Christ died on the cross and saved us [and that we are justified by faith]; but they repudiate that by which we obtain Him; that is, the means, the way, the bridge, the approach to Him, they destroy. . . . They lock up the treasure which they should place before us and lead me a fool's chase; they refuse to admit me to it; they refuse to transmit it; they deny me its possession and use." (*Luther*, 3, 1692.) That certainly constitutes a serious impairment of the article of justification by faith; the blessing to be obtained by faith is—unobtainable; the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* is in reality nullified. Says Dr. Walther: "With

the Evangelical Lutheran Church most so-called Protestant churches do indeed subscribe to the statement: Man is justified before God by grace alone, through faith, for Christ's sake, without the deeds of the Laws; however, their teaching on the *means by which* man is justified by God subverts this doctrine. They teach falsely, first, concerning the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments, which are the vehicle for the bestowal of God's gifts, and, secondly, concerning the instrument by which man appropriates the gift, faith; and these errors, in their turn, are based on the false teachings concerning the redemptive work and the person of Christ and concerning the gracious will and gracious call of God." (*Referat ueber die Rechtfertigung*, p. 35. Cp. *Proceedings of Western Dist.*, 1859, p. 30.)

Now, dialecticalism has retained the orthodox Reformed teaching on this point. On the all-important matter of the means of grace as vehicles for bestowing the forgiveness of sins Brunner says nothing. He is, to be sure, not writing a treatise on the means of grace. He is writing on the Mediator and justification. But if one does not direct the sinner to the Gospel and the Sacraments, the depository of the grace in Christ, one might as well write nothing on the Mediator and on justification. Brunner does not so much as mention Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He does treat of the Gospel, and he does say: "The righteousness of Christ . . . is made our own through the Word of Grace." (See statement above.) But that does not mean that the Gospel of Grace, preached, for example, in John 3, 16 and 2 Cor. 5, 19 ff., conveys to the sinner, and bestows upon him, the forgiveness of sins, that the words: "God so loved the world," etc., as they stand and read, absolve the sinner, that the sinner need only stretch out the hand of faith and lay hold of his pardon. So the Lutheran views the Gospel. The Reformed cannot do it. He holds indeed that the Gospel speaks of the grace of God, but he denies that the Gospel *confers* this grace. And what does the dialecticalist mean by the "Word," the "Word of Grace"? We investigated that in the two preceding articles of this series. The "Word" in dialecticalism is a most indefinite, nebulous matter. What is the "Word of Grace" on which the sinner should base the assurance of his pardon? Is it John 3, 16? Brunner says: "Justification means this miracle, that Christ takes our place and we take His. Here the objective vicarious offering has become a process of exchange. . . . Indeed, justification simply means that this objective transaction becomes a 'Word' to us, the Word of God. When I know that it is God who is speaking to me in this event, that God is really speaking to *me*, I believe. Faith means knowing that this fact is God speaking to men in His Word." (P. 524.) Brunner is unable to say to the sinner: God assures you of your forgiveness in the simple words set down John 3, 16. According to Brunner something

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additional is needed. And that something is akin to the old Reformed "immediate illumination of the Spirit."

What does Barth think of the means of grace and their *vis dativa*? He declares that the Lutherans went too far "in their extolling the fulness of the gift of grace in the Sacrament." (*Das Wort Gottes*, etc., p. 207.) In his essay *Die Lehre von den Sakramenten* he rejects the "Catholic-Lutheran" (!) and the Zwinglian teaching and champions Calvin's view. Quoting Luther's statements in the catechisms that Baptism "is a gracious water of life," "it is nothing else than a divine water (*ein Gotteswasser*)," he says: "*Wir werden da nicht mitmachen.*" For the purpose and power of the Sacraments lies in this: "The immersion into the water of baptism is a sign of our dying and rising again with Christ, the eating and drinking of the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper is a sign of our preservation through Christ's sacrifice, His going to the Father." "Not indeed *signa nuda, vacua et inefficacia*," but "efficacious signs"—in the sense of Calvin's words (*Institutes*, IV, 14, § 12): "Our confidence ought not to be fixed on the Sacraments, nor ought the glory of God to be transferred to them, but passing beyond them all, *our faith and confession should rise to Him who is the Author of the Sacraments and of all things.*" (*Zwischen den Zeiten*, 1929, pp. 456. 441 f. 458.) And what does Barth make of Rom. 10, 8, that outstanding *locus classicus* for the doctrine that the Gospel is the carrier of God's grace, the righteousness gained for us by Christ? The passage reads: "The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the Word of Faith, which we preach." This is how the Lutheran Stoeckhardt reads it: "This Word tells of Christ and the righteousness, contains Christ and the righteousness, and brings both very close to man. He that receives this Word in faith thereby grasps and possesses Christ and the righteousness that avails before God." (*Roemerbrief*, p. 486.) This is how the Lutheran Pieper reads it: "As close as the Word of Faith, that is, the Gospel, is to us, so close to us is in every instance God's verdict of justification. When a Gospel word is in our mouth, for instance, the word 'God so loved the world,' etc., God's verdict of justification is thereby in our mouth, and we lay hold of justification by believing the Word. . . . How diligently we would hear, read, and study the Word of God if we always remembered that through this Word all the grace that Christ has gained is offered and given! How greatly would we cherish and love each single evangelical verse if we realized the fact that here all grace, heaven and its endless bliss, is beaming upon us! . . . Every Gospel verse contains everything that we poor sinners need." (*Christliche Dogmatik*, II, p. 614 f.) And Luther: "God has placed the forgiveness of sins in Holy Baptism, in the Lord's Supper, and in the Word. Yea, He has placed it in the mouth of every

Christian, when he comforts you, promises you the grace of God gained through the merit of Christ; you must receive and believe it with no less assurance than if Christ Himself, by His own mouth, promised and gave it to you, as He here gives it to the palsied man. Therefore the sectarian spirits and enthusiasts, Zwinglians, Oecolampadius, and their adherents, as also the Anabaptists, teach a most perilous error when they tear apart the Word and the forgiveness of sins." (13, p. 2440.) Barth sees nothing of this in our passage. What he sees is this: "*Nahe ist dir das Wort in deinem Munde und in deinem Herzen, naemlich das Wort von Gottes Treue, das wir verkuendigen.* Das bedeutet in erster Linie: *Es bedarf keiner Machenschaften, keiner Verrenkungen, keiner Kuenste, keiner positiven und keiner negativen. Es bedarf nur eines: des Blickes in die Naeh, das heisst, in die Not und Verheissung des Lebens, wie sie in jedem Wort deines Mundes, in jeder Regung deines Herzens zum Ausdruck kommen. Du stehst einfach dadurch, dass du Mensch bist, an jener Grenze der Menschheit, in jener Problematik, auf die 'das Wort von der Treue Gottes, das wir verkuendigen', die einzige Antwort ist. . . . Denn noch einmal: 'Nahe ist dir das Wort!' sagt die Gerechtigkeit Gottes (Deut. 30, 14). Bereit liegt es, ernst genommen zu werden, bereit, sich geltend zu machen, bereit, uns aufs schwerste zu bedraengen und aufs hoechste zu befreien, bereit, von uns gehoert und gesprochen zu werden — das Wort, das, weil es das Wort Christus' ist, doch nie ausgehoert, nie ausgesprochen sein wird," etc. (Roemerbrief, p. 363 f.)<sup>4</sup> The dialecticalists do not find the *vis dativa* of the Gospel in Rom. 10, 8 — and they do not find it taught anywhere else in Scripture. Together with all the Reformed they deny it. They teach justification by faith, but they do not direct faith straight to the means of grace.<sup>5</sup> — And Reformed theology impugns the article of justification by faith directly.*

(To be concluded.)

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4) The old-school Calvinists come nearer to the truth. Charles Hodge writes in his *Commentary on Romans*: "The purpose of the apostle is to contrast the legal and the Gospel method of salvation — to show that the one is impracticable, the other easy. By works of the Law no flesh living can be justified; whereas, whosoever simply calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. . . . Paul represents the Gospel as speaking of itself. The method of justification by faith says, 'The Word is near thee, in thy mouth, i. e., the word or doctrine of faith is thus easy and familiar. . . . The Gospel, instead of directing us to ascend into heaven or to go down to the abyss, tells us the thing required is simple and easy. Believe with thy heart, and thou shalt be saved.'" These old-school Calvinists deny that the *vis dativa* of the Gospel is taught here or anywhere else, but they can at least tell us what "Word," "Gospel," means. Neo-Calvinism (dialecticalism) is too hazy on this point.

5) The material principle of Reformed theology is here at work. The sovereignty of God, His absolute will, and the immediate operation of the Spirit are correlatives. The saving will of God, according to Lutheran theology, is *voluntas ordinata*, based on Christ's merit and operating through the Gospel and the Sacraments.