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CHURCH DOGMATICS

BY

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VOLUME I

THE DOCTRINE

OF THE WORD OF GOD

PART ONE

EDITORS

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one in their distinction. It is thus right and necessary that for all our awareness of the unity of the Father with the Son and the Spirit the knowledge of the Father as the Creator and our Father should always be a particular knowledge. Only when it is taken seriously in its particularity does it lead to that awareness, and the very awareness will lead us constantly to take it seriously in its particularity too.

§ II

GOD THE SON

The one God reveals Himself according to Scripture as the Reconciler, i.e., as the Lord in the midst of our enmity towards Him. As such He is the Son of God who has come to us or the Word of God that has been spoken to us, because He is so antecedently in Himself as the Son or Word of God the Father.

I. GOD AS RECONCILER

We return to the starting-point of the previous section where we began with the question: Who is the One whom Holy Scripture calls the Lord, who has dealings with man in revelation? and where we gave the answer that at the climax of the biblical witness it is stated (obviously with the intention of stating what is true and valid for the whole of the biblical witness, including the Old Testament) that Jesus of Nazareth is this Lord. We then followed first of all the line in the New Testament message in which, in apparent antithesis to the statement, Jesus of Nazareth is understood rather as the Servant of the Lord who proclaims and does the will of His heavenly Father. But we then saw how also and especially the revelation of the Father might appear primarily as its pure Mediator Jesus, and how it cannot be abstracted in any sense from this Mediator according to the biblical witness. What God reveals in Jesus and how He reveals it, namely, in Jesus, must not be separated from one another according to the New Testament, and on the assumption that this prohibition is to be taken seriously we have to regard the concept of God as the Father in His relation to this Mediator of His revelation as a mode of being which truly and definitively appertains to Him; we have to regard His fatherhood as an eternal one.

We now turn our attention again to the other line of biblical testimony which we touched on for a moment and then left again, namely, the line on which the emphasis lies, not on the distinction of Jesus from the Father, but, without denying this distinction, directly on His communion and even unity with the Father. To the statements about the relation of the Father to the Son to which we referred in the previous section there corresponds exactly a series of statements about the relation of the Son to the Father. The development of the dogma
of the Trinity began with these statements and a priori it is to be expected that we shall have to follow the dogma again and specifically at this point too if the unity of the Son with the Father attested in these statements, and therefore the deity of Jesus Christ, is to be understood as definitive, authentic and essential.

In this regard we must refer already to the ascribing of the name of Kyrios to Jesus, even though this is, of course, wrapped in all manner of obscurity. Is apostolic usage adopting here the title of the divine world-ruler well-known in Hellenistic Egypt? Or the title given in Syria to the cultic god in contrast to his slaves, the adherents of the cult? Or the title of the emperor in the imperial religion of Rome? Be that as it may, the significance of these and other miracles were done, which is, so to speak, the place, the sphere, in which all they speak and do is to take place (Col. 3:17). The name of Yahweh has precisely the same comprehensive and pervasive meaning in the Old Testament (cf. § 8:2); the name of Jesus is simply Yahweh revealed to men. Who, then, is Jesus if His name has this significance? Is there really any need of the express declaration of Paul (Phil. 2:9) that God has given Him the name that is above every name?

As a second general phenomenon which points in the same direction—its meaning and direction of the whole, may be summed up in the words: ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἄνθρωπος (Ac. 2:27) or: ἃ μαρτυρεῖ τῷ και διάκονον (Ac. 1:21). But these and similar summary accounts, which often enough (e.g., Ac. 1:21; 10:37) seem to be acquainted only with Jesus the miracle-worker, simply formulate an impression which an impartial reading of, say, St. Mark’s Gospel, cannot fail to leave, namely, that the teaching, which is, of course, presented here, is not meant to be understood apart from but only through the interpretation of the action which invariably accompanies it. It is a weakness of R. Bultmann’s Jesus (1926) that he ignores this insistent demand of the texts and construes Jesus one-sidedly in terms of His sayings. The acts which invariably speak and are to be heard as well are miraculous acts. How they are connected with the central content of the words of Jesus may be seen from the story of the paralytic in Mk. 2:1-12, where to the horror of the scribes—who immediately speak of blasphemy and not unjustly from their standpoint—Jesus not only speaks of the forgiveness of sins but actually forgives sins and, to show His authority for this act, cures the paralytic. God’s act as it takes place visibly, the totality of a gracious act on man, emphasises that the word spoken is God’s Word. This is the meaning of the miracles ascribed to Jesus (and expressly to His apostles too on the basis of the authority conferred on them by Jesus)—and it marks off these miracles, however we assess them, at any rate something very distinct from the plethora of miracle stories in that whole period. Their distinctive feature, however, lies in their complete and indissoluble combination with the word of Jesus, a combination which distinguishes this word no less from mere prophecying than the miracles from mere thunders. In this combination in which both word and deed are in the same way give evidence of something above and beyond ethos (“history”) and physis, of a higher authority confronting the whole state of human and indeed cosmic reality. Who is the One who, obviously speaking representatively for this higher authority, can speak thus because He can act thus and act thus because He can speak thus?

It might be said of the further titles ascribed to Jesus in the New Testament, the titles of Messiah-Christ, Son of Man and Son of God, that in themselves they are ambiguous or even obscure. Thus in the ancient Orient Son of God was a widespread term simply for the king. But the context of New Testament Christology makes this title, too, eloquent in a distinctive way. He whom the Gospel wants to depict, so to speak, the Fourth Evangelist has, the Word which became flesh, tabernacled among us, and was seen by us in His glory (Jn. 1:14), this Word, unlike all other words, was not a created human word only relating to God and only speaking of God and about God. As Word it was spoken where God is, namely, ὁ θεός, in principium of all that is, πάντα τὰ πάντα, belonging to God, the Word, for God is that which is made clear by nature (Jn. 1:1), the Word, for God is that which evidences itself so clearly that "πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ εὐγένεται—God called into being and existence everything that is (Jn. 1:3). No more and no less than God Himself is there when this word, αἰτία, i.e., Jesus, whose story the Gospel aims to tell, is there as light in the darkness which does not apprehend the light (Jn. 1:9, 14). The θεός ὁ θεός is then expressed in Jn. 1:14 (according to the correct reading): ἐμοί γεννησαν θεὸν ὁ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τοῦ πατρὸς, He has revealed the invisible God. The same equation between the seen, heard and handled object of Christian proclamation and the ὁ θεός ὁ θεός is also made in 1 Jn. 1:3. Similarly Paul says: ὁ θεός ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνθρώπων (Col. 1:9), and: ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεότητος σωμάτων (Col. 2:9). The passage Heb. 1:3, in which the majesty of the Son of God is established even above the angelic world, is noteworthy because in the words quoted from the Psalms even the distinction between θεός, which is perhaps still to be construed adjectivally and inexacty, and ὁ θεός disappears, and then the same repeated in 1 Jn. 1:1 (according to the correct reading): ὁ θεός ὁ μονογενὴς θεός ὁ ὁμός ὁ κόσμῳ τῶν πατρών, He has revealed the invisible God. The same equation between the seen, heard and handled object of Christian proclamation and the ὁ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἀνθρώπων (Phil. 2:11) ὁ πατήρ ἡμῶν ἐκ τῶν θεῶν ὁ χριστός καθηκόντων (Col. 1:19), and: ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεότητος σωμάτων (Col. 2:9). The passage Heb. 1:3, in which the majesty of the Son of God is established even above the angelic world, is noteworthy because in the words quoted from the Psalms even the distinction between θεός, which is perhaps still to be construed adjectivally and inexacty, and ὁ θεός disappears, and then the same repeated in 1 Jn. 1:1 (according to the correct reading): ὁ θεός ὁ μονογενὴς θεός ὁ ὁμός ὁ κόσμῳ τῶν πατρών, He has revealed the invisible God.
1. God as Reconciler

the mount or resurrection from the dead, God appointed the man Jesus to this dignity and adopted Him as His Son. This could be a good symbol for what men themselves had done in the zeal of their Christ-enthusiasm. To the "eye of faith" a remarkable man who had once been known as such, and who strictly was always kept in view, was idealised upwards as God, as could happen and actually had happened to other heroes. This is Ebonite Christology, or Christology historically reconstructed along the lines of Ebionitism.

Secondly, the New Testament statement about Christ's deity could also be taken as just the opposite, the Son of the living God. In Him, the theory runs, we have the personification of a familiar idea or general truth, e.g., the truth of the communion of deity and humanity, or the truth of the creation of the world by God's word and wisdom, or the truth of redemption by the way of "Died and Become," or the truth of the juxtaposition of truth and goodness or forgiveness and claim. The fact that the manifestation of this idea was seen in Jesus of Nazareth was more or less accidental and indifferent, so indifferent that the concrete humanity of His earthly existence, or finally even its historical reality, could be queried. He was believed in as a theophany or myth, as the embodiment of a general truth, as the familiar Son of Man of Daniel or the familiar pre-existent Logos or the familiar world-deliverer of whom all Hellenism thought it had some knowledge, or as an analogue of the divine hypostases taught by the Rabbis when they spoke of Memra (the Word), Shekinah (the glory) and Metatron (the supreme archangel of God). As and to the degree that the symbol of this idea was seen and venerated in Jesus of Nazareth, He was called the mystical Son of God or divine idea. He was finally, in full awareness of the imputed deity, God Himself.

The power of the Christ-enthusiasm which had both the ability and the need to make this equation was the power of the idea, the power of the concept of the descending and self-manifesting God, which simply found in its connexion with Jesus of Nazareth its specific crystallisation, and this power, in its turn, has demonstrably found similar crystallisations. The general "eye of faith" had now also and specifically fallen on Him. But what was in view was the idea, not the Rabbi of Nazareth, who might be known or not known as such with no great gain or loss either way, whom there was at any rate a desire to know only for the sake of the idea. This is Docetic Christology, or Christology historically reconstructed along the lines of Docetism.

These two conceptions or explanations of the statement about the deity of Christ seem to be in greater self-contradiction than is actually the case. The former understands Jesus as the peak or a peak of history soaring into super-historical heights; the latter understands Him as the sucker of super-history reaching down into history. According to the former He is the supreme manifestation of human life, while according to the latter He is the most perfect symbol of divine presence. Obviously it should not be very hard to relate these two conceptions to one another dialectically or to reconcile them with each other. Common to both is the notion that strictly speaking the New Testament statement about Christ's deity is a form of expression that is meant very loosely and is to be interpreted accordingly.

As early as the 2nd century the Church rejected both Ebionitism and Docetism and in so doing it also ruled out in advance the corresponding modern explanation. And the New Testament statement about Christ's deity can in fact be understood only on the assumption that it has nothing whatever to do either with the apotheosis of a man or with the personification of an idea of God or divine idea. It avoids these alternatives, but this takes place, of course, on a line in which the plane on which the Ebionite and Docetic lines intersect is cut by another plane, and therefore in a third dimension, perpendicular to it and to the two lines. If one thinks persistently on this plane with its two
dimensions one can never escape the dialectic of history and super-history or super-history and history, the conception of a Christ-enthusiasm in which a heavenly essence arises out of a historical form or a historical form out of a heavenly essence. In this case one will persistently speak, not of the Christ of the New Testament, but of idealising and mythologizing man, and of Jesus as the object of the thought of this man. But if one is not speaking of God's revelation, the New Testament statement about Christ's deity makes sense only as witness to God's revelation. Any other exegesis is blatantly opposed to the opinion of the authors and in conflict with them. Ebionism and Docetism are misunderstandings of a dialectic that is inevitably at work in the thought and utterance of the New Testament authors, for it is indisputable that men—because it has pleased God to assume humanity—are thinking and speaking here, and that the first plane with its two dimensions is the sphere in which they think and speak. (We shall return to the dialectic present in the New Testament itself in connexion with the doctrine of the incarnation of the Word.) Even on this plane, however, what they think and say has a different meaning from that it seems to have when seen from the standpoint of Ebionite and Docetic thinking. This other meaning is given by the fact that while the thought and utterance of the New Testament witnesses takes place on the first plane like all human thought, it is related to the second plane which falls upon it perpendicularly and which is identical with God's revelation. It is thus true that even in what the New Testament witnesses think and say one may plainly see and distinguish a kind of opposite movement. It is true that especially in the Synoptists we are presented with the starting-point of Ebionite thought, which finds God in Jesus and that especially in the Fourth Gospel we are presented on the whole with another christological starting-point which finds God in Jesus. But the first does not mean that the Synoptists found God in a mere man, in the figure of a great man, in an impressive movement. But the second does not mean that John found an idea, a general truth of an intellectual, moral or religious kind, personified specifically in Jesus. One will search the New Testament documents in vain for the fatal starting-point of Ebionite Christology, i.e., personality, or the fatal starting-point of Docetic Christology, i.e., idea. These can never be anything but an arbitrary construction behind the documents and in contradiction with them. The starting-point of Ebionite thought, which finds God in Jesus, is the fact, actual to certain men, of the divine envy as such. It is the unambiguous fact of the man who was among them teaching and healing, dying and rising again, as a reality which did not first have to be disclosed and interpreted and asserted, but which is actually called to their lips the confession: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God (Mt. 16:14), their actual drinking of the living water (Jn. 4:10). "We beheld—his glory." And this led to certain men, of the divine envy as such. It is the unambiguous fact of the man who was among them teaching and healing, dying and rising again, as a reality which did not first have to be disclosed and interpreted and asserted, but which is actually called to their lips the confession: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God (Mt. 16:14), not as a synthetic but as an analytic statement, an explanatory statement about the absolute beginning of their thought and their modern successors. Against the background of this factual material which is simply there in the New Testament texts one may certainly advance the following considerations too. When the Ebionite and Docetic Christologies presuppose that at the end of ascending or descending reflection—reflection on the man Jesus as such and reflection on deity in special relation to the man Jesus—we simply have a small or even a big exaggeration with whose help the statement about Christ's deity arises or is explained, they ascribe to the thought of the believers an achievement which the latter themselves could not have reached. They take the presupposition, a pettie principii, as the blasphemy of which Jesus was accused, but falsely so, according to their records. If Jesus had called Himself, or the primitive Church had called Him the Son of God, in the sense presupposed by these two conceptions, then He and His Church would have been rightly expelled from the Old Testament community. For what could the idealising of a man or the mythologising of an idea be but characteristically the very thing that the Old Testament understood by the setting up and worship of an idol, of an unworthy and empty rival of Yahweh? Those who think, or hyperbolically allege that they think, that a man can really become God or that the real God could have a copy in a man have very little understanding of the word "God" in the Old Testament sense. If we can claim that the first generation of the witnesses of Jesus are in any degree true Israelites or Palestinian Jews; if we can be confident that they understand the difference between God and man, not as a quantitative one that could be easily bridged, but as a qualitative one, then we can describe the expression of an axiomatically false supposition, an explanatory statement about the absolute beginning of their thought which is posited in advance for their thought. The explanation of their statement that Jesus is Lord is to be sought only in the fact that for them He was the Lord, and was so in the same factual and self-evident and indisputable way as Yahweh was of old Israel's God. The utter embarrassment of a historical approach which on the one hand cannot conceal the fact that the statement "is already essentially present in the most ancient literary testimonies, the
epistles of Paul," and yet on the other hand will not take this presupposition into account, may be seen in the words of Johannes Weiss: "The fusion of hitherto unrelated conceptual elements at this centre presupposes a power of attraction which we cannot overestimate. How strong the indirect or direct effect of the personality of Jesus must have been on the souls of His followers if they were ready to believe this of Him and to die for this belief!" (RGG1, Art. "Christologie," 1). What is the meaning of "power of attraction, of indirect or direct effect," in this case, in relation to this effect? One may well ask whether apart from all else, the early Church did not perhaps have more sense of historical reality and possibility when it left it to heretics to wander to and fro along the beaten tracks of apophasis and hypostasis Christology and thought it more natural to seek the meaning of the New Testament statement about Christ's deity in the corresponding factual presupposition as this is presented to us in the New Testament itself.

Jesus is Lord—this is how we think we must understand the New Testament statement in concert with the ancient Church—because He has it from God whom He calls His Father to be the Lord, because with this Father of His, as the Son of this Father, as "the eternal Father's only child," He is the Lord—and "is" which we deny if we are unable to affirm it with those who first uttered it, yet which cannot be deduced, or proved, or discussed, but can only be affirmed in an analytic proposition as the beginning of all thinking about it. In distinction from the assertion of the divinisation of a man or the humanisation of a divine idea, the statement about Christ's deity is to be understood in the sense that Christ reveals His Father. But this Father of His is God. He who reveals Him, then, reveals God. But who can reveal God except God Himself? Neither a man that has been raised up nor an idea that has come down can do it. These are both creatures. Now the Christ who reveals the Father is also a creature and His work is a creaturely work. But if He were only a creature He could not reveal God, for the creature certainly cannot take God's place and work in His place. If He reveals God, then irrespective of His creaturehood He Himself has to be God. And since this is a case of either/or, He has to be full and true God without reduction or limitation, without more or less. Any such restriction would not merely weaken His deity; it would deny it. To confess Him as the revelation of His Father is to confess Him as essentially equal in deity with this Father of His.

But what does it mean for us—for this must be our starting-point as well—to confess Jesus as the revelation of His Father and therefore as His true Son? If now we consider this and stress that Jesus as the Revealer of the Father and His will and work does not merely proclaim to us our Lord but in so doing is Himself our Lord, so that He also reveals Himself as the Son of the Father, then to the degree that what takes place here is an act of God this obviously signifies something very different from the activity of God the Creator which we understood as the epitome of the content of the revelation of the Father. Over and above the reality of God's lordship over our existence it implies God's lordship in the fact that He turns to us, that indeed He comes to us, that He speaks with us, that He wills to be heard by us and to arouse our response. It signifies the reality of an intercourse which He has established between God and us. God does not just will and work. In His revelation in Jesus Christ He discloses to us His will and work. He does not treat us as dust or clay, even though we are this as His creatures. He does not just subject us to His power as Creator or cause us to be controlled by His power as Creator so as to fulfil His purpose in us. He seeks us as those who can let themselves be found. He converses with us as those who are capable of hearing, understanding and obeying. He deals with us as the Creator, but as a person with persons, not as a power over things. "Your brother is the eternal good." And this is by no means obvious. It is miraculous, and this not merely nor primarily as a miracle of power, as the mystery in which the principle finitum non capax infiniti is abrogated. Naturally this is true too. But the abrogation of this principle is not the real mystery of the revelation of the Son of God. The real mystery is the abrogation of the other and much more incisive principle: homo pecator non capax verbi divini. God's power to establish intercourse with us is also called in question of course, but in the long run not decisively, by the fact that He is infinite and we are finite, that He is Lord of life and death and we live as those who are limited by death, that He is the Creator and we are those who have been called out of nothing into being and existence. God's ability is decisively called in question, however, by the fact that we are God's enemies. How do we know that? Certainly not of ourselves. Certainly not in and with the fact that we are aware of the problematic nature of our being and existence as men, of the conflict between the spiritual and the natural sides of our existence, or of the conflict between our theoretical ideals and our practical achievements, or of the antinomies generally in which the course of our thought and existence runs. The fact that we are God's enemies never follows from these intrinsically incontestable facts, and if we were to view it as only an expression of these familiar facts it could only be described as a misanthropic exaggeration. The insight that "I have sinned and am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Lk. 15:19) is not an insight of abstract anthropology. Only the son who is already recalling his father's house knows that he is a lost son. We know that we are God's enemies first and solely from the fact that God has actually established that intercourse with us. But precisely on the assumption of the factuality of this event we can regard this event itself only as miraculous. The Word of God whose revelation is attested in Scripture tells man that he is a rebel who has wantonly
abandoned the fellowship between himself as creature and God as Creator and set himself in a place where this fellowship is impossible. It tells him that he wanted to be his own lord and therewith betrayed and delivered up himself to the sphere of God’s wrath, the state of rejection by God, and therefore of being closed up against God. It tells him that contrary to its destiny by creation his existence is a contradiction against God, a contradiction which excludes listening to God. It thus tells him, strangely, that he cannot hear at all the Word of God which tells him this, and that he cannot hear it because he will not hear it, because his life-act is disobedience and therefore factually, in respect of the use he makes of his life, it is a refusal to listen to what God says to him. Indeed, this content of the Word of God spoken to man makes it quite inconceivable that man should even get to hear God’s Word, that God should turn to him at all and address him. The fact that he is closed up to what God can say to him is simply an expression of the wrath of God resting upon him. If this wrath of God is serious—and God’s Word will tell us no other than that it is really serious—then will it not consist primarily and decisively in the fact that God has turned away His face from us and therefore will not speak with us, that even objectively, then, there is for fallen man no Word of God at all? If we hear it nevertheless, and if this has the twofold implication that we can actually hear it and that we do actually get heard again—if this self-understanding really relates to our hearing—then we can regard and our situation as one which has on our side no complement or precondition.

This is how there comes into being the self-understanding of the real hearer with respect to the possibility of his hearing. He regards himself as one who continually robs himself of this possibility. He can regard God alone as the One who gives him this possibility, and by whose gift it is a possibility. Paul describes Christ as Him δι’ αὐτοῦ (i.e., in Paul: in the presence of the regnum gratiae denoted by revelation) the καταλλαγὴ (Rom. 5:19). To God’s good-pleasure to have His πλήρωμα dwell in Him there corresponds His will δι’ αὐτοῦ καταλλαγῆς τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν (Col. 1:22). God was κόσμον καταλληλοῦντων in Him, 2 Cor. 5:19 says to the same effect. Hence the apostolic ministry is the διακονία τῆς καταλληληγίας (2 Cor. 5:19) which comes to a head in the challenge καταλληλήγεται τῷ θεῷ (2 Cor. 5:20). Thus the concept of reconciliation coincides with that of revelation though not with that of redemption (διάλυσιν, σωτηρία). In the New Testament redemption is from the standpoint of revelation or reconciliation the future consummating act of God which has still to come: namely δι’ αὐτοκτόνων (ἔριμα) in τῷ πάμματι τῆς σωματικῆς αὐτοῦ (Col. 1:19). Καταλληλήγεται σωτηρία (Rom. 5:19). For the eschatological use of διάλυσιν see Lk. 21:24; Rom. 8:17; Eph. 4:23; Heb. 11:14, and for the similar use of σωτηρία cf. t Thess. 5:10; Rom. 13:11; Phil. 1:21; 2:16; Heb. 12:9. In distinction from this reconciliation is the act of God which is the basis of this prospect of the future, the act in Christ as the mediator between God and man (2 Tim. 2:17) or of the new covenant (Heb. 9:12; 12:24), the bearer and bringer of εἰρήνη as it is understood in Paul especially as the underlying purpose of God’s gracious address to man (cf. the combination of χάρις and εἰρήνη in the greetings) and as it is explained as a divine act in Eph. 2:14.

The inconceivable element in revelation as such, in revelation as reconciliation which can be a reality only as it comes from God, is the fact of the Son of God who is the Lord in our midst, and therefore amid our enmity towards God. Because the love of God manifested in this fact cannot be identical with the love of God for the world which He willed to create and did create, for sin and death lie between this
world and our world; because the love of God manifested in this fact is rather His love for the lost world of man who has become guilty before Him (Jn. 3:19), for the world whose continuity with the original one is completely hidden from us, therefore we cannot confuse God's lordship in the one case with God's lordship in the other, or directly identify them, but in relation to the one (creation) we must speak of a first mode of God's being and in relation to the second (reconciliation) we must speak of a second mode of His being. For as we have to say that reconciliation or revelation is not creation or a continuation of creation but rather an inconceivably new work above and beyond creation, so we have also to say that the Son is not the Father but that here, in this work, the one God, though not without the Father, is the Son or Word of the Father.

It is hard to see how the distinction of the mode of being of the Son of God from that of the Father—and the same distinction must also be made from that of the Holy Spirit—can be denied without speculatively changing and weakening the seriousness of God's wrath against sin, of the opposition between original creaturely, does not correspond to the seriousness of the problem it is to solve, nor to the character of omnipotent grace which the semi-divine event, an event which is not strictly miraculous but in the synthesis of genesis and fall into a mere tension within a totality which is known to us and can be surveyed, into a mere tension within a totality which is known to us and can be surveyed, requires the acknowledgment that its subject is infinite seriousness, requires the acknowledgment that its subject is identical with God in the full sense of the word.

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§ 11. God the Son

It is in this light, with reference to the reconciliation whose subject can be no less than God Himself if its power and the seriousness of the problem that it solves are to be perceived, if it is not to be regarded as a mere appearance of reconciliation, that the knowledge of the true deity of Christ has rightly been asserted and proclaimed from time immemorial. The so-called Homily of Clement (1, 1) begins with the declaration that we are to think of Jesus Christ as psx heò odos and forthwith it interprets this in the words: "de orfam et superam Deum et semper.

One should not merely flounder in the sunbeams of glory. To think meanly of Christ is to show at once that one has only a mean hope too. There is interrelation and necessary correspondence in the knowledge of the Reconciler and of God in His humanity, and acquire and restore to us righteousness and true God "so that by virtue of His Godhead He might bear the burden of the iniquities to the Son and Spirit, and thus subject themselves to a creature, are not placing their hope in God and are deceiving themselves in thinking that they are put in a better position as Christians (Or. cat., 14 and 39). Luther constantly stressed this connexion too: "Vincere peccatum mundi, mortem, maledictionem et fratern Dei are not the works of a humana aut angelica potestas but mera opera divinae maiestatis. Qua re sum deorum, homo Christum justificari, Christum esse victorem peccati, mortis et aeternae maledictionis, testificamus simul eum esse natura Deum" (on Gal. 3, 15), 1. 81, 1. 18; on Gal. 14, 1b., p. 96, l. 15; on Gal. 3rd, 1b., p. 441, l. 16, 25, 31). "for if sin is thus a big thing and its cleansing costeth so much that such a lofty person as Christ is here extolled must be so set to and cleanse it Himself, what then in such a case could avail our poor and helpless acts, for we are creatures, nay, sinful and wicked perishing creatures? that were as to undertake to set heaven and earth aflame with an extinguished firebrand. There must be here as great a payment for sin as God himself is who is injured by sin" (Sermon on Heb. 14, p. 522, W.A., 10th, p. 161, l. 21). "Now God maketh none a king who is not God, for He will not let the reins out of His own hands, and will alone be lord over heaven and earth, death, devil, and over all creatures. Since He then maketh Him a lord over all that is made, He must already be God" (Sermon on In. 3, 276, W.A., 10th, p. 296, l. 37). For if the person who offered himself for us were not God, it would have been nothing before God that He was born of a virgin and likewise suffered a thousand deaths. But it bringeth blessing and victory over all sin and death that the seed of Abraham is also very God who giveth Himself for us" (Sermon on Phil. 2. 15, 1525, W.A., 17th, p. 326, l. 25). "We men are all sinners and lost. If then we are to be righteous and blessed, it must come about through Christ. But because we are righteous and blessed through Christ alone, He must be more than a pure and simple man. For man's hand and power can make no one righteous and blessed, God must do it Himself" (Sermon on the Passion, How Christ was Buried, and on Is. 53, E.A., 3, 276). The answer to 4w. 6 that the Mediator is to the same effect. The Mediator must be true God so that by virtue of His Godhead He might bear the burden of the wrath of God in His humanity, and acquire and restore to us righteousness and life."
heaven." But as He does so, as that which is unheard of takes place, namely, that this God is revealed in Him, He reveals Himself to us, so assuredly does the fact of revelation signify a new thing vis-a-vis its content, so assuredly is reconciliation not to be understood as the completion of creation but as a miracle in and on the fallen world. We have seen in the previous section that in the context of the New Testament witness this new revelation of the Creator and our Father cannot be abstracted from the person of the Revealer. It was in the light of this unity of the content of revelation and the person of the Revealer that we then understood the original and proper sense of the fatherhood of God: He is Father because He is the Father of this His only-begotten Son. From the same unity we at once have the further result of the divine sonship of Jesus Christ. There is no abstract person of the Revealer, but the person of the Revealer is the person of Jesus Christ, who is subordinate to the Creator revealed by it, yet who is also indissolubly co-ordinate with Him, who is with Him; in this person the revelation is a reality. In other words, there is no Jesus per se who might then acquire also the predicate of a bearer of the revelation of His Father. Nor is there any revelation of the Father per se which might then be apprehended in Jesus in exemplary and pre-eminent fashion. Jesus is the revelation of the Father and the revelation of the Father is Jesus. And precisely in virtue of this "is" is "He is the Son or Word of the Father.

Our criticism of Ebionite and Docetic Christology has shown us that in the New Testament witness the person and thing really constitute this unity and that the thinking of the apostles about Jesus Christ, whether it began with the person or the thing, never took the form of a syllogism but always ended with the knowledge of Christ's deity because it had already begun there. In this respect, too, we can only dodge the unity of the content of revelation and the person of the Revealer if we evade the New Testament witness and disregard the prohibition and command set forth therein.

And now in the light of what has been said about creation and reconciliation we can add that the divine sonship of Jesus also results from the fact that creation (the content of His revelation of the Father) and reconciliation (the content of His self-revelation) are completely different from one another in their significance for us and yet are also completely related to one another in their origin. In trying to follow the tracks of Holy Scripture itself we have already been able to grasp the concept of the Creator only on the apparent detour via knowledge of God as the Lord of life and death, as the God of Good Friday and Easter. And in trying to grasp the concept of the Reconciler we have had to presuppose that there is a world created by God even though fallen and lost and that there is a man created by God even though actually existing in enmity against Him. Only in the One who acts on us as the Creator through the cross and resurrection could we perceive the Creator, and only in the Creator who remains the Lord of our being in spite of our enmity can we perceive the Reconciler.
God is addressed as follows in the offertory of the Roman Mass: *Deus, qui humanae substantiae dignitatem mirabiliter condidisti et mirabilius reformasti*. But the dispute is pointless. *Intelligent redempti sui, non suisse excellenterius, quod initio factus est mundus, quam quod in fine saeculorum Pascha reparator.*

Here genuine miracle stands side by side with genuine miracle. On neither side can there be any question of more or less miracle and therefore of more or less deity. In both cases we simply have an either/or. Here, then, sonship as well as fatherhood, in and with the super- and subordination expressed thereby, is to be understood as unrestrictedly true deity.

2. THE ETERNAL SON

Who is the Son of God? We have heard the provisional answer: Jesus Christ as the One who reveals the Father and the One who reconciles us to the Father is the Son of God. For as this One He reveals Himself to us as the Son who has come to us or God's Word that has been spoken to us. The dogma of the Trinity adds something new to this insight from Scripture's witness to revelation only to the extent that it adds the interpretation that Jesus Christ can reveal the Father and reconcile us to the Father because He reveals Himself as the One He is. He does not first become God's Son or Word in the event of revelation. On the contrary, the event of revelation has divine truth and reality because that which is proper to God is revealed in it, because Jesus Christ reveals Himself as the One He already was, before this event, in Himself too. His sonship on the basis of which He can be the Reveal, the Mediator, the Reconciler, is not a mere contrivance of God behind which, in some higher essence of God which remains a mystery, there is no sonship or word-ness in God, but perhaps an inexpressible and speechless it-ness, a divine, a below with a different or unknown name. No, revelation has eternal content and eternal validity. Down to the very depths of deity, not as something per se, but as the ultimate thing that is to be said about God, God is God the Son as He is God the Father. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God Himself as God His Father is God Himself.

How does this interpretation of the biblical witness to revelation arise? We can give here only the very simple but momentous answer that it arises because as a final word we accept the truth and validity of the equal and incomprehensible divinity of both the work of creation and also the work of reconciliation, and therefore the truth and validity of the unity of the Father and the Son as the witness presents this to us as distinctive of the revelation attested by it. The Church dogma of Christ's deity as compared with the New Testament statement about Christ's deity says no other than that we have to accept the simple presupposition on which the New Testament statement rests, namely, that Jesus Christ is the Son because He is (not because He makes this impression on us, not because He does what we think is to be expected of a God, but because He is). With this presupposition all thinking about Jesus, which means at once all thinking about God, must begin and end. No reflection can try to prove this presupposition, no reflection can call this presupposition in question. All reflection can only start with it and return to it. The Church dogma of the deity of Christ arose out of this insight and it expresses this insight. For when it explicitly takes the deity of Christ to be eternal deity, when we say that the Son who has come to us or the Word that has been spoken to us is antecedently the Son or Word of God *per se*, we are simply saying in practice that the statement about Christ's deity is to be regarded as a basic and not a derivative statement. This is how the apostles understood it, the dogma says, and this is how we, too, must understand it if we are to understand the apostles. This is how we must understand the apostles and the statement, then, if our own understanding is not to be led astray from the understanding of the early Church which expressed and deposited this understanding in the dogma. Our own understanding as we have attempted it here has not so far led us astray from the doctrine of the early Church but has rather led us to it. Things might have been different. The dogma does not have divine dignity for us but only human pedagogic dignity. We might have turned our backs on it, but we have no cause to do so. As an expression of our own understanding of the New Testament too we can and we must say what the dogma says. We cannot understand the New Testament statement about Christ's deity in any different or better way than by studying it in harmony with the early Church, i.e., by directly comparing with it the dogma of the eternal deity of Christ. The dogma as such is not to be found in the biblical texts. The dogma is an interpretation. But we can convince ourselves that it is a good and relevant interpretation of these texts. We thus accept it. The deity of Christ is true, eternal deity. We see it in His work in revelation and reconciliation. But revelation and reconciliation do not create His deity. His deity creates revelation and reconciliation.

...
a mere something, however great or meaningful. He posits and makes known Himself exactly as He posits and knows Himself from and to all eternity. He is the Son or Word of God for us because He is so antecedently in Himself. It is one of the many optical illusions of Modernist Protestantism to have imagined that it should and could interpret and discredit this “antecedently in himself,” i.e., the confession of Christ's true and eternal deity, as the exponent of an untheological metaphysical speculation by claiming that the Reformers adopted a very different position in this matter from that of the ancient and mediaeval Church. What is usually adduced from the actual statements of the Reformers in support of this thesis is, however, quite inadequate to prove that they ever dreamed of attacking or even altering in the slightest degree the dogma of the deity of Christ.

The main passage to call for consideration here is in the first edition of Melanchthon's Loci (1521). In the introduction to this oldest Evangelical dogmatics Melanchthon distinguishes among the Loci theologici those which are prorsus incomprehensibiles and those which according to the will of Christ must be comprehendibii to all Christian people. Of the first it must be said: mysteria divinitatis rectius adoraverimus, quam vestigaverimus. For the latter involves greater danger, and God has veiled His Son in flesh ut a contemplatione maternatis suae ad carnis adequate fragilitatis nostrae contemplationem invitaret. Melanchthon is thus declaring that he sees no reason to spend too much time on the loci insigni et diversi de Deo, de sanctitate, de trinite dei, de mysterio creations, de modo incarnations. The Scholastics had become fools in investigating these things and the beneficia Christi had been obscured thereby. For the arguments (et philosophia, says the second edition, 1522) which they had presented had often been more worthy of a heretical than a Catholic dogma. The other loci, however, are vital: on the power of sin, the law, and grace. Nam ex his proprie Christus cognosciter, signisque hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia eius cognoscere, non quod isti docent eius naturas, modos incarnationis contuleri. Ni scis, in quem usum carmen induverit et cruci affexus sit Christus, quia proderit eius historiam novisse? The physician must know more about plants than their nature, namely, their vitaliva, so Christ must be known as salutare as this is made plain precisely in these other loci of which the Scholastics did not speak. We should follow Paul's example in Romans, where, as though foreseeing disputatationes frigidae et alienae a Christo, he did not deal with the Trinity, the incarnation, or creatio aeterni, but with the law, sin and grace, i.e., with the loci, qui Christum tibi commendent, qui conscientiam confirmant, qui animum adversus salutem erigit. The Rationalists of the 18th and early 19th centuries (cf., e.g., J. J. Spalding, "Uber die Nutsbarkeit des Predigtamtes, 1772, p. 138 ff.; K. G. Bretschneider, Handbuch d. Dogmatik, Vol. I, 4th edn., 1838, p. 553), and in recent times especially A. Ritschl (cf. Rockel, W. Ferschmug, Vol. III, p. 374. Theologie und Metaphysik, 1874, p. 60) and his followers (e.g., B. M. Rade, Glaubenslehre, Vol. I, 1924, p. 53; H. Stephan, Glaubenslehre, 2nd edn., 1928, p. 166, 240), are the ones who thought they had much to rejoice about in this passage. But we must not conceal the fact that the passage does not really say what they were pleased to find in it. It reflects a passing mood but not a theological position which became historically significant even for Melanchthon. And even the mood was not directed against the content of the trinitarian dogma but against its importance in relation to other dogmas which lay nearer to Melanchthon's own heart. Moreover it was not occasioned by Melanchthon's own, perhaps critical, preoccupation with the dogma of the Trinity. It was occasioned on the one hand by his intensive preoccupation with the other dogmas under the influence and inspiration of Luther and on the other hand by his indignation at the unchurchly theoretical way in which the Scholastics, i.e., the theologians of the later Middle Ages with whom he was primarily acquainted, had dealt with the doctrine of the Trinity. It was a passing mood. Only the later emergence of antitrinitarians was needed to change it at once and to make room for the dogma of the Trinity in its Loci in spite of the passage quoted. The mood never achieved significance in the confessions or the theological work of the Reformation.

Friends of the Melanchthon passage might do better to appeal to Calvin if they knew him better. In 1537, during his first stay in Geneva, the theological and ecclesiastical adventurer Petrus Caroli could publicly accuse Calvin of antitrinitarianism, and not without gaining a hearing even among serious people. The circumstances relating to the charge were as follows. The Confession de la foi of 1536 (in K. Müller, p. 111 f.), which was so authoritative at the beginning of the reformation in Geneva, though its contents are, of course, less characteristic of Calvin than of Farel, who was then the leader, has nothing at all to say about the doctrine of the Trinity either in its doctrine of God or its Christology. Furthermore the first draft of the Institutio of Calvin himself, which appeared rather earlier in the same year (cap. 2, De fide), does indeed give a very sound and respectful exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity, and shows that there is not a vestige of the Caroli's charge that Calvin avoided the doctrine of the persona, but it should still be noted that the author hardly has a burning interest in the matter. Even in his defence against Caroli in 1545 Calvin himself writes that true knowledge of Christ's deity consists in putting all our confidence and hope in Him and calling on His name. Quae practica notitia certior haud dubie est quod habes, quaeque doctrinae. Tuc enim pius animus dissimulationis, conspicit et paene attrectat, ubi se vivificari, illuminari, salvari, justificari et sanctificari sentit (Ad Pol. Caroli calumnias, C.R., 7, p. 312 f.). Calvin also seems to have had at that time various objections to the authority and authenticity of the symbols of the early Church (C.R., 5, 337; 70, 54, 86; 7, 311 f.). And it is a fact that Caroli demanded that he should prove his orthodoxy he strenuously refused to do so because of the "tyranny" of such a demand (C.R., 7, 315; 105, 120 f.). From both the theological and the human standpoint the whole controversy is most obscure. What does emerge from the passage quoted, and especially from the first edition of the Institutio, is that Calvin at that period, like Melanchthon sixteen years earlier, was preoccupied with other matters, these being, as in the case of Melanchthon, the problems of appropriating salvation rather than its objective presuppositions. In the case of Farel one might well ask whether he had not really lost sight of the latter and was thus well on the way which would lead to antitrinitarianism like many of his contemporaries. But one cannot say this of Calvin even in relation to this period. For even at this early time he had the presuppositions more plainly in view than the Melanchthon of the 1521 statements had. With the lack of a true and distinctive doctrine of the Trinity which he had traced back to Arius, Caroli, who seems to have been rather confused, was also accusing Calvin of attributing to Christ the Old Testament name of Jehovah. Calvin naturally meant this as an elogium divinitatis (C.R., 7, 312; 105, 121; 9, 708). Again one cannot speak of anything but a churlish mood (strengthened by Caroli's arbitrary accusation) even in the Calvin of this period, nor was it occasioned by Melanchthon's own, perhaps critical, preoccupation with the dogma of the Trinity. It was occasioned on the one hand by his intensive preoccupation with the other dogmas under the influence and inspiration of Luther and on the other hand by his indignation at the unchurchly theoretical way in which the Scholastics, i.e., the theologians of the later Middle Ages with whom he was primarily acquainted, had dealt with the doctrine of the Trinity. It was a passing mood. Only the later emergence of antitrinitarians was needed to change it at once and to make room for the dogma of the Trinity in his Loci in spite of the passage quoted. The mood never achieved significance in the confessions or the theological work of the Reformation.
droductions from this mood is unequivocally attested by the structure of the "Institutio" and also by his attitude in the Servetus case.

The real issue in this whole matter is plain in Luther, to whom also is usually made. It is Luther's insights that lay behind the statements of Melanchthon and indirectly behind those of Calvin too. From his perception that man's justification is in Christ alone and therefore by faith alone, Luther rightly concluded that all human theology can only be theology of revelation. As it is arbitrary and dangerous in the matter of justification to orientate oneself to a preconceived idea of the Law or one capriciously abstracted from the statements of Scripture; so it is arbitrary and dangerous in theology generally to start with a preconceived idea of God or one capriciously abstracted from the statements of Scripture. The total theological question, like the question of justification in detail, can be answered only with reference to the God who reveals Himself in Christ. Already in 1530 Luther mentions a thought he was often to repeat: This is the unicus et solus modus cognoscendi Deus (shamefully neglected by the doctores Sententiarum with their absolutae divinitatis speculationes, that quicunque velit salutari de Deo cogitare aut speculare, prorsus omnia postea praeter humanitatem Christi (Letter to Spalatin, February 12, 1519, W.A. Br. 1, p. 328 f.). About the same time we find him writing polemically: "Prodest, qui vult Deum cognoscere, scholam terrae infìsam continuare: cedit hic tota ratio hominum. Natura guidem docet, ut simus propensiores ad contemplanda magna quam abieeta. Hinc collige, quam iniquente, ne dicam impie, agant et speculantur, quaque sibi neque alis prodeas aut consule possint. "Start here below, Thomas and Philip, and not up above" (Schol. in libr. Gen. on Gen. 28, W.A., p. 406, l. 11). Even better known is the following passage: For I have often said and say it again that what dead men should remember and guard against all teachers as ridden and led by the devil who in lofty positions begin to teach and preach about God nakedly and apart from Christ, as heretofore in high schools they have speculated and played with His works up above in heaven, what He is and thinks and does in Himself, etc. But if thou wilt fare securely and rightly teach or grasp God so that thou find grace and help with Him, then let not thyself be persuaded to seek Him elsewhere than in the Lord Christ, nor go round about and trouble thyself with other thoughts nor ask about any other work than how He hath sent Christ. Fix thine art and study on Christ, there let them also abide and hold. And where thine own thought and reason or anyone else leaddeth or guiddeth thee thine eyes and say: I should and will have no other God save in my Lord Christ 9 (Sermon on Jn. 17, 1528, W.A., p. 28, l. 33; cf. also Comm. on Gal. 1. 1535, W.A., p. 49, 1. 75 f.; W.A. Ti., 6, p. 28). One should not fail to note that in so far as these statements of Luther are polemical in content they are not concerned with the doctrine of Christ's deity, and in so far as they are concerned with the doctrine of Christ's deity they are not polemical in content. What Luther wants—this is his point in this train of thought—is that deity in general and Christ's deity in particular should not be known along the path of autonomous speculation but along the path of knowledge of God's revelation, which means in practice along the path of knowledge of the beneficent Christi and therefore the humanitas Christi, i.e., His human reality as attested in Scripture, through which His benefits reach us. But Luther does want it to be known—and this must never be ignored or pushed into the background. More prudent than the Melanchthon of 1531, Luther does not fail to point out that in Jacob's dream we have angels both ascending and descending: "angeli ascendentes et descendentes: doctores praecores verbi Dei. The path is first from below upwards, from the natura humana Christi to cognitio Dei. But it does really lead upwards and therefore it leads downwards too again. Deinde cum eorumHumanitas Christi est unicus et solus modus cognoscendi Deum" (W.A. Br., p. 100, l. 3). Thus even knowledge of God's goodness depends again on the fact that the path leads from above downwards. "Nos Christiani do not have enough about how a Creator is to be compared with a creature. Sed doctores postea de scriptura exscriptura what is God in Himself, quid est Deus in seipso? . . . quid is He in Himself where He hath His divine being by Himself? Ibi Christi: 1 unicus dominus, rex et creator, per filium sic definitis se, quod in deitate hi se . . . Non solum inspicieantur deus ab extra in operibus. Sed deus vult eisam, ut agnoscamus eum etiam ab intra. What is He inwardly?" (Comm. on Jn. 1, 1534, W.A., p. 128, l. 5).

What is left of the whole appeal to the Reformation in this matter is in the last resort the mere fact that the burning problem of the Reformation was a different one from that of the 4th century, and that in the urgency of the conflict about their own problem the Reformers did and perhaps had to permit themselves sometimes to set the problem of the 4th century aside and put it in its proper place in a somewhat impatient gesture. But no one can seriously maintain that for them it did not occupy this place, or that they did not know it as the natural presupposition of their own problem, or that they did not recognise it again at the very latest in the controversy with their radical adversaries who were coming in at that time. Whether we explain it (W.A. 1535, p. 140) as a lack of theological consistency that they not only did not attack the doctrine of the early Church but in its proper place very solemnly affirmed it, or whether (with A. Ritschl, Rechtfert. u. Versohnung, Vol. 1, p. 145 f.) we see in this attitude the results of their ecclesiastico-political regard for the mediæval churchsystem, or that it is simply eliminated or simply trans­formed into the practice?

But the objection that we have only an untheological speculation in the dogma of Christ's deity is materially nonsensical and untenable and in the long run it is bound to recoil on its authors.

J. J. Spalding, who was perhaps the first to try to use the Melanchthon passage in this way, is typical of everything that is usually said along these lines even to our own day when he argues: "Not what the Son of God is in Himself, in His nature which is impervious to our understanding, is part of our true Christianity, of the religious knowledge which is generally necessary and fruitful, but what He is for us, that for which He was given to us, what we should thank Him for, how we should use and hold Him in order to attain to the blessedness to which He would lead us. And how definitely we can dispense with all those hard words and even harder concepts!" (op. cit., p. 142).

"If there exists a clear divine declaration that after my offences a conversion is
again granted to me and access to my blessedness is still open; if in this declaration I am told that this is mediated and given to me in Jesus Christ, I do not see why this basis of my reassurance should not be sufficiently reliable for me. To regard such a generally declared assurance as inadequate, not to be ready to trust it with full confidence, until I myself first see how God could make this blessing possible, or whether He was even competent to forgive sins, would mean the assumption on my part of a kind of right of judgment on the holy laws of God's government that cannot possibly belong to me. He promises me forgiveness through Christ; more I do not need. What my Redeemer had to do and had to be in order to accomplish this is no part of my religion whether in respect of my virtue or of my peace of mind; I simply leave it to Him who has so clearly given me His word about my reacceptance. This declaration and assurance of the true God that He will forgive me is incomparably more necessary for me to know than the way in which He brings it about that He can forgive me; and it would be hard to find adequate grounds for making both equally essential and important in religious knowledge" (p. 144 f.). In short, knowledge of what the dogma says gives to Christians "not the slightest addition to their blessedness and their solace, but a correspondingly greater one to the futile burdening of their understanding" (p. 147). This line of argument, which is typical of Enlightenment theology (in the broadest sense of the term), completely fails to see that the point of the dogma is not at all to enrich or obfuscate simple and self-sufficient religious knowledge by an explanation of the possibility of its content which is as subtle as it is superfluous, but that the issue in this religious knowledge—whatever burdening of the understanding this may involve and irrespective of the sense in which it may belong to my religion, virtue and peace of mind, or the mystery of the Word of God, i.e., that the truth of what Christ is for us, the truth of His beneficia, is the truth of the event of the divine manifestation and not the truth of a generally declared reassurance detached from this event. That the true God has forgiven me—this and not merely that He will forgive me is an essential attribute of God’s grace, i.e., of the very thing that really makes it grace. This declaration and assurance of the true God that He will forgive me is incomparably more necessary for me to know than the way in which He brings it about that He can forgive me; and it would be hard to find adequate grounds for making both equally essential and important in religious knowledge. It is this acknowledgment that is made in the Church dogma, whereas Enlightenment theology (in the broadest sense of the term) is obviously at war with it.

2. If we will accept only the Son of God for us without remembering that He is antecedently the Son of God in Himself this certainly cannot be called the knowledge of faith—if, that is, the knowledge of faith is the knowledge of a divine act, of an unveiling of the veiled God, and therefore of a coming forth or a way of God; if the knowledge of faith is distinguished from other knowledge by the fact that it is knowledge of the mystery of the speech of God—the speech of God which arises out of a silence of God, which is truth as an actual event between a terminus a quo and a terminus ad quem and not otherwise. If we think we can understand the beneficia Christi apart from this event, then it is we, and not the Church dogma that reminds us of this event, who are engaged in untheological speculation.

3. If we want to restrict the task of theological reflection to an understanding of Christ in His revelation but only in His revelation in itself and as such, then what standard and criterion can there be for this understanding, this highly vaunted beneficia Christi cognoscere? Obviously the criterion will have to be something man himself has brought. It may thus be, within the limit of our capability, either the evaluation of human greatness or the evaluation of the idea of God or a divine being. Since Christ is to be rated highly according to this humanly possible evaluation, we may to that extent, on the basis of our value judgment, call Him the Son of God. We are thus confronted again by the two christological types which we have learned to know as the Ebionite and the Docetic.

A. Ritschl—according to our classification his Christology, unlike that of the religious school which followed him, undoubtedly belongs to the Docetic type—has described as follows the process whereby there may be knowledge of Christ's deity on this presupposition: "If the grace and faithfulness and lordship over the world which are displayed both in Christ's mode of action and also in His bearing of suffering are the essential attributes of God that are decisive for the Christian religion, then in certain historical circumstances it was logical to establish the correct evaluation of the perfection of God's revelation through Christ in the predicate of His deity" (Unterricht in d. chr. Rel., 1875, § 24; cf. Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung, Vol. 3, p. 370 f.).

But all this interpreting, estimating and evaluating by a standard coarsely imported and applied to Christ by the theologian—is not
this real untheological speculation (even though in result and in its actual wording it does seem to bring us back again to the content of the Church dogma)? On the other hand, does not the Church dogma with its “antece­ dentely in Himself” strike this standard out of our hands when it says to us that the knowledge of Christ’s deity can only be the beginning and not the result of our thought?

Undoubtedly the dogma of Christ’s deity snaps any correlation between the divine revelation and human faith. The cycle of religious psychology, the theory of two accessible elements of truth in a unity of tension, and all such well-meant inventions no matter what we call them, can never lead us to what this dogma is seeking to say. And if everything that cannot be grasped by these instruments is for that reason illegitimate metaphysics, then certainly this dogma is metaphysics of that kind. But on the basis of the three points made above we may simply turn the tables and say that the illegitimate metaphysics in which the Reformers obviously did not indulge consists in absolutising the correlation that we suppose we can attain and survey and understand, in regarding it as the reality in which God has as he were delivered Himself up to man and human thought and speech, instead of remembering that our being in this relation may always be pure illusion, and our thought within it and speech about it may always be pure ideology, if they are not grounded in God Himself and continually confirmed by God Himself. Because and to the extent that what the dogma states is true, that God’s Word is the Word of God, for that reason and to that extent the correlation is also true. Its truth hangs as on a nail on the truth of which the dogma speaks. Similarly all the truth of our thinking and speaking about it hangs on knowledge of the truth of the dogma. Without this it is empty dreaming and chatter even though it has for a long time called itself a theology of revelation and faith. Just because Christ is the Son of God antecedently in Himself, there are two elements of truth in mutual tension (the elements of truth in Ebionite and Docetic thought) in which we recognise that He is God’s Son for us and not vice versa. How could a theology which does not know the freedom of God’s grace, which does not know the mystery of His way, which does not know the fear of God as the beginning of wisdom, how could such a theology come to call itself a theology of revelation and faith? How could it be knowledge of the beneficita Christi? Is not this defiant arrogance, all the worse because it pretends to be so humble? But there is no sense in scolding here. With particularly painful clarity we are faced here by the rift which divides the Evangelical Church. Those who are at loggerheads here can neither understand nor convince one another. They not only speak another language; they speak out of a different knowledge. They not only have a different theology; they also have a different faith. In the last resort we can only protest at this point as we can only protest against the assertions of Roman Catholic theology in other contexts.

For dogmatic science the most important record of the Church dogma of the deity of Christ is the portion of the second article of the so-called Symb. Nicaeno-Constantinopolitanum which relates to this problem.

The Symb. Nic. Const. is a baptismal creed of the last third of the 4th century, perhaps the baptismal creed of the Church of Constantinople (or Jerusalem?), in which the decisive trinitarian decisions of the Council of Nicaea (325) were adopted and which according to a not wholly certain tradition is supposed to have achieved recognition at the Council of Constantinople in 381. It became an established part of the Eastern liturgy from 565 and of the Western from 1014. We say that it is for us the most important record of the dogma of the deity of Christ on the following grounds:

1. Of the three ancient creeds accepted by the Reformation Churches its definitions are at this point both the most trenchant and also the most succinct.
2. While simply repeating for the most part the ancient creed of Nicaea at this point, it offers us the definitive results of the patristic discussion of Christ’s deity.
3. On account of its liturgical significance in the Eastern and Roman Catholic Churches, it is well adapted to remind us that over and above ecclesiastical divisions there was ecumenical consensus on the Christian confession, even though this was continually obscured.
4. It says unequivocally what Liberal Protestantism refuses to listen to, and for that very reason its validity must be recognised absolutely in an Evangelical dogmatism.

We shall conclude our consideration of the present problem with a short commentary on the relevant passage. It runs thus:

(Priestly . . . )

1. in unum Dominum Jesum Christum 1. We believe in the one Lord Jesus Christ.
2. filium Dei unigenitum 2. We believe that He is the Son of God.
3. et ex Patre natum, ante omnia saecula 3. and begotten of the Father, before all ages.
4. Deum de Deo, lignem de ligneo, Deum 4. from God, from God, God from God, genuinum non factum
5. consubstantialem Patri 5. of the same substance as the Father.
6. et de ipso propter eum 6. and of the same substance for His sake.

(Text, Denzinger, No. 86) (Text, Missale Romanum)

I. We believe in the one Lord Jesus Christ. The term “Lord” points in the first instance to the significance of Jesus Christ for us. In relation to us He is the Bearer of authority and power. He has a claim on us and control over us. He commands and rules. But He does not do so accidentally and provisionally, nor partially and restrictedly, like other lords. His lordship is not derivative nor grounded in a higher lordship. It is lordship in the final and definitive sense of the word. It is self-grounded lordship. This is the point of the “one” Lord. Its meaning is that the confession “Jesus Christ is
Lord" is not just an analysis of the meaning of Jesus Christ for us as this is manifested to us in faith. It tells us that grounded in Himself, and apart from what He means for us, Jesus Christ is what He means for us, and that He can mean this for us because quite apart therefrom He is it antecedently in Himself.

How could faith (as the apprehension of what Jesus Christ means for us) succeed in regarding itself as the justification of that confession? On the contrary, faith can regard itself as justified by the fact that prior to all apprehension of ours Jesus Christ is in Himself the very One as whom He gives Himself to be apprehended by us. Christus quamquam sit coelestis et sempiternae conditionis creaturarum, non fames eum, quomium ab illo condita est, Deum credebit, sed idea potius est condenda, quia credebit... (Augustine, De civ. Dei, XXII, 6, 1).

The phrase "the one" Lord relates Jesus Christ directly to the Father of whom the confession has said emphatically in the first article that He is the one God. If there can be no rivalry between the words "God" and "Lord" when they refer to the one being—to the one being in the same way as the statements about creation and reconciliation refer to the one work of this one being—then this phrase already makes the decisive point that Jesus Christ is Himself this being, that He is not just His legate or plenipotentiary, but that He is identical with Him. Because He is the one Lord, because He is the Lord in this strictest sense, His lordship for us, in His revelation, has no beginning and no end; it breaks in upon us with the unique and incomparable thrust of eternal truth and reality itself; it cannot be perceived or inferred from any standpoint whatever; knowledge of it begins with its acknowledgment. Only if He were another Lord, one of the lords within our world, could things be different. But He is this Lord, the "Lord of all lords" (Deut. 10:17; 1 Tim. 6:15). He has this significance for us because it corresponds to what His being is "antecedently in Himself."

2. We believe in Jesus Christ as the only-begotten Son of God. The term "Son" will be dealt with under point 4. The phrase "only-begotten" first emphasises the oneness, which means the exclusiveness and uniqueness of the revelation and reconciliation enacted in Jesus Christ. To believe in Him as the Son of God is to know no other Son of God alongside Him, i.e., to know no other revelations which would be for us the revelation of God Himself, to know no other reconciliations in which we would be aware of being reconciled to God Himself. There are indeed other, immanent revelations and reconciliations accomplished within the created world; there are revelations of the spirit and revelations of nature. One man can reveal himself to another. And man can be reconciled to his destiny, even to death, and even—which is perhaps the greatest thing of all—to his fellow-man. But none of all this is the act of the Son of God. At any rate if a man believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, if God is revealed to him in Him and he is reconciled to God through Him, he will not see works of other sons of God in all those revelations and reconciliations. If they are to be authentic revelations and reconciliations, they can only be identical with the revelation and reconciliation through the Son of God. Jesus Christ will have to be recognised as living and acting in them. The one revelation and reconciliation will not be one among others. Yet this is not all that the confession is saying in the clause about the only-begotten Son of God.

If this were all it might still mean that the New Testament  

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... and such. The exclusiveness of this belief, the so-called "absoluteness of Christianity," would then be the content of the confession. But if by μονογενής the confession is confessing the oneness and uniqueness of the revelation that took place in Jesus Christ, this is something very different from the absoluteness of Christianity. The confession is not saying that in faith, even in faith understood as a decision, we can and should choose one possibility among many others and label and claim it as absolute in distinction from the many others. How can this kind of exaltation of Jesus Christ attach itself to faith when the meaning of His exaltation by His heavenly Father is already quite different, when it is not an innovation but the confirmation of something original and intrinsic? The uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and therefore the uniqueness of the revelation and reconciliation enacted in Him, is not a predicate subsequently conferred on Him by God. It is to be understood as the content of an analytic, not a synthetic, statement. Monogenēs is not to be interpreted by διάμορφος but  

vice versa: Non ideo μονογενής dicitur, quia διάμορφος sed ideo est diamorphos quia μονογενής (Quenstedt, Thes. did. pol., 1685, 1, cap. 9, sect. 1, th. 34).

The only-begotten Son is according to Jn. 1:18 the one God. God Himself, God in Himself, is in the mode of being of the only-begotten of the Father. This is why this Only-begotten is the object of the Father's love and this is why He can be the object of our faith. Before all revelation and all faith, before it is given to man to behold the glory of this Only-begotten (Jn. 1:14), this glory is the glory of God Himself. And this is why it is "grace and truth " in its revelation. This is why its revelation has to be unique. The uniqueness of its revelation and of reconciliation corresponds to what God in His own being is antecedently in Himself: the Son of the Father, beside whom there can no more be a second Son of the Father than there can be a second God alongside the one God.

3. We believe in Jesus Christ as the begotten of the Father before all time. Our starting-point here, too, must be the fact that this is
saw of Jesus Christ as the Revealer of God and therefore of the God who acts on us and for us in time. Hence the statement about God as such does not stand abstractly as a second statement alongside a first statement about God as the Lord of our history. The statement about God as the Lord of our history is underscored by the statement that He is God as such and not a mere analogy of God, even the highest, in a sphere of reality distinct from God. He does not signify God Himself; He is God Himself. The phrase "before all time" does not, then, exclude time, whether the illic et tunc of revelation as it is attested in Scripture or the hic et nunc in which it is to become revelation for us. It does not exclude but includes time, concretely this time, the time of revelation. Hence it does not exclude history; it includes it. But the fact that time (the time of our time, the time and history of the sinful creature—and this is also the time and history of revelation) is included in a divine "before all time" is not something that we can take for granted. It is grace, mystery, a basis that we must recognise in the fear of God. Hence the statement about God as such, about God Himself, must be explicitly made even at the risk of the misunderstanding that we might be speaking without revelation and faith, that we might be speaking "non-historically," at the very point where everything depends on our speaking correctly about revelation and faith, about history. Even the statement about God as the Lord of our history is not as such immune from misunderstanding. In itself it might be construed as a statement of anthropological metaphysics. But it, too, can and must be construed only as an underscoring of the statement about God as such. Certainly the statement about the pre-existence of Jesus Christ is only an explication of the statement about His existence as the Revealer and the Reconciler, as the God who acts in us and for us in time. But just as truly the statement about His existence is only an explanation of the statement about His pre-existence. This One, the Son of God who exists for us, is the Pre-existent. But only this One, the pre-existent Son of God, is the One who exists for us. The dogma of the incarnation of the Son of God will elucidate the first statement. The dogma of the deity of Christ which is our concern here emphasises the second.

The second article of the Nic. Const. distinguishes very clearly between these two circles of knowledge. The dogma of the incarnation is not stated explicitly in the Nic. Const. but in the Ephe. 431 and the Chalcedonensis of 451.

"Begotten of the Father before all time" means that He did not come into being in time as such, that He did not come into being in an event within the created world. That the Son of God becomes man and that He is known by other men in His humanity as the Son of God are events, even if absolutely distinctive events, in time, within the created world. But their distinction does not itself derive or come from time. Otherwise they would be only relatively distinctive events, of which there are others. Precisely because they have divine power, because the power of this world is here the power of the world to come, because the power of God's immanence is here the power of His transcendence, their subject must be understood as being before all time, as the eternal Subject, eternal as God Himself, eternal as God. Jesus Christ does not first become God's Son when He is it for us. He becomes it from eternity; He becomes it as the eternal Son of the eternal Father.

"Before all time" should not be regarded, then, as a temporal definition. Ab qua initio, semper ac sine fine: Pater generans, Filius nascens et Spiritus sanctus procedens, says the Conc. Lat. IV, 1215, of God's three modes of being. On a passage often quoted in this context, namely, Ps. 2:7: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," Cyril of Jerusalem has the pertinent comment: Τὸ δὲ σήμερον, οὐ πρόφητας, διὸ σήμερον ἔχοντος, πρὸ πάντων τῶν πάνων (Cat., 11, 5). Vox "hodie" notat diem immutabilis aeternitatis, is Quenstedt's paraphrase (op. cit., th. 15), and in regard to its relation to time he then interprets the concept of the generation of the Son from the Father as follows (th. 28): Haec generatio Filii Dei non fit derivations aus transmutations, nec actions, quae in ipso aut desinat, sed fit indesinente emanatione, cui simile nihil habetur in rerum natura. Deus Pater enim filium suum ab aeterno genitum et semper gignit, nec semper distinct gignere. Si enim generatio filii finem habet, habebet etiam in infinitum et sic aeterni non esset. Of this divine "antecedently" (which decides the temporal event that affects us to-day), we can and must say equally, then, that it takes place to-day, that it took place yesterday, and that it will take place tomorrow. Nec tamen propterea generatio haec dici potest imperfecta et successiva. Actus nuncupationis in Pater et Filio consideratur in opera perfectus, in operatione perpetua. That is to say, the transcendence of the "antecedently" over all time cannot mean an emptying of the temporal event which is based on this "antecedently," for this is genuine and eternal transcendence. What is real in God must constantly become real precisely because it is real in God (not after the manner of created being). But this becoming (because it is this becoming) rules out every need of this being for completion. Indeed, this becoming simply confirms the perfection of this being.

4. We believe in Jesus Christ as light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made. In this clause we have the true and decisive trinitarian definition of Christ's deity. It states two things: First, that in God's work and essence we have to distinguish light and light, God and God, to distinguish them in the same way that in the created world we have to distinguish a source of light and a light that emanates from it, or a light that kindles and a light that is kindled, or father and son, or speaker and the word spoken. Then we have to understand this distinction as a distinction in God Himself. We have not to understand it as though there were God on the one side and a creature on the other, but in such a way that the one God is found equally on both sides. We shall try to understand the two series that are discernible here together, in their mutual relationship to one another.
In the first instance the statements about distinction and unity in God are simply statements about revelation as the Church has found it attested in Holy Scripture. At this point, in this revelation, God is here and God is there, God in this way and God in that way, God is the Creator and God is the Reconciler, and yet He is one and the same God. We have here the concealed God and the revealed God, and yet the concealed God is no other than the revealed God and vice versa. In the first instance the dogma simply corresponds to the dialectic of revelation as such; it repeats the distinction and the unification. But according to the preceding clause it is now incontestable that with reference to the revelation that took place in Jesus Christ, in interpretation of the revelation as such, we have to say something that is more than the revelation. By revelation we have to say something that is beyond and above the revelation. We have to say that, as Christ is in revelation, so He is antecedently in Himself. Thus He is antecedently in Himself light of light, very God of very God, the begotten of God and not His creature. We have to take revelation with such utter seriousness that in it as God’s act we must directly see God’s being too.

To say that our concern is with the distinction and unity of two modes of being in God is to say already that while we can and must try to define this distinction and unity we cannot expect to grasp it in these definitions. We can and must think them out and express them. To try to avoid doing so is to try to evade knowledge of them. But it is with the biblical witness to God’s revelation, as we have felt we must understand it, that knowledge of them is imposed on us as at least the task of dogmatics. We have good reason to recall that knowledge of God’s Word can only be knowledge in faith. Decisively, then, it can only be acknowledgment, man’s responsibility to the question which is set by this object. This responsibility cannot be discharged by grasping this object or seizing control of it. The object will always remain an object for what we think and say. What we think and say will never be commensurate with it; it will always be incommensurate (inadequate). Even though we reproduce the dogma or indeed the very statements of Holy Scripture it is only by God’s grace and not intrinsically that the content of knowledge can be proper to what we think and say. Regarded immanently, what we think and say will always be in itself inadequate and broken thought and utterance.

(a) Relatively the least vulnerable of the three phrases in the clause is the middle one: “Very God of very God.” The ek denotes very briefly the distinction in modes of being: Very God grounded in and proceeding from very God—that is Jesus Christ. That is God only in this mode of being. The distinction of mode of being in which Jesus Christ is God consists, then, in the relation to another mode of being, a relation which the ek shows to be a grounding in or proceeding from.

Conversely the unity of the two modes of being as modes of being of an absolutely identical being is denoted by the repetition of the noun theos along with the emphatic repetition of the adjective homoousia.

In what became the official Latin text the crescendo: Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero, is obviously intentional. In his controversy with Caroli, Calvin called the passage a batalologia, a carmen magis cantillando aptum quam formula confessionis, in qua syllaba una redundat absurdo est (Adv. P. Caroli calumnias, C.R., 7, 315 f.). But it is better to think that the intensification of thought from lesser to greater definition is meant to be achieved as it were in acta.

The difficulty in even this very simple formula consists in the fact that as soon as we try to explain the ek either as above or similarly, it unavoidably gives rise to the idea of two autonomous beings in a specific relation of dependence to one another, or, if this concept is avoided, it becomes meaningless, so that there is no longer any reference to a distinction in the Deus versus. The truth signified actually lies beyond the words that signify it. Deus versus and Deus versus do not confront one another as autonomous beings but are twofold in one and the same autonomous being. This is what no language can render adequately; even the language of dogma can render it only very inadequately.

(b) In the first phrase “light of light” we have a lofty but all the more parlous attempt at illustration. In the first instance what is probably in view is the image of the sun and sunlight, of which the fathers were particularly fond. Jesus Christ as one mode of being in God is related to the first mode of being in which it is grounded and from which it proceeds, in the same manner as sunlight is to the sun.

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The decisive phrase is naturally the third: "Begotten, not made."

In the negative part, there are two aspects to this. Firstly, it tells us that as a mode of being in God, Jesus Christ is certainly from God, yet He is not from God in the way that creatures from the highest angel to the smallest particle of sun-dust are from God, namely, by creation, i.e., in such a way that had His existence, as an existence distinct from God, through the will and word of God. This can, of course, be said of the human nature of Christ, of His existence as a man in which, according to Scripture, He meets us as the Reveal of God and the Reconciler to God. But it cannot be said of Him who here assumes human nature, of Him who here exists as man ("for us men," as Nic. Const. says later) but does not allow His being and essence to be exhausted or imprisoned in His humanity, who is also in the full sense not man in this humanity, who is the Reveal and Reconciler in His humanity by virtue of that wherein He is not man. He who becomes man here to become the Reveal and Reconciler is not made. Otherwise revelation and reconciliation would be an event within creation and, since creation is the world of fallen man, they would be a futile event. Because the One who here became man is God, God in this mode of being, therefore, and not otherwise, His humanity is effective as revelation and reconciliation.

We now turn to the positive side of the phrase. Surprisingly enough it denotes the real becoming of Jesus Christ, His eternal becoming appropriate to Him as God, His relation of origin and dependence as God in His distinctive mode of being. And it uses a figure of speech from the creaturely realm to do this. And, one might add, it uses the figure of speech which characterises this sphere as no other could. "Begotten," which means, in an eminent sense, that He has come into being as all living things in creation have come into being on the basis and presupposition of the divine Word of creation, that He has come into being in the context of sex and the nexus of the species, that He has come into being as the worm has come into being, that He has come into being as man comes into being, in the process in which creation and sin, in what is perhaps the most enigmatic way, are not interfused but opposed even as they exist together. We must not shut our eyes to this stumbling-block if we are to reach understanding here.

Thomas Aquinas thinks that what is properly expressed by the metaphor of generation is the procreation of the Word of God. (S. theol., 1, qu. 27, art. 2). On this point we must say that genерatio and the processio verbi are certainly to be regarded as terms for the same thing, yet not in such a way that one of the terms can be simply reduced to the other. Processio verbi may also be regarded as an important figure of speech but in its own way it is inadequate too. Both metaphors, that of the Son and that of the Word of God, point to an object with which they are not commensurate. But for that very reason each of them must be taken seriously, and neither should be abandoned with a reference to the other.

Obviously the natural character of the metaphor of begetting makes it clear at the outset that in all that is said about Father and Son in description of the two modes of being in God we have a frail and contestable figure of speech. We denote God in this way but we do not grasp Him.

The early Church, which did not invent the metaphor but found it in Holy Scripture, where it is the most prominent figure of speech for this fact, was by no means unaware of its inadequacy and often stated this. Est in nos mysterio generationis, quae est omnibus imperfectionibus generationis physice adhaerebitibus sicingum (Quenstedt, op. cit., th. 47). And already Cyril of Jerusalem demands expressly that not only the most patent physical sense of the term generation but also the sense of intellectual generation (e.g., in the teacher-pupil relation) and that of spiritual generation (as in believers when they become children of God) must be completely ruled out in this regard (Cat., 11, 9).

But what, then, does the metaphor mean?

In place of the categories of understanding which have been rightly rejected Quenstedt put a new one invented for the purpose when he spoke of a generatio hyperphysica, quae fit ab aeterno, sine omni temporis successione, materia et mutatione et in sola essentiae communicatio consistit. But Irenaeus had made the same point in a more illuminating way when he declared: Si quis tuegisse nobis dictum: Quoniam ergo Filius prolatus a Patre est? dicimus et, quia prolatisum ipsum, sive generationem, sive nunciationem, sive adspersionem aut qualibet quod nomine vocaveris generationem eius ianuarialis existentiam, nemo novit, non Valentinus, non Marcion, neque Saturninus, neque Basilides, neque angelus, neque archangelus, neque principes, neque patesites, nisi solus qui generavit Patem et qui natus est Filium (C. o. h., II, 28, 6) and so had Cyril of Jerusalem when he declared that the Father begets the Son of whom no one knows; the only possible thing we can say of this begetting is how it did not take place (Cat., 11, 11). Mihi est curioshe inde loqui de genere, utrumque mutum aeternitatis (ib., 11, 12). Est enim in dominio, vel in sphaera, vel in mode, vel in individuo (ib., 11, 14). Taken strictly, even the concept of communicatio essentiae says something which cannot be said without denying the unity of God's essence, and it becomes obscure or meaningless if it is not taken strictly. It does not carry us beyond the barrier which Quenstedt, too, had to admit in another passage (op. cit., 1, cap. 9, sect. 5, qu. 8, fund. col. 5): Satis est, nos hic ro de tener, quod scripstate dixist, vel ro nolite recessisse, sed statui, qui non luc erit.

In all its secularity and inadequacy, which we cannot possibly overlook, the figure of the Father and the Son says that a similar—not the same but a very different, an inconceivably and inexpressibly different—nevertheless a similar distinction and continuity exists to that between the person of a father and the person of a son in the created world, that there is a similar being of the first for the second and a similar being of the second from the first, that there is a similarity of twoness and oneness of the same being, between the mode of being in which God is revealed to us in Jesus Christ and the mode of being from which He is as He who is revealed to us in Jesus Christ. The very thing which, veiled in the puzzling co-existence of creation and sin, we know
only as the begetting of a son by a father, though it is not grasped but only denoted in its true How by this figure, being just as unfathomable to us in its true How as is the being of God generally—this same thing is God’s self-positing in which He is also and through Himself alone indis­solubly distinct, the Father of Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ the Son of the Father. Even this most forceful figure can do no more, and does not seek to do more, than summon us to knowledge, not trying even for a moment to tie us to itself but at once directing our gaze beyond itself to the object to which, powerless though it is in itself, it can respond, leading us to the acknowledgment in which alone knowledge can consist here. All the associations which might be meaningfully suggested by the image are legitimate, and none is legitimate. Everything we might think of in this connexion, the fruitfulness of the Father, the love that does not let Him want to be alone, the dependence of the Son’s existence on the Father, the love He owes to the Father with His existence, the indestructible fellowship between the two which is not grounded in choice but in their two-sided existence—all this may be expressed and on all this we must be able to be silent again. The knowledge expressed in the metaphor is a non-knowing knowledge. It should regard itself as a knowing non-knowledge. Like every human word—though this is seldom so clear as here—it can only serve the Word which God Himself says about Himself. In this figure, which even in itself and as such denotes the deepest mystery of creaturely life, we can and should think of everything that can be meaningfully thought of in relation to the Father-Son relation in God, and we should then say: We are unprofitable servants, we have only thought and said in figures to that about which we have thought and spoken, not to what we have thought and said is correct. Correctness belongs exclusively to that about which we have thought and spoken, not to what we have thought and spoken.

That the “begotten,” along with the whole metaphor of father and son, says nothing, or does not say the truth, respecting God, does not in the least follow from all this. What it says is inappropriate, but it does say something and it says the truth. If we call what is said about Father and Son figurative, it should be remembered that this can apply only to our human speech as such but not to its object. It is not true, then, that the father-son relation is itself originally and properly a creaturely reality. It is not true that in some hidden depth of His essence God is something other than Father and Son. It is not true that these names are just freely chosen and in the last analysis meaning­less symbols, symbols whose original and proper non-symbolical content lies in that creaturely reality. On the contrary, it is in God that the father-son relation, like all creaturely relations, has its original and proper reality. The mystery of begetting is originally and properly a divine and not a creaturely mystery. Perhaps one ought even to say that it is the divine mystery.

...
§ 1. God the Son

When God speaks, then Nous and Logos share equal truth and dignity. Deus totius existens mens et totus existens logos, quod cogitat, hoc et loquitur et quod loquitur, hoc et cogitatur (Irenaeus, C. H., II, 12, 8 and 28, 5). Non enim se ipsum integre perfecundum divisisit, si aliquid minus aut amplius in eis Verbo quam in ipso (Augustine, De trin., XV, 14). Etenim non potest aliud quem quod es aut aliud maius vel minus te esse in verbo, quo teipsum dictis, quantum verbum tuum sic est verum quod est veras (Anselm of Canterbury, Pros. 23). "When Moses said, 'In the beginning God made heaven and earth,' no person is yet specifically named or expressed. But as soon as he saith further, 'And God said, Let there be light,' he expresseth that there was a Word with God before light came into being. Now the same Word that God speaketh there could not be the thing that was created there, neither heaven nor earth, since God, just by speaking what He does, maketh heaven and earth with the light and all other creatures, so He hath done nothing more to create save His Word, therefore it must have been before all creatures. But if it were before, ere time and creatures began, it must be eternal and another and higher being than all creatures, whereupon it followeth that it is God." (Luther, Sermon on Gen. 1, 1527, W. A., 24, p. 29, l. 4).

Jesus Christ, the Word of God, meets us as no other than God, but in another way, in a different mode of being compared with God in so far as God speaks the Word, in so far as the Word goes forth from Him.

"But if God speaketh and the Word falleth, He is not alone nor can He personally be Himself the Word that He speaketh. Therefore, because the Word is also God, it must be another person. Thus the two persons are expressed: the Father who speaketh the Word and hath essence of Himself, the Son who is the Word and is from the Father and is eternally and is with Him" (Luther, O. cit., l. 14, cf. W. A., 107, p. 183, l. 13).

The same revelation thus compels us to separate God and His Word and also to unite them.

"Who cannot here gather from these words of Moses how there must be two persons in the Godhead and yet but one Godhead? unless he wills to deny clear Scripture. Again, who is so acute as he may here contradict? He must allow the word to be something other than God its speaker, and must yet confess it was before all creatures and the creature was made thereby; so he must certainly allow it also to be God, apart from the creatures there is naught but God. So he must also confess, there is but one God. And so this scripture compeleth and conclueth that these two persons are one complete God, and each is the one, true, perfect, natural God who hath created all things, and that the Speaker hath not His being from the Word but the Word its being from the Speaker, yet all eternally and in eternity apart from all creatures" (Luther, Sermon on Jn. 1, 1522, W. A., 107, p. 184, l. 6).

This distinction and unity in God which is inescapably presented to us in revelation itself is acknowledged and underlined by the dogma when it understands Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the eternal Word. The Word of God in which He gives Himself to be known by us is none other than that in which He knows Himself. For this reason and in this way it is God's own Word, the Word of God, which is His revelation. According to the preceding development in the history of the dogma, it is beyond question that whenever the Nic. Const. spoke
of the Son of God it always meant the Word of God too. The Word is the one Lord. The Word is spoken by the Father before all time. The Word is light of light, very God of very God. The Word is spoken by God, not made. Alongside the statement that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of the eternal Father one may thus put the statement that He is the eternal Word of the Father who speaks from all eternity, or the eternal thought of the Father who thinks from all eternity, the Word in which God thinks Himself or expresses Himself by Himself.

Jesus Christ is God's eternal emanatio intelligibilis utpote verbi intelligibilis a dicente, quod manet in ipso (Thomas Aquinas, S. theol., I, qu. 27, art. 1).

As the Word which God thinks or speaks eternally by Himself and whose content can thus be no other than God Himself, Jesus Christ as God's second mode of being is God Himself. Yet we must not disguise the fact that on our lips and in our concepts this way of speaking is also inappropriate. We do not know what we are saying when we call Jesus Christ the eternal Word of God. We know no word which, though distinct from a speaker, still contains and reproduces the whole essence of the speaker. We know no Logos with an adequate Nous-content and no Nous which can be exhaustively expressed in a Logos. We know no thought or speech which can transcend the antithesis of knowledge and being in triumphant synthesis. In short, we know no true word. Neither do we know, then, the true word about the true Word, God's Word. We must say once more what we said about the father-son relation. For us who think and speak in the doubly veiled sphere of creatureliness and sinfulness, the true word is strictly and exclusively the eternal Word concealed in God, Jesus Christ Himself. It is not that our creaturely thought and word has in relation to the creaturely reason which produces the creaturely logos a metaphorical aptitude which justifies the claim that we are thinking and speaking the truth when we call Jesus Christ the Word of God. It requires revelation and faith, and the connected gracious event of the incarnation of the eternal Word and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, if what we know as word to be continually awakened and raised up to this metaphorical aptitude, so that it may become the truth when we call Jesus Christ the Word of God.

"Now must we open wide the heart and understanding, that we regard not such a word as a man's petty and halting word, but as he is great that speaketh, so great must we consider his word. 'Tis a word he speaketh in himself, and it abideth in him and is never sundered from him, Therefore according to the apostle's thought we must so think as God speaketh with Himself to Himself and leaveth a word about Himself in Himself, but the same word is no mere wind or sound, but bringeth with it the whole essence of the divine nature, and as is said earlier in the epistle about appearance and likeness, the divine nature is so depicted that it is wholly present in the likeness and it becometh and is itself the likeness, and the clarity thus exceedeth the appearance and passes essentially into the appearance. Accordingly then God also speaketh His word about Himself that His whole godhead followeth the word and naturally abideth in the word and is essential. Lo, we see there whence the apostle hath his language that he calleth Christ an image of the divine being and an appearance of the divine honour, namely, from this text of Moses, who there teacheth that God speaketh a word about Himself which may not be other than an image that indicateth Him. For every word is a sign that signifieth somewhat. But here is that signified, naturally in sign or word, which is not in other signs; therefore he rightly calleth it an essential image or sign of his nature" (Luther, op. cit., p. 186, l. 9).

On account of the inadequacy of this figure of speech it is inadvisable to bring the concept of the deity of Christ under the denominator of the image of "word."

There seems to be at least a strong tendency in this direction in Thomas Aquinas, cf. S. theol., I, qu. 27, art. 2 and also qu. 34. Nor does this rest on any particularly high estimation of "word" as the episteme of revelation, Scripture or Church proclamation, but rather on his anthropology, i.e., on his high opinion of the process of knowledge as the similitudo supremae creaturarum (qu. 27, art. 1). In regard to this it must be said that an emanatio verbi manentis in dicente is metaphorically apt, not because such a similitudo is inmanent in it, but because it is awakened and raised up to be a similitudo, a likeness, and therefore to metaphorical aptness, in the event of revelation and faith. The same may naturally be said in opposition to Augustine's doctrine of the vestitgium or the imago trinitatis in the three powers of the soul, memoria, intellectus and amor. There is no analogy entis but only an analogia fidei. But it is instructive to see the preference which on the basis of his own theory Augustine, too, gives to the concept of word: "Ec quippe filius quo verbum, isti est reversus again: et eo verbum quo filius (De trin., VII, 2). He is well aware, of course, that by "Son" something is said about Jesus Christ which cannot be said by "word" and which must always be added in thought to what we know as word, namely, the continuity and oneness of essence between Speaker and Spoken. So he must combine the images: Verbo quod genuit dicens est, non verbo, quod profertur et sonat et translat, sed . . . Verbo aequili sibi quo semper est immutabiliter dicti seipsum (ib., VII, 1). Seipsum dicens genuit Verbum sibi aequale per omnia, . . . Et idem Verbum hoc vere veritas est (ib., XV, 14). And Thomas Aquinas, too, does not hesitate to admit that different nomina are needed to express the perfection of the divine origin of Christ: Filius, splendor, imago, verbum. Non autem potuit unam nomem insinuari, per quod omnia ista (namely, everything that is meant to be designated by this whole of these terms) designaretur (S. theol., I, qu. 34, art. 3, ad. 3). F. Diekamp's conclusio theologica that "the begetting of the Son from the Father is an intellectual one" (Kath. Dogm., Vol. I, 6th edn., 1930, p. 329 f.) must be described as an unwarranted systematisation even of the view of Thomas. Cf. in this respect the more cautious attitude of B. Hartmann, Lehrb. d. Dogm., Vol. I, 4th edn., 1928, p. 198 f., especially the references to Thomas given on p. 200.

It is when we use all the metaphors, including that of the Word, with an awareness of their limitations that in respect of the event of revelation and faith we shall always be the more confident to speak the divine truth in our human untruth: pecatores iusti.
§ II. God the Son

5. We believe in Jesus Christ as being "of one substance (or essence) with the Father." Historically the incorporation of this phrase into the original Nicene was a bold anticipation, dubious in many respects, but ultimately justifiable both historically and materially.

Ecclesiastically, it was more than doubtful that Constantine I presumed to force this τὸ ὑμωμοσύνα on the council of 325 and that the majority of the council allowed the imposition of this imperial theology in spite of their well-considered persuasion to the contrary. Morally one is bound to sympathise, not with the orthodox minority who were given the victory in this way, and even less with the middle party of Eusebius which apparently yielded for the sake of peace, but rather with the unfortunate Arius and his few followers who preferred deposition and exile to abandoning their resistance. (There was a similar scandal to the detriment of the Nicene faith at Milan in 335.) Furthermore the meaning and intention behind the triumph of the ὑμωμοσύνα was far from clear; before Nicaea, and for a long time afterwards, it was by no means obvious whether the concept of ἀμοιβασία (a term already familiar to Valentinian Gnosticism according to Irenaeus, C. o. h. I, 5, 1) did not involve subscription to Sabellianism or even a form of tritheism. In the 3rd and 4th centuries there was good reason to be opposed to this term. In 305 it had even been explicitly rejected at a council in Antioch in justifiable self-defence against Paul of Samosata. And even the group of theologians who eventually won the victory for the doctrine of Christ's eternal deity, the so-called Neo-Nicenes, finally accepted it only upon a very precise interpretation, i.e., in the sense of equality of essence along with distinction of the persons. It was understandable that the making of a dogma out of the hitherto relatively little discussed ἀμοιβασία should become the standard in a battle for or against it which occupied the whole period between 325 and 381 and in which, by wide detours and with many setbacks, the Church had later to learn to understand what it had intended and decided in 325 homoiousia con-fusionem et Dei providentiam. One may well ask whether the authoritative theologians at the time of the Council of Constantinople, the Cappadocians in particular, would themselves have devised this formula. Even the West, which was better able to resist Arianism, and which at certain points was the salvation of the Nicene faith, did not finally produce the ὑμωμοσύνα but accepted it as a fait accompli.

In fact one can understand and acknowledge this formula only after recognising quite fearlessly the problems of its origin. But in this way one can and must acknowledge it. One must do so historically, for with the ψευδοδιον και the γεννηθέντα ως παρθένη, but less ambiguously than either of these for the thought of the time, it proved to be the formula by which the Arius contradiction was finally bound to be unmasked as such and broken. Hilary (De Syn., c. 83) once wrote not without humour: Homousia si cui displicet, placat necesse est, quod ab Ariano sit negatum. One must also acknowledge it materially, for even if the Church had great difficulty in seeing what it meant by it, and was far from seeing that when it was made a dogma in 325, what it did positively mean by it is for us who come after expressly enough in this formula along with the others in the symbol.

"Of one substance or essence," i.e., of identical essence, is the meaning of ὑμωμοσύνα or consubstantialis as a dogma. This is how it was understood by Athanasius, who was virtually the leading man in the Church in this whole matter: ἀμοιβασία γὰρ ἐν τῷ παρθένῳ ὑμωμοσύνῃ τῶν εἰκόνων τῶν πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τῆς τύχης τῶν ἀγαθῶν (De. decr. nic. syn. 23), ἵνα μὴ μόνον ὑμωμοσύνῃ τῶν νόοι, ἀλλὰ...
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concept of the dogma we may say what we have said of all the formulæ in the preceding phrases. We do not even remotely grasp the object to which there is an attempt to respond in this concept. Precisely when we do not construe the concept of homoousia polytheistically nor modalistically, precisely when we interpret it with Athanasius and Augustine as identity of essence on the one side and when, taking up the concern of the Neo-Nicenes, we let it speak to us of two distinct but equal modes of being in the one essence on the other side, it is plainly referring to an essence of which we have no idea at all; it thus becomes a concept of the type philosophy usually calls "empty concepts." We have stated often enough that distinction in unity and unity in distinction is the point in all trinitarian theology. In relation to the concept of homoousia, which is trying to express both at the same time, it is thus as well to grant that in the last resort we are familiar only with unities without distinction or distinctions without unity. All images fail at this limit of our thought and speech: the image of Father and Son, that of Speaker and Word, that of light and light, and that of original and copy, which is a metaphor too. For in these we never have one essence in what are really two modes of being or else we never have two modes of being in what is really one essence. Either we have one essence in what are only apparently and transiently two modes of being or we have two modes of being with two corresponding essences. It all depends on our interpretation of the metaphors, and they can all be interpreted in two ways. The one real essence in two real modes of being is God Himself and God alone. He Himself and alone is both Father and Son, Speaker and Word, light and light, original and copy. From Him the created, sinful creature receives the truth of its relationships by revelation. It must confess Him, not independently or arbitrarily, but by His revelation in faith, if it is to know its own truth. The concept of homoousia is not an attempt at independent, arbitrary, so-called natural knowledge of God. It seeks to serve the knowledge of God by His revelation in faith. We have not concealed the historical and material ambiguity of this particular concept. Hence we neither can nor would hide the fact that considered in itself it serves the knowledge of God very badly. For philosophers and philosophical theologians it has always been easy game. But it may be that very little depends on its immanent soundness or unsoundness. It may be that even in its obvious frailty it was the necessary standard which necessarily had to be set up in the 4th century and which even to-day, as often before, has still to be kept aloft against the new Arians, not as the standard of a foolhardy speculative intuition of the Church, but as the standard of an unheard-of encounter which has overtaken the Church in Holy Scripture. If this is so, of what avail is anything that might be said against it? Do we not have to be aware of all these objections, and yet still acknowledge it as the dogma which the Church, having once recognised, can never let go again? For in all its folly it is more true than all the wisdom which has voiced its opposition to it. We have no reason to take any other view of it. We are under no illusion as to the fact that we do not know what we are saying when we take this term upon our lips. But still less can we be under any illusion as to the fact that all the lines of our deliberations on the deity of Christ converge at the point where we must assent to the dogma that Jesus Christ is ὁμοούσιος τῷ πατρί, consubstantialis Patri.

It is fitting that we should again listen to Luther, who by means of the distinction and unity of original and copy has also made the decisive point that must be made concerning the concept of homoousia: "Thus in these words 'tis powerful taught that Christ is one true God with the Father, equal to Him in all things, without distinction, except that He is from the Father and not the Father from Him, like as radiance is from the brightness of the divine essence and not the brightness of the divine essence from the radiance." "So too when he says that He is the image of His substance he likewise attesteth powerfully that Christ must be true and natural God and yet there are not on that account many gods but one God. 'Tis said it is a counterfeit when a picture is made exactly like that of which it is a picture. But it is a lack in all pictures that they have not nor are the same essence or nature as that of which is depicted, but are of another nature or essence. As when a painter, or carver, or stone-mason depicts a king or prince on a canvas, block, or stone as exact and like as ever he can, so that all eyes must say: Lo, that is this or that king, prince, or man, etc. This is naturally an image or counterfeit. But it is not the essence, nor nature of the king, prince, or man, etc. It is a poor picture, image, or figure of it, and hath another essence, for its nature or essence is stone, wood, canvas, or paper, and whoso seeth or graspeth it doth not see nor grasp the essence, nature, or substance of the man, and every one saith, 'Tis a wooden or stone or canvas likeness. But it is not the living, essential likeness of the men. . . . But here Christ is the image of the Father, so that He is the likeness of His divine essence, and not made of another nature, but is (if one may so speak) a divine image which is of God and hath divinity in itself or of itself, as a crucifix is called a wooden likeness of Christ, being made of wood. And all men and angels are also made in the image of God. But they are not images of His essence and nature, nor made or arisen out of His divine nature. Christ, however, hath arisen from eternity out of His divine nature and is His essential image, substantialis imago, non artificialis aut facta vel creata, which hath His divine nature wholly in itself and also in it, nor made nor fashioned of aught else, just as the divine essence is not made nor fashioned of aught else. For if He had not the entire Godhead of the Father in Himself and was not complete God, He could not be nor could be called the likeness of His essence, for the Father would still have something wherein the Son was not equal nor like unto Him, so He would in the last resort be quite unlike and in no wise His image according to essence. For the divine essence is the most single of all, indivisible, it must be entirely where it is or not there at all " (Luther, Die drei Symbola oder Dehennnis des Glaubens Christi, 1538, W.A., 50, p. 276, l. 30 and p. 277, l. 19).

6. We believe in Jesus Christ "by whom all things were made."

We have here an almost literal quotation from Jn. 1, which says even more explicitly than the symbol itself: εἰστιν αὐτὸς ὁ γόνης καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο
17ol"/Ods. Thus the present clause interprets the 0JLool1(110S only to the degree its own interpretation very God from all eternity.

It may be asked whether within the context of the creed this statement is one of the definitions of Christ's deity or whether it is not rather a pronouncement on His work as the Mediator of creation and thus a transition to the succeeding phrases on the incarnation and the work of reconciliation. The syntactical form, however, seems to point in another direction. And even if it were a pronouncement of the latter type, the content at any rate would still have to be understood strictly in terms of trinitarian theology, and, thus understood, it means that the Son of God, too, has a share in the work which is ascribed in the first article of the creed to God the Father, the work of creation. Thus understood, it is an indirect but all the more expressive confirmation of the ὡμοονόης and therewith of all the preceding phrases. If the Son has a share in what was called the special work of the Father, if He works with the Father in the work of creation, then this means, at least in the sense of Athanasius and the theology which finally triumphed in the 4th century, that He is of one essence with Him. In order that all things might be made by Him, in order that He might be the Mediator of creation, He Himself had to be God by nature.

Rejection of the Arian view of Jn. 1 and par. is not expressly voiced in the symbol. According to Arius the Son is itself the creaturely instrument of the divine Creator. This is completely ruled out by the ὡμοονόης and γενεθλίως αὑτού. Thus the present clause interprets the ὡμοονόης only to the degree that its own interpretation is governed by the context of the symbol.

Here again we have to remember the principle: opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa. It implies at this point that an appropriation is involved when, as in the continuation in the creed, revelation and reconciliation are ascribed to the Son. This appropriation is right and necessary since it is grounded in revelation itself. But revelation cannot be understood correctly if we do not add that as this appropriation cannot exclude the Father from being also the subject of this event (to the degree that the Father is also present and at work with the Son in revelation and reconciliation), so it cannot exclude the Son being also the subject of the event to which the first article refers, that is, the subject of creation. We are following John 1 and Luther's expositions of Genesis 1 and John 1 (which we quoted earlier) when we offer the interpretation that Jesus Christ is the Word by which God created the world out of nothing. As this Word of the Father He is, in distinction from everything created by Him, equal to the Father, very God from all eternity.

Where has God created the world? asks Augustine. In heaven? On earth? In the air? In the water? In the universe? But these are all themselves created. Has He created them out of a being He first took in hand for the purpose? But unde ibi hoc quod tu non faceras, unde aliquid faceres? Quid enim est, nisi quia tu es? Ergo dixisti et facta sunt atque in verbo tuo facies est (Conf., XI, 5, 7). Ecce omnis per verbum suum et verbum eius ipse Christus, in quo requiescunt angelii et omnes creaturas mundi sui in sancto silente (De cat. radi., 17, 28). Constat ... summam substantiam prius in se quasi divinum eunctum creaturam quae cum secundum eandem et per eandem suam intimam locutionem condidit (Anselm of Canterbury, Mono., XI). Cum ipse summus spiritus dixit se ipsum, dicti omnia, quae facta sunt. ... Semper in ipso sunt, non quod sunt in se ipsis sed quod est idem ipse (ib., 34).

In the same sense Thomas Aquinas gave an affirmative answer to the question: Utrum in nomine verbi importetur respectus ad creaturam? Deus enim cognoscento se, cognoscit omnem creaturam. Unus autem Deus nescit Himself and all that is outside Him, and so His Word is not just the precise image of the Father but also the original of the world (S. theolog., I, qu. 34, art. 3). Similarly Luther: Filius enim in se habet exemplar non solum maiestatis divinae, sed etiam omnis creaturam (Comm. on Gen. 1, 1535, l., W. A., 42, p. 37, l. 30). Even the bodily warmth with which a hen hatches her eggs is according to Luther ex verbo divino, quia, si absque verbo esset, calor illius est inefficax (on Gen. 1, 18, ib., p. 40, l. 9).

In contrast it is rather laboured and lacking in humour when K. Bretschneider (Handb. d. Dogm., Vol. I, 4th edn., 1838, p. 659) assures us that we "must regard the whole idea of the creation of the world by the Son as one which does not belong to religion but to Johannine and Pauline theology," or when A. Ritschl, following in the footsteps of earlier rationalism, thinks he should comment on the relevant New Testament passages as follows: "This combination takes us beyond the sphere of theology proper and has no direct and practical significance for religious life. Just as He created as the God that sent Him which we have derived from some other source. But even this general rule which we should judge according to a knowledge of the God that sent Him which we have derived from some other source. But "he came to his own possession" (Jn. 1, 19), to the world, to us whom He Himself created, who are from the very first His own, and He theirs. The Word which we hear in revelation, the Word by which
there is no possibility of appealing or withdrawing to some domain of our own where we were once alone and where He does not yet reach us to respond to Him or not. We are already responsible to Him and in has it antecedently in Himself. some other source the authority to address and claim us; He already in His revelation Jesus Christ the Word of God does not need to from intercourse with Himself. What does this mean? whom we would not be, and yet from whom we have separated ourselves, not only does not let us fall into the nothing from which He attain to grace, as we are again shown to have done in the revelation of inconceivable kindness, or it cannot be understood at all. And to grace, as we are again shown to have done in the revelation of Jesus Christ, means that we have separated ourselves from the One without whom we would not be even in this separation and yet, separated from whom, we cannot be in any true or proper sense. To be sinners means that we have come to a place where our existence is absolutely inconceivable because at this place it can be only a plunge into nothing, where our existence can be understood only as an event of inconceivable kindness, or it cannot be understood at all. And to attain to grace, as we are again shown to have done in the revelation of Jesus Christ, means that notwithstanding our separation He without whom we would not be, and yet from whom we have separated ourselves, not only does not let us fall into the nothing from which He called us, but also, addressing and claiming us as sinners, He grants to us over and above existence no less a gift than Himself, fellowship and intercourse with Himself. What does this mean? It means that in His revelation Jesus Christ the Word of God does not need to get from some other source the authority to address and claim us; He already has it antecedently in Himself. It is not a question of whether we want to respond to Him or not. We are already responsible to Him and in different ways our whole being is response to Him. In relation to Him there is no possibility of appealing or withdrawing to some domain of our own where we were once alone and where He does not yet reach us or does so no longer, to a neutral human existence, as it were, where it is first up to us to place ourselves or not under the judgment and the grace that He declares to us, and from which we might comfortably come to an understanding with Him. In fact we do not know anything about our human existence except through the Word which declares to us judgment and grace. In declaring this, it tells us that it is itself the ground of our being as men; on this ground alone are we men, and not otherwise. It comes to us because it already applies to us even before it comes. It is the hand that already holds us even as it grasps us. It is the ruling act of the king who was already a king before and who has both the might and the right to perform this act. It encompasses us on every side (Ps. 139). It is the Word which has power, the Word of the Lord. And it is the Word of the Lord because it is the Word of the Reconciler who is also the Creator.

In our investigation of the New Testament doctrine of the deity of Christ we ended with the tautology that for the men of the New Testament Jesus Christ is the Lord because He is the Lord. Though we cannot avoid this tautology we can now put it this way: He is for them God the Reconciler as He is God the Creator. His judgment and grace concern them as He concerns their existence. We should, of course, immediately reverse this and say also that He concerns their existence as He comes to them with His judgment and His grace. The point cannot be that in their existence, in their creaturely humanity, they had a previously given criterion by applying which they then accepted His judgment and His grace and thus believed in Him as the Lord and the Son of God. On the contrary, His judgment and His grace bar every exit or escape to a humanity which is already given and assured as such. They take away every private criterion and spoil every private judgment. These men have found themselves, their being, and also the possibility of their own judgment only at the place where His wrath and His kindness have reached them. But there they have in fact found themselves and their being therewith the possibility of their own judgment. They are as men who are judged by Him. And as men who are judged by Him they now judge; they judge concerning Him. They thus judge concerning Him: He is the Son of God. In saying this they are saying that He is our Reconciler as He is our Creator. They might just as well abandon the judgment. "We are " as the judgment that "He is God's Son." For them the two are inseparable, for their knowledge of themselves, their existence, their creatureliness and their Creator is not from another source than knowledge of their reconciliation. For them there can be no question of any gap between a known Creator God and Jesus Christ as a Redeemer and Saviour who perhaps stands in some relation to God. As they know their reconciliation through Jesus Christ, they know themselves, their existence, their creatureliness, their Creator. There is thus taken away from under their feet the ground on which they would have to stand to ask, to seek, and to discover whether Jesus Christ is the Lord and the Son of God. So they can only begin with this knowledge and this confession. One would have to abstract again between the Creator and the Reconciler; one would have to make two words again out of what is for the men of the New Testament one word, to be able to find Ebionite or Docetic Christology in the New Testament.

In this sense, then, the statement illumines and explains who and what Jesus Christ is in His revelation. It says of Him that in His
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revelation He has the immediate power of the Creator over men. But in acknowledging this we shall not limit His power as Creator to His revelation.

Already in the 2nd century writers like to compare with the δι' ὧς τὰ πάντα the insight that the Church is the first creature of God made before the sun and moon (see e.g. Βεγγαλος οἰκογενείης (Hermenea Pastor, Viz. II, 4, 1; Clem. Hom., 14, 1)). And in the 20th century R. Seeberg has interpreted this biblical concept as follows: “If God created the world with the resolve that the Church should come into being in it, then the will of God—and this is Christ—was already at work in the creation and formation of the world...” In so far as the natural world was to be “the theatre of a spiritual historical world, the divine will that there be a history which leads to the Church...was already at work in such a way at the creative fashioning of the world that the natural possibility was provided for the existence and continuity of a spiritual world” (Chr. Dogmatik, Vol. I, 1924, p. 463 f.). Even if we ignore the fact that the Church is hardly the same thing as a “spiritual historical world,” we must still comment as follows. Certainly Jesus Christ as the One by whom all things were made is also the κεφαλή τοῦ οίκου τῆς εκκλησίας (Col. 1). As the former He can be and is the latter. But it is not as the latter that He is the former. It is not as the Head of the Church, not first and only in revelation, that He is the One by whom God made all things. Certainly He is so powerful in His revelation because He is already the Creator. But He is not first the Creator in the fact that He is so powerful in His revelation; nor is He the Creator only on this ground. If we permit reversals here, if we are not content to find the Creator again in the revelation, if we at once take the further step of deducing creation as such from revelation and basing it on this, this is just as much an illegitimate speculation as the attempt, which we criticised earlier, to understand revelation as creatio continuata. To attribute the Church or revelation directly to creation or the creative will of God as such is to forget or ignore the fact that the Church or revelation can be an event only as an answer to the sin of man, or it is to be forced to try to integrate the sin of man into creation. It is also to forget the free-loving-kindness of God which gives this answer, or to make it a necessary member in a dialectical process. Then this speculative synthesis of God’s works—in a way which is no less unavoidable in Seeberg than Schleiermacher—finds appropriate expression in the abrogation of the distinction of the divine persons, in a modalistic doctrine of the Trinity. Only thus can one say that the world was created for the sake of the Church or revelation, and that this purpose is the meaning of the participation of the Son of God in creation. These conclusions are the necessary price of such syntheses. If we do not want to pay the price—and we have good reason not to want to pay it—then we must refrain from the syntheses.

The truth of the recognition that Christ in His revelation has the power of the Creator depends on its being the acknowledgment of a fact and not an arbitrary combination. When the power is experienced there is nothing to combine. Creation and revelation are not truths which are to be held alongside one another and compared to one another and set in relation to one another. They are the one reality of Jesus Christ as the Revealer with the power of the Creator. And this power of the Creator cannot be regarded as one that is specifically related or restricted to revelation alone.