

# Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Volume I

Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Four volumes, in twelve parts (one in two halves), plus index. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936–1977. Cited by volume, part, and page. Study Edition, in thirty-one paperback fascicles. London and New York: T. & T. Clark, 2009.

The chapter divisions of the original do not appear in the contents or text of the study edition. Their names, however, do appear on the back of each fascicle as a part of the synopsis comparing the first edition and the study edition, where they identify the latter's groupings of numbered "paragraphs" (§) into fascicles. Page numbers from the first edition are given in the margins of the study edition, and a note in I.1 encourages continuing to use them for references to this work.

## THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

Volume I

### INTRODUCTION

I, Part 1

#### § 1. THE TASK OF DOGMATICS

I.1, 3

**As a theological discipline dogmatics is the scientific self-examination of the Christian Church with respect to the content of its distinctive talk about God.**

Ah! The language of the church needs to be examined, and it is the task of theology so to examine it! The language of the church is sometimes better, sometimes worse. What the church says about God and his Christ is sometimes more faithful, sometimes less faithful. All sermons, all creeds, all pronouncements needed to be criticized, and it is the duty of theology so to do. And there are standards by which such examination is to be conducted.

We are not free in the church to say anything just because we like it. We are not free to preach in any old way we want. We are not free to fashion God and his Christ in our own image. We are not free to invent the gospel. Instead, we are bound to the Word of God. It is our duty to frame our proclamation in conformity with it.

Think what non-sense and worse in the church could be avoided by paying attention to this one sentence summary!

#### 1. The Church, Theology, Science

I.1, 3

#### 2. Dogmatics as an Enquiry

I.1, 11

“Dogmatics as such does not ask what the apostles and prophets said but what we must say on the basis of the apostles and prophets.”

I.1, 16

3. Dogmatics as an Act of Faith	I.1, 17
§ 2. THE TASK OF PROLEGOMENA TO DOGMATICS	I.1, 25

**Prolegomena to dogmatics is our name for the introductory part of dogmatics in which our concern is to understand its particular way to knowledge.**

Ah! Echoes of John Calvin already. You will remember that Calvin defined faith as *knowledge*:

“Now we shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain *knowledge* of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” (*Institutes*, 3.2.7, emphasis added)

The Christian faith is not simply a matter of feeling or personal opinion. It is a matter of *knowledge*! And therefore theology, as a study of that faith, has to do with knowledge.

1. The Necessity of Dogmatic Prolegomena	I.1, 25
--	---------

“Knowledge of the revelation believed in the Church does not stand or fall with the general religious possibility that is made easier by the ancient view of things and more difficult by the modern.” I.1, 28

“Revelation itself creates of itself the necessary point of contact in man.” I.1, 29

How seriously does Barth take this knowledge? Consider its implications for apologetics:

“All planned apologetics and polemics have obviously been irresponsible, irrelevant and therefore ineffective. . . . In such apologetics faith must clearly take unbelief seriously. Hence it cannot take itself with full seriousness. Secretly or openly, therefore, it ceases to be faith. . . . Does not the credal statement concerning the remission of sins itself forbid any discussion in which the unbelief of the partner in discussion is taken seriously?” (p. 30)

We believe in the forgiveness of sin! By the freely given promise in Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, we believe in the forgiveness of sin. Therefore we cannot possibly take sin as seriously as we do forgiveness. We cannot take unbelief as seriously as we do faith.

It occurs to me that this dismissal of planned apologetics might be part of the reason that some Christians who understand themselves as Evangelicals reject Barth. There are non-denominational seminaries in this country where courses are taught in apologetics and, perhaps, where there are departments of apologetics. Books are being written of apologetics, trying to argue to the world how good, useful, and true the Christian faith is.

But do not such efforts continue, as Barth pointed out, to take unbelief more seriously than it deserves?

“By heresy we understand a form of Christian faith which we cannot deny to be a form of Christian faith from the formal standpoint, i.e., in so far as it, too, relates to Jesus Christ, to His Church, to baptism, Holy Scripture and the common Christian creeds, but in respect of which we cannot really understand what we are about when we recognise it as such, since we can understand its content, its interpretation of these common presuppositions, only as a contradiction of faith.” I.1, 32

Don't rush past the notes in small print. Here is one about heresy, which Barth understands to be Christian in “form” but a contradiction of the faith in “content”:

“Even when this [conflict with heretics] included the by no means laudable nor even necessary mutual abuse or even burnings of those past days, there was meaning in it, since the Church and heretics were talking very differently about the same theme, and therefore not talking past one another but in opposition to one another. There was thus a headlong collision such as can only take place between contending brothers. The much vaunted progress made between the 17th and 18th centuries consisted in the decision to tolerate one another, i.e., to abandon one another to the appropriate fate. This was the first breach in fellowship hitherto continually maintained in conflict.” (pp. 32-33)

Toleration, the great high virtue of the day in which we live, is not an expression or outgrowth of Christian faith but an abandonment of faith, an abandonment of love, and therefore an act of unbelief! Toleration is not an act of caring for the other but an act of abandoning the other. Toleration does not foster fellowship but is itself a breach in fellowship.

2. The Possibility of Dogmatic Prolegomena I.1, 36

## CHAPTER 1. THE WORD OF GOD AS THE CRITERION OF DOGMATICS

§ 3. CHURCH PROCLAMATION AS THE MATERIAL OF DOGMATICS I.1, 47

**Talk about God in the Church seeks to be proclamation to the extent that in the form of preaching and sacrament it is directed to man with the claim and expectation that in accordance with its commission it has to speak to him the Word of God to be heard in faith. Inasmuch as it is a human word in spite of this claim and expectation, it is the material of dogmatics, i.e., of the investigation of its responsibility as measured by the Word of God which it seeks to proclaim.**

1. Talk about God and Church Proclamation I.1, 47

“We know ourselves only as the man to whom mercy is shown as one who is fallen, lost and condemned. We know ourselves only as man in the kingdom of grace, of the present

age between the time of creation and that of redemption. We stand under the sign of a decision constantly taken between the secularity and the sanctification of our existence, between sin and grace, between a being as man which forgets God, which is absolutely neutral in relation to Him and therefore absolutely hostile, and one which in His revelation is awakened by faith to being in the Church, to the appropriation of His promise.” (pp. 47-48)

“The event in which God acts consists wholly in the fact that men are visibly awakened, separated and gathered by God to being in the visible Church. A visible distinction which arises within the secular sphere between religious and profane is now, not intrinsically but in this event of divine election, confirmed and maintained and therefore characterised as a genuine indication of the antithesis of judgment and grace in which, even though men do not act towards others, God Himself acts towards men. Only in faith, of course, is this event visible as such; only in faith is being in the Church visible as divine election and sanctification. What is visible in itself is simply an event within the secular sphere. Its significance can be missed, but it cannot actually be taken away from it again.” (pp. 48-49)

Of course, not all talk about God in the church is proclamation. “Prayers, hymns and confessions of faith” are responses of “praise, confession and thanksgiving” to prior proclamation. They must “cease to attempt the impossible task of proclaiming something to God”—have you ever heard or prayed such prayers? They must “cease to attempt . . . the unworthy [task] of incidentally proclaiming something to man”—ah, this would rule out a lot of hymns! (p. 49)

Neither is the work of the church proclamation:

“If the social work of the Church as such were to try to be proclamation, it could only become propaganda, and not very worth propaganda at that. Genuine Christian love must always start back [i.e., recoil] at the thought of pretending to be a proclamation of the love of Christ with its only too human action.” (p. 50)

If churches could remember that today, it would help to eliminate much confusion and mischief!

Neither is theology proclamation. “Theology reflects upon proclamation” and as such is “science, instruction and investigation.” (p. 51)

“Proclamation . . . is directed to men with the definitive claim and expectation that it has to declare the Word of God to them. . . . Here, in what is said about God, there lies concealed as the meaning and purpose of the action the intention to speak the Word of God Himself.” (pp. 51-52)

“Proclamation is human speech in and by which God Himself speaks like a king through the mouth of his herald, and which is meant to be heard and accepted as speech in and by

which God Himself speaks, and therefore heard and accepted in faith as divine decision concerning life and death, as divine judgment and pardon, eternal Law and eternal Gospel both together.” (p. 52)

If both our preachers and our congregations held to such a high understanding of proclamation, our congregations and life in them would be very different. Of course, such proclamation cannot be programmed. The church has a “commission” in relation to such service to the Word of God, and the question is whether we accept this commission obediently. (p. 53). In any event, God remains free, and “can establish the Church anew and directly when and where and how it pleases him.” (p. 54)

Still, the church has a “commissioned proclamation” to “talk about God both to men and for them.” What is this proclamation?

“1. This proclamation is preaching, i.e., the attempt by someone called thereto in the Church, in the form of an exposition of some portion of the biblical witness to revelation, to express in his own words and to make intelligible to the men of his own generation the promise of the revelation, reconciliation and vocation of God as they are to be expected here and now.” (p. 56)

“2. This proclamation is the sacrament, i.e., the symbolical act which is carried through in the Church as directed by the biblical witness of revelation in accompaniment and confirmation of preaching and which is designed as such to attest the event of divine revelation, reconciliation and vocation which does not merely fulfil but underlies the promise.” (p. 56)

Such proclamation, of course, cannot be “arbitrary religious discourse.” It must be “controlled and guided” “exposition of Scripture,” the “legitimate repetition . . . of the promise given to the Church by God Himself.”

“But if it is to be a real repetition of this promise, it cannot consist in the mere reading of Scripture or in repeating and paraphrasing the actual wording of the biblical witness. This can be only its presupposition. The concrete encounter of God and man to-day, whose actuality, of course, can be created only by the Word of God Himself, must find a counterpart in the human event of proclamation, i.e., the person called must be ready to make the promise given to the Church intelligible in his own words to the men of his own time. Calling, promise, exposition of Scripture, actuality—these are the decisive definitions of the concept of preaching.” (p. 59)

## 2. Dogmatics and Church Proclamation

I.1, 71

“When and where it pleases God, it [proclamation] is God’s own Word.” (p. 72)

“The Church should fear God and not fear the world.” (p. 73)

As a part of the Church's fear of God, the Church must avoid every attempt to evade the theological task of dogmatics.

“The luxury of ‘quite untheological’ thought and talk which has no part in the dogmatic question, a luxury in which theologians of all people are also prone to indulge very gladly and not without being vain of their freedom, can strictly be achieved only by secretly leaving the Church either temporarily or permanently. The freedom claimed when men think they can and should theologise ‘quite untheologically’ is the freedom to prattle heretically or in a way that makes for heresy. There is no room in the Church for this freedom.” (p. 77)

Finally, Barth concludes with one of my favorite quotations from him, a disclaimer which he actually quotes from Ambrose: “*Non in dialectica complacuit Deo salvum facere populum suum.*” This means, if I have understood it correctly, “It has not pleased God to save his people with [theological] arguments.”

#### § 4. THE WORD OF GOD IN ITS THREEFOLD FORM

I.1, 88

**The presupposition which makes proclamation proclamation and therewith makes the Church the Church is the Word of God. This attests itself in Holy Scripture in the word of the prophets and apostles to whom it was originally and once and for all spoken by God's revelation.**

##### 1. The Word of God Preached

I.1, 88

Note that while we would think of our proclamation of the Word of God as chronologically subsequent to, and dependent upon, the prior forms of the Word of God as written and revealed, Barth takes it up first here. Proclamation has priority in that, as we have seen in previous sections, it is the task of dogmatics to examine the Church's proclamation. Thus, it is taken up first.

The presupposition of proclamation, that without which there is not and could not be any proclamation, is the Word of God. Barth makes four points about the “decisive connections” of proclamation and the Word of God (and he portrays these points as concentric circles of increasing specificity):

1. “The Word of God is the commission upon whose givenness proclamation must rest if it is to be real proclamation.” I.1, 89

“Real proclamation, then, means the Word of God preached and the Word of God preached means in this first and outermost circle man's talk about God on the basis of God's own direction, which fundamentally transcends all human causation, which cannot, then, be put on a human basis, but which simply takes place, and has to be acknowledged, as a fact.” (p. 90)

2. “The Word of God is the theme which must be given to proclamation as such if it is to be real proclamation.” I.1, 91

“Real proclamation, then, means God’s Word preached, and in this second circle God’s Word preached means human talk about God on the basis of the self-objectification of God which is not just there, which cannot be predicted, which does not fit into any plan, which is real only in the freedom of His grace, and in virtue of which He wills at specific times to be the object of this talk, and is so according to His good-pleasure.” (p. 92)

3. “The Word of God is the judgment in virtue of which alone proclamation can be real proclamation.” I.1, 92

“Real proclamation, therefore, is the Word of God preached, and in this third inner circle the Word of God preached means human talk about God which by God’s own judgment, that cannot be anticipated and never passes under our control, is true with reference both to the proclaimed object and also to the proclaiming subject, so that it is talk which has to be listened to and which rightly demands obedience.” (p. 93)

4. “Finally—and only here do we make the decisive point—the Word of God is the event itself in which proclamation becomes real proclamation.” I.1, 93

“Real proclamation as this new even, in which the event of human talk is not set aside by God but exalted, is the Word of God. Again, then, real proclamation means the Word of God preached. Only now is it clear that ‘preached’ belongs to the predicate, and to what degree. The Word of God preached means in this fourth and innermost circle man’s talk about God in which and through which God speaks about Himself.” (p. 95)

2. The Word of God Written I.1, 99

“With its acknowledgment of the presence of the Canon the Church expresses the fact that it is not left to itself in its proclamation, that the commission on the ground of which it proclaims, the object which it proclaims, the judgment under which its proclamation stands and the event of real proclamation must all come from elsewhere, from without, and very concretely from without, in all the externality of the concrete Canon as a categorical imperative which is also historical, which speaks in time. . . . This Canon is in fact identical with the Bible of the Old and New Testaments.” (p. 101)

“The fact that God’s own address becomes an event in the human word of the Bible is, however, God’s affair and not ours. . . . The Bible is God’s Word to the extent that God causes it to be His Word, to the extent that He speaks through it.” (p. 109)

## 3. The Word of God Revealed I.1, 111

“Revelation is simply the freedom of God’s grace. . . . It is . . . the event in which the free God causes His free grace to rule and work.” (p. 117)

“Revelation in fact does not differ from the person of Jesus Christ nor from the reconciliation accomplished in him. To say revelation is to say ‘The Word became flesh.’” (p. 119)

## 4. The Unity of the Word of God I.1, 120

“It is one and the same whether we understand it as revelation, Bible, or proclamation. There is no distinction of degree or value between the three forms.” (p. 120)

“The revealed Word of God we know only from the Scripture adopted by Church proclamation or the proclamation of the Church based on Scripture.

“The written Word of God we know only through the revelation which fulfils proclamation or through the proclamation fulfilled by revelation.

“The preached Word of God we know only through the revelation attested in Scripture or the Scripture which attests revelation.

“There is only one analogy to this doctrine of the Word of God. Or more accurately, the doctrine of the Word of God is itself the only analogy to the doctrine which will be our fundamental concern as we develop the concept of revelation. This is the doctrine of the trinity of God.” (p. 121)

## § 5. THE NATURE OF THE WORD OF GOD I.1, 125

**The Word of God in all its three forms is God’s speech to man. For this reason it occurs, applies and works in God’s act on man. But as such it occurs in God’s way which differs from all other occurrence. i.e., in the mystery of God.**

## 1. The Question of the Nature of the Word of God I.1, 125

See pages 125-131 for note about why Barth rewrote I:1 and how he did so.

“What God and His Word are . . . is something God Himself must constantly tell us afresh. But there is no human knowing that corresponds to this divine telling.” (p. 132)

## 2. The Word of God as the Speech of God I.1, 132

“God’s Word means that God speaks.” I.1, 132

1. "It [i.e., that the Word of God means irrevocably and originally that God speaks] implies first of all the spiritual nature of the Word of God as distinct from naturalness, corporeality, or any physical event." I.1, 133

2. "This [that God's Word means that God speaks] implies secondly its personal quality." I.1, 136

"God's Word is not a thing to be described nor a term to be defined." (p. 136)

"Understanding the Word of God not as proclamation and Scripture alone but as God's revelation in proclamation and Scripture, we must understand it in its identity with God Himself. God's revelation is Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (p. 137; see p. 153 below)

3. "This [that God's Word means that God speaks] implies thirdly what one might call the purposive character of the Word of God." I.1, 139

(1) "The Word of God as directed to us is a Word which we do not say to ourselves and which we could not in any circumstances say to ourselves." (p. 141; see Volume I, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*) I.1, 141

(2) "The Word of God as this Word of the Lord directed to us is the Word which aims at us and smites us in our existence." (p. 141; see Volume II, *The Doctrine of God*) I.1, 141

(3) "The Word of God as the Word of the Creator directed to us is the Word which has obviously become necessary and is necessary as a renewal of the original relation between us and Him." (p. 142; see Volume III, *The Doctrine of Creation*)

I.1, 142

(4) "The Word of God as the Word of reconciliation directed to us in the Word by which God announces Himself to man, i.e., by which He promises Himself as the content of man's future, as the One who meets him on his way through time as the end of all time, as the hidden Lord of all times." (p. 142; see Volume IV, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*) I.1, 142

3. The Speech of God as the Act of God I.1, 143

1. "The fact that God's Word is God's act means first its contingent contemporaneity." I.1, 145

2. "The fact that God's Word is God's act implies secondly its power to rule." I.1, 149

“The Holy Spirit, at least according to the Western understanding of the divine Triunity, cannot be separated from the Word, and His power is not a power different from that of the Word but the power that lives in and by the Word.”

I.1, 150

“All this must be said of the Word of God because the Word of God is Jesus Christ and because its efficacy is not distinct from the lordship of Jesus Christ. He who hears God’s Word is drawn thereby into the sphere of the real power of this lordship. There applies to him and for him everything the Word of God says as promise, claim, judgment and blessing. Preaching does not put it into effect; preaching declares and confirms that it is in effect. It is proclamation of the Word of God when it proclaims it as something that is already in effect.”

I.1, 153

“Nor is it faith that puts in effect all that the Word of God tells us. Faith too, and faith especially, is faith in Jesus Christ. It is thus the recognition and confirmation that God’s Word was already in effect even before we believed and quite apart from our believing. . . . If he [man] believes, this will be just a confirmation of the fact that he has God’s promise and is claimed, judged and blessed by God. If he does not believe, this again will not be a possibility he can freely choose. He will sin against God’s Word. He will not show himself to be free, but unfree.” (p. 154)

3. “The fact that the Word of God is the act of God means thirdly that it is decision. That is what distinguishes an act from a mere event.”

I.1, 156

4. The Speech of God as the Mystery of God

I.1, 162

1. “The speech of God is and remains the mystery of God supremely in its secularity.”

I.1, 165

2. “The speech of God is and remains the mystery of God in its one-sidedness.”

I.1, 174

3. “The speech of God is and remains the mystery of God in its spirituality.”

I.1, 181

“The Lord of speech is also the Lord of our hearing. The Lord who gives the Word is also the Lord who gives faith. The Lord of our hearing, the Lord who gives faith, the Lord by whose act the openness and readiness of man for the Word are true and actual, not another God but the one God in this way, is the Holy Spirit.”

I.1, 182

§ 6. THE KNOWABILITY OF THE WORD OF GOD

I.1, 187

**The reality of the Word of God in all its three forms is grounded only in itself. So, too, the knowledge of it by men can consist only in its acknowledgment, and this acknowledgment can become real only through itself and can become intelligible only in terms of itself.**

Note: If the second clause of the second sentence in boldface above were read in isolation, it would appear that the antecedent of both occurrences of “itself” would be “acknowledgment.” However, when taken in the context of the first clause of the second sentence, “itself” seems to point back to the “it” there, which in turn points back to the first sentence. That is to say, despite the structure of the second sentence, the sense of it seems to be that the use of “itself” there parallels the use of “itself” in the first sentence, and that all three occurrences have as their antecedent “the Word of God.”

1. The Question of the Knowability of the Word of God I.1, 187

“A result of the uniqueness of this object of knowledge might well be that the concept of its knowledge cannot be definitively measured by the concept of knowledge or other objects or by a general concept of knowledge but that it can be defined at all only in terms of its own object.” (p. 190)

2. The Word of God and Man I.1, 190

“Men can know the Word of God because and in so far as God wills that they know it, because and in so far as there is over against God’s will only the impotence of disobedience, and because and in so far as there is a revelation of God’s will in His Word in which the impotence of disobedience is set aside.” I.1, 196

That is to say, the Word of God creates its own hearing. As preachers, we are not to dress it up, make it pretty, make it sensible or believable or practical, or even to make it lively or relevant. We are to proclaim the promises of God as accurately and as faithfully as we can. When and where God chooses, acting in and through the Holy Spirit, preaching actually becomes the Word of God proclaimed and hearing actually becomes faith. Neither of these is a human possibility. Neither is under our control. If there is anything that I have learned out of Volume I, it is that the Word of God, which is Jesus Christ, creates its own hearing. Thanks be to God!

3. The Word of God and Experience I.1, 198

“If a man lets himself be told by the Word of God that he has a Lord, that he is the creature of this Lord, that he is a lost sinner blessed by Him, that he awaits eternal redemption and is thus a stranger in this sphere of time, this specific content of the Word experienced by him will flatly prohibit him from ascribing the possibility of this experience to himself either wholly or in part or from dialectically equating the divine possibility actualised in this experience with a possibility of his own.” (p. 199)

“The man who really knows God’s Word, as this man comes before us in the biblical promise, can understand himself only as one who exists in his act, in his self-determination. The Word of God comes as a summons to him and the hearing it finds in him is the right hearing of obedience or the wrong hearing of disobedience. Whether it is finally the one or the other is not, of course, in his hands. For that, for obedience or

disobedience in his action, he cannot resolve and determine himself. As he decides, as he resolves and determines, he is rather in the secret judgment of the grace or disfavour of God, to whom alone his obedience or disobedience is manifest.” (201)

“The experience of God’s Word, i.e., the determination of the whole self-determining man by God’s Word,” consists of “acknowledgment.” (pp. 204-205) See pages 205-208 for nine points about this (knowledge, relation, control, respect, power, decision [freedom], enigma, act, and submission), based on what was said about the Word of God in §5.

Barth is not impressed with “*finitum non capax infiniti*” (the finite cannot contain the infinite) as a general philosophical statement. The particular point is, instead, that “*homo peccator non capax verbi Domini*” (sinful man cannot contain the Word of the Lord). (pp. 220-221)

“It will be true that God has spoken and man has heard. A new, regenerate man will arise in the act of this acknowledgment as the man whom God has addressed and who hears God.” (p. 222)

#### 4. The Word of God and Faith

I.1, 227

“Faith . . . is the making possible of knowledge of God’s Word that takes place in actual knowledge of it.” (p. 228)

“It is the Word, Christ, to whom faith refers because He presents Himself to it as its object, that makes faith faith, real experience.” (p. 230)

“He has not created his own faith; the Word has created it. He has not come to faith; faith has come to him through the Word. He has not adopted faith; faith has been granted to him through the Word. As a believer he cannot see himself as the acting subject of the work done here.”

I.1, 244

“The Word of God becomes knowable by making itself known. . . . The possibility of knowing the Word of God is God’s miracle on us just as much as is the Word itself or its being spoken.” (p. 246)

#### § 7. THE WORD OF GOD, DOGMA AND DOGMATICS

I.1, 248

**Dogmatics is the critical question about dogma, i.e., about the Word of God in Church proclamation, or, concretely, about the agreement of the Church proclamation done and to be done by man with the revelation attested in Holy Scripture. Prolegomena to dogmatics as an understanding of its epistemological path must therefore consist in an exposition of the three forms of the Word of God as revealed, written, and preached.**

## 1. The Problem of Dogmatics

I.1, 248

“In the three preceding sections we have described the criterion of dogmatics, its three forms, its nature and its knowability. What we had in view when in § 3 we called the Word of God the standard by which dogmatics must measure Church proclamation should now have become provisionally comprehensible in all its incomprehensibility. . . . We have said that what is meant by the Word of God must have become comprehensible how in all its incomprehensibility. First, we accept and shall continue to accept the incomprehensibility of the fact that the Word of God is spoken to man. . . . Secondly we accept and continue to accept the incomprehensibility of the nature of the Word of God in itself. For one thing, as what it is it is only the content of the specific event of its being spoken to this man or that. Then again, as what this man or that receives and accepts and can give an account of as God’s Word in the event of faith, it is no longer what the Word of God that is spoken to him is in itself, but only his recollection of what is said to him and his expectation of what will be said to him afresh. Dogmatics cannot get round this twofold barrier even by turning its attention to the concrete content of the Word of God. . . . One should not expect anything superhuman from dogmatics; its office cannot be to tear down the barriers of faith that are set for the Church. Part of its task is rather to make these barriers known, to say what can be said and therewith to warn against violations or illusions regarding things one cannot say.” (p. 248-249)

*“The task of dogmatics is the examination of Church proclamation in respect of its agreement with the Word of God, its congruity with what it is trying to proclaim.”* (p. 250, emphasis added)

“The possibility always remained . . . that the Bible would rule the Church. . . . The Bible found a voice and finds a voice in the Church. Hence the possibility is not ruled out that it may also find a voice over against the Church. . . . The Church is not constantly or continuously the Church of Jesus Christ. It is this in the event of the Word of God being spoken to it and believed by it.” (pp. 260-261)

“The Word of God over the Church and to the Church will permit of no proof, not even and least of all this proof from the faith present in the Church. The conclusion that because I believe, and because for me as a believer the Bible is the Word of God, therefore and thus far it is God’s Word, destroys the divinity of the Word of God, since it is no longer understood as the Word that stands over the Church and is directed to it. . . . Whether the Bible will speak to us as God’s Word, whether we will hear it, whether we will believe it as God’s Word—we and those with whom we speak—is something can neither appropriate to ourselves nor give to them. . . . We can only point to the fact that in that event, in faith in God’s Word in the Bible, a flat and irrefutable decision will be made against any view of the Bible as a court instituted and superintended by the Church, as a purely relative counter-authority to the Church proclamation of the day.” (pp. 261-262)

“Seeing we face the task of dogmatics, we decide, of course, to accept the Bible as the absolute authority set up over against Church proclamation.” (p. 265, emphasis added)

“Dogmatics as the question of the Word of God in Church proclamation must be the critical question as to the agreement of Church proclamation . . . with the revelation attested in Holy Scripture.” (p. 265)

“Dogma is the agreement of Church proclamation with the revelation attested in Holy Scripture. Dogmatics enquires into this agreement and therefore into dogma. . . . In a later section of the Prolegomena we shall have to deal with dogmas, i.e., with the doctrinal propositions acknowledged and confessed by the Church and deposited with its symbols, with their relative authority and with their importance for dogmatics.” (pp. 265-266)

“Dogmatic propositions, dogmas and dogma have this in common: They are not the truth of revelation. . . . One may thus define dogma as Church proclamation to the degree that it really agrees with the Bible as the Word of God. . . . But a theology claiming to know and have dogma would be a *theologia gloriae* [Note: this means a theology of glory, moving positively from sign to that which is signified, as opposed to a theology of the cross, which understands the thing signified to be hidden under the sign of the opposite (e.g., Christ’s majesty hidden in the humility of the manger, Christ’s victory hidden in his apparent defeat on the cross, etc.); see especially Martin Luther, *The Heidelberg Disputation*], which the dogmatics of the Church ought not to seek to be. . . . The real result of dogmatics, even though they have the form of the most positive statements, can themselves only be new questions, questions to and fro between what the Church seems to proclaim and what the Bible seems to want proclaimed. . . . If the questioning ceased, . . . the kingdom of God would have dawned.” (pp. 268-269)

Note: Barth gives “this theology of ours” an extended name: “*theologia ektypos mediatae revelationis hominum viatorum post lapsum*.” (p. 269) To the extent that I understand this, it means that this theology does not have direct access to God but instead depends upon that which is mediated through revelation to fallen human beings in our present temporality.

“Heaven is as high above Church dogma regarded as command as it is above Church dogma regarded as proposition.” (p. 273)

“What truth is must be measured by what is higher here, what God’s will is. His Word goes out to the Church of assembled sinners as the Word of the Lord whose knowledge must be worked out in the form of acknowledgment. In logical in not temporal priority it must first be believed and only then and in that way can it be known as truth. *Credo ut intelligiam*. [Note: I believe in order to understand.] (p. 273)

“Knowledge of real dogma will never take place before the end of all things. . . . It is primarily the question of a servant who has to ask whether his actions agree with his master’s intentions. . . . What is under debate in dogmatics is the Church’s fundamental

relation of obedience to its Lord in respect of its proclamation. . . . The Church stands or falls with the object of dogmatic enquiry. . . . We pursue dogmatics because, constrained by the fact of the Bible, we cannot shake off the question of the obedience of Church proclamation.” (p. 274)

## 2. Dogmatics as a Science

I.1, 275

“Fear of scholasticism is the mark of a false prophet. The true prophet will be ready to submit his message to this test too.” (p. 279)

Three things may thus be demanded of a scientific dogmatics:

1. “It must devote itself to the problem of Church proclamation as such and not to problems of thought which might arise in proximity to certain concepts in Church proclamation but which have nothing to do with proclamation itself.” (p. 280)

“Not all the statements of dogmatics are adapted to become directly statements of Church proclamation. To be precise, we must even say that no single statement in dogmatics is adapted to be a statement in proclamation. Dogmatics is preparation for Church proclamation. It formulates statements that have to be pondered before Church proclamation formulates its statements.” (p. 280) [Note: I.e., don’t quote dogmatics in sermons! Study dogmatics in preparation to writing sermons.]

2. “Scientific dogmatics must devote itself to the criticism and correction of Church proclamation and not just to a repetitive exposition of it.” (p. 281)

3. “*Scientific dogmatics—and now we come to the decisive point—enquires into the agreement of Church proclamation with the revelation which is attested in Holy Scripture.*” (p. 283, emphasis added)

“The seriousness of the reference stands or falls with the attention that is actually paid to the witness of Holy Scripture.” (p. 285)

“What finally counts is whether a dogmatics is scriptural.” (p. 287)

## 3. The Problem of Dogmatic Prolegomena

I.1, 287

“As the Word of God reveals itself, the Bible and proclamation are the Word of God. . . . We are dealing with the concept of the revelation of the God who according to Scripture and proclamation is the Father of Jesus Christ, is Jesus Christ Himself, and is the Spirit of this Father and this Son. . . . It is this concept of God, and this concept alone, that interests dogmatics.” pp. 290-291)

## CHAPTER II. THE REVELATION OF GOD

[see § 4.3]

## PART I. THE TRIUNE GOD

## § 8. GOD IN HIS REVELATION

I.1, 295

**God's Word is God Himself in His revelation. For God reveals Himself as the Lord and according to Scripture this signifies for the concept of revelation that God Himself in unimpaired unity yet also in unimpaired distinction is Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness.**

## 1. The Place of the Doctrine of the Trinity in Dogmatics

I.1, 295

“The basic problem with which Scripture faces us in respect of revelation is that the revelation attested in it refuses to be understood as any sort of revelation alongside which there are or may be others. It insists absolutely on being understood in its uniqueness. But this means that it insists absolutely on being understood in terms of its object, God. . . . The question of the self-revealing God . . . thus forces itself upon us as the first question.” (p. 295)

“God, the Revealer, is identical with His act in revelation and also identical with its effect.” (p. 296)

“Thus to the same God who in unimpaired unity is the Revealer, the revelation and the revealedness, there is also ascribed in unimpaired differentiation within Himself this threefold mode of being.” (p. 299)

“It is hard to see how in relation to Holy Scripture we can say what is distinctive for the holiness of this Scripture if first we do not make it clear (naturally from Holy Scripture itself) who the God is whose revelation makes Scripture holy.” (p. 300)

This is “the concrete and decisive question: *Who is God?*” (p. 301, emphasis added)

Note: The important question for Barth is not whether God exists, or what God is, or how we know God. Even to attempt to answer those questions would be already to go in a wrong direction. Instead, there is one question, one question posed by revelation, one question alone to which we are bound and with which we have to do: Who is God? There continue to be many today who would rather start at different places, follow other questions, and thereby pursue alien answers. But is not this the question of our lives, the question of our work, and the question of the church? Who is God?

“*The doctrine of the Trinity is what basically distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God as Christian, and therefore what already distinguishes the Christian concept of revelation as Christian, in contrast to all other possible doctrines of God or concepts of revelation.*” (p. 301, emphasis added)

## 2. The Root of the Doctrine of the Trinity

I.1, 304

“According to Scripture God’s revelation is God’s own direct speech which is not to be distinguished from the act of speaking and therefore is not to be distinguished from God Himself, from the divine I which confronts man in this act in which it says Thou to him.” (p. 304)

“According to Holy Scripture *God’s revelation is a ground which has no higher or deeper ground above or below it but is an absolute ground in itself*, and therefore for man a court from which there can be no possible appeal to a higher court. Its reality and truth do not rest on a superior reality and truth. They do not have to be actualised or validated as reality from this or any other point. They are not measured by the reality and truth found at this other point. They are not to be compared with any such nor judged and understood as reality and truth by reference to such. On the contrary, God’s revelation has its reality and truth wholly and in every respect—both ontically and noetically—within itself. Only if one denies it can one ascribe to it another higher or deeper ground or try to understand and accept or reject it from the standpoint of this higher or deeper ground.” (p. 305, emphasis added)

Note: To appeal to something outside revelation in an attempt to establish the truth of revelation would necessarily disprove the truth of revelation and expose it as a fraud. If there is a higher standard to which we must appeal, let us listen to that higher standard, not to that which we were testing.

“One can either obey or disobey, either believe or not believe, what is called revelation in the Bible—both are possible—but from no other standpoint can one get into a position to see whether it has really happened and its content is true.” (p. 305)

“We may sum all this up in the statement that *God reveals Himself as the Lord*. . . . Revelation is the revelation of lordship and therewith it is the revelation of God. . . . Lordship means freedom.” (p. 306, emphasis added; see p. 314 below)

“*Godhead in the Bible means freedom*, ontic and noetic autonomy. In the decisions taken in this freedom of God the divinely good becomes event, and truth, righteousness, holiness, and mercy deserve to be called what their names declare because they are real in the freedom of God. It is thus, as One who is free, as the only One who is free, that God has lordship in the Bible. It is thus that He also reveals it.” (p. 307, emphasis added)

“*God reveals Himself as Lord*; in this statement we have summed up our understanding of the form and content of the biblical revelation.” (p. 314, emphasis added; see p. 306 above)

“Revelation in the Bible means the self-unveiling, imparted to men, of the God who by nature cannot be unveiled to men.” (p. 315)

“The mysteries of the world are of such a kind that some day they can cease to be mysteries. God is always a mystery.” (p. 321)

“Our concepts of unimpaired unity and unimpaired distinction, the concept of the one essence of God and of the three persons or modes of being to be distinguished in the essence, and finally the polemical assertion, which we touched on only briefly, that God’s triunity is to be found not merely in His revelation but, because in His revelation, in God Himself and in Himself too, so that the Trinity is to be understood as ‘immanent’ and not just ‘economic’-none of this is directly biblical, i.e., explicitly stated in the Bible; it is church doctrine. We have established no more than that the biblical doctrine of revelation is implicitly, and in some passages explicitly, a pointer to the doctrine of the Trinity.” (p. 333)

### 3. *Vestigium Trinitatis*

I.1, 333

“In trying to analyse the biblical concept of revelation, we have arrived at the thesis that this analysis reduced to its simplest form, the threefold yet single lordship of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the root of the doctrine of the Trinity. In other words the biblical concept of revelation is itself the root of the doctrine of the Trinity. *The doctrine of the Trinity is simply a development of the knowledge that Jesus is the Christ or the Lord.* When we say that the doctrine of the Trinity grows from this root we are saying critically and polemically that it does not stem from any other root.” (p. 334, emphasis added)

Barth goes on to criticize Augustine and all who followed him for pursuing a knowledge of God as Trinity through the analogy of being.

“The finders of the *vestigial trinitatis* had no wish to postulate a second and different root of the doctrine of the Trinity side by side with revelation. Far less did they wish to represent this second root as the only true one or to deny the revelation of the trinitarian God. But their action is deeply overshadowed by the question whether this is not precisely what they did. We are plainly dealing with that non-obligatory, uncommissioned and dangerous possibility whenever theological language, as here, thinks it must not just be the interpretation of revelation but also its illustration. *Interpretation means saying the same thing in other words. Illustration means saying the same thing in other words.* Where the line is to be drawn between the two cannot be stated generally. But there is a line, for *revelation will submit only to interpretation and not to illustration.* If we illustrate it we set a second thing alongside it and focus our attention on this. We no longer trust revelation in respect of its self-evidential force.” (p. 345, emphasis added)

Note: Does this not also apply to preaching? Does not what Barth has written here about theology apply also to proclamation? Should we not focus upon proclaiming the promises of the gospel as given to us in revelation in the Scripture, interpreting those promises only so far as necessary, and avoiding at all costs all petty and distracting illustrations? Is this not a major point at which Barth can inform our preaching? If we believe in the power of

the Word of God to create its own hearing, shouldn't we proclaim that Word boldly and plainly and not try to prop it up (which only bears witness, and necessarily so, to our underlying distress in regard to its weakness, as if it needed to be propped up) with jokes, cute stories, philosophical babbling, psychological gobbledygook, and rank emotional manipulation?

“*Theological language is not free to venture anything and everything.*” (p. 346, emphasis added)

Note: Theology works within certain boundaries. It is not free, and we as theologians are not free, to say anything it wants or we want.

“There is of course . . . a true vestigium trinitatis in creatura, an illustration of revelation, but we have neither to discover it nor to bring it into force ourselves. . . . It consists in the form which God Himself in His revelation has assumed in our language, world, and humanity. . . . God is present for us in the threefold form of His Word, in His revelation, in Holy Scripture, and in proclamation. (p. 347)

## § 9. THE TRIUNITY OF GOD

I.1, 348

**The God who reveals Himself according to Scripture is One in three distinctive modes of being subsisting in their mutual relations: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is thus that He is the Lord, i.e., the Thou who meets man's I and unites Himself to this I as the indissoluble Subject and thereby and therein reveals Himself to him as his God.**

### 1. Unity in Trinity

I.1, 348

“The doctrine of the triunity of God, as this has been worked out and rightly maintained in the Church as an interpretation of biblical revelation regarding the question of the Subject of this revelation, does not entail—this above all must be emphasised and established—any abrogation or even questioning but rather the final and decisive confirmation of the insight that *God is One*. . . .

“In our demonstration of the root of the doctrine of the Trinity in the biblical revelation we began with and continually returned to the revealed name of Yahweh-Kyrios which embraces both the Old Testament and the New. The doctrine of the Trinity is not and does not seek to be anything but an explanatory confirmation of this name. This name is the name of a single being, of the one and only Willer and Doer whom the Bible calls God.” (p. 348, emphasis added)

“We may unhesitatingly equate the lordship of God, to which we found the whole of the biblical concept to be related, with what the vocabulary of the early Church calls the essence of God, the *deitas* or *divinitas*, the divine οὐσία, *essentia*, *natura*, or *substantia*.

The essence of God is the being of God as divine being. The essence of God is the Godhead of God.” (p. 349)

“It may be said of this essence of God that its unity is not only not abrogated by the threeness of the ‘persons’ but rather that its unity consists in the threeness of the ‘persons.’ Whatever else we may have to say about this threeness, in no case can it denote a threeness of essence. The triunity of God does not mean threefold deity either in the sense of a plurality of Gods or in the sense of the existence of a plurality of individuals or parts within the one Godhead.” (pp. 349–350)

“If revelation is to be taken seriously as God’s presence, if there is to be a valid belief in revelation, then in no sense can Christ and the Spirit be subordinate hypostases. In the predicate and object of the concept of revelation we must again have, and to no less a degree, the subject itself. *Revelation and revealing must be equal to the revealer.* Otherwise there is no room for them beside the revealer if this be the one God. The unity of God would render revelation and revealing impossible. Christ and the Spirit would not just be foreign to and totally unlike the Father, as Arius said in dangerous proximity to a denial of all revelation. They would have no more to do with Him than any other creatures. *Only the substantial equality of Christ and the Spirit with the Father is compatible with monotheism.*” (p. 353, emphasis added)

## 2. Trinity in Unity

I.1, 353

“At issue here is the revealed knowledge of the revealed unity of the revealed God—revealed according to the witness of the Old and New Testaments. The unity of God confirmed in the doctrine of the Trinity is not to be confused with singularity or isolation.” (p. 354)

“The statement that God is One in three ways of being, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, means, therefore, that the one God, i.e. the one Lord, the one personal God, is what He is not just in one mode but—we appeal in support simply to the result of our analysis of the biblical concept of revelation—in the mode of the Father, in the mode of the Son, and in the mode of the Holy Ghost.” (p. 359)

## 3. Triunity

I.1, 368

“The doctrine of perichoresis (*circumincessio*, passing into one another) of the divine persons . . . states that the divine modes of being mutually condition and permeate one another so completely that one is always in the other two and the other two in the one. Sometimes this has been grounded more in the unity of the divine essence and sometimes more in the relations of origin as such. Both approaches are right and both are ultimately saying the same thing.” (p. 370)

## 4. The Meaning of the Doctrine of the Trinity

I.1, 375

“Every baptism validly performed in our churches at least confronts us with the problem of the doctrine of the Trinity.” (p. 379) This at least suggests that any presumed baptism not performed “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” is not a valid baptism and therefore not a baptism at all.

“The question that is answered by the doctrine of the Trinity is a very specific question regarding the basic concept of the revelation of God or the basic fact of it as attested in Scripture.” (p. 379)

“The specific question about revelation which is answered by the doctrine of the Trinity is, however, the question of who it is that reveals Himself, the question of the subject of revelation. One may sum up the meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity briefly and simply by saying that *God* is the One who reveals himself. But if this meaning is to be fully perspicuous one must also reverse the emphasis and say that God is the One who *reveals* Himself. . . . *God* is the Revealer. . . . The *Revealer* is God.” (p. 380)

“The doctrine of the Trinity means on the one side, as a rejection of Subordinationism, the express statement that the three moments do not mean a more and a less in God’s being as God. . . . Subordinationism finally means the denial of revelation.” (p. 381)

“The doctrine of the Trinity means on the other side, as the rejection of Modalism, the express declaration that the three moments are not alien to God’s being as God. . . . Modalism finally entails a denial of God.” (p. 382)

“The doctrine of the Trinity tells us—this is the positive thing which it was defending on the polemical fronts—how far the One who reveals Himself according to the witness of Scripture can in fact be our *God* and how far He can in fact be *our* God. He can be our God because in all His modes of being He is equal to Himself, one and the same Lord. . . . And this Lord can be our God, He can meet us and unite Himself to us, because He is God in His three modes of being as Father, Son and Spirit, because creation, reconciliation and redemption, the whole being, speech and action in which He wills to be our God, have their basis and prototype in His own essence, in His own being as God.” (pp. 382–383)

## § 10. GOD THE FATHER

I.1, 384

**The one God reveals Himself according to Scripture as the Creator, that is, as the Lord of our existence. As such He is God our Father because He is so antecedently in Himself as the Father of the Son.**

## 1. God as Creator

I.1, 384

“In the event which the Bible describes as revelation God deals with man as Lord; not as a being of the kind and order to which man himself belongs and therefore not as a being over which man for his part might equally be lord; nor yet as a being which exists and remains in and for itself in its own kind and order. These are the two errors or lies about God which are set aside by revelation. . . .

“But who is the Lord and therefore the God to whom the Bible is referring? As we have seen already, it is typical of the Bible in both the Old Testament and the New that its answer to this question does not point us primarily to a sphere beyond human history but rather to the very centre of this history.

“The answer is that at the climax of the biblical witness Jesus of Nazareth is the Kyrios.” (p. 384)

“The lordship of Jesus as the Son of God is obviously only a manifestation, exercise and application of the lordship of God the Father. . . .

“What is the goal to which Jesus is the way? Whom or what does He reveal in so far as He reveals God the Father? What do we see in Him to the degree that He is God’s reflection and mirror? Who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?” (p. 386)

“God the Father is . . . not identical with what we know as our life or perhaps with its meaning and power. . . . His will stands over against our will to live, supreme, unbound, or rather in absolute control. . . . God the Father wills neither our life in itself nor our death in itself. He wills our life in order to lead it through death to eternal life. He wills death in order to lead our life through it to eternal life. He wills this transition of our life through death to eternal life. His kingdom is this new birth.

“. . . God our Father, whose will and work on men these are, is the Lord of our existence. . . . The real Lord of our existence must be Lord over both life and death. . . . The Lord of existence is the Creator. . . . It is a truth of revelation.” (pp. 388, 389)

## 2. The Eternal Father

I.1, 390

“The decisive statement by which the answer just given to the question: Who is God the Father? is elevated to the status of an element in the knowledge of the triune God along the lines of church dogma, must be as follows: God as the Father of Jesus Christ can be our Father because even apart from the fact that He reveals Himself as such He already is the One He reveals Himself to be, namely, the Father of Jesus Christ, His son, who as such is Himself God. God can be our Father because He is Father in Himself, because fatherhood is an eternal mode of being in the divine essence.” (p. 390, emphasis added)

“God’s Trinitarian name of Father, God’s eternal fatherhood, denotes the mode of being of God in which He is the Author of His other modes of being.” (p. 393)

“We cannot separate the Father from the Son from the Holy Ghost. . . . Not the Father alone, then, is God the Creator, but also the Son and the Spirit with Him. And the Father is not only God the Creator, but with the Son and the Spirit He is also God the Reconciler and God the Redeemer.” (pp. 394-395)

“The Father is not the Son and is not the Spirit. . . . Certain statements about the work of the Son and the Spirit cannot be appropriated to the Father even though God the Father is no less the subject of reconciliation and redemption than the Son and the Spirit.” (pp. 396-397)

## § 11. GOD THE SON

I.1, 399

**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.**

### 1. God as Reconciler

I.1, 399

“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. . . . If He reveals God, then irrespective of His creaturehood He Himself has to be God. . . . To confess Him as the revelation of His Father is to confess Him as essentially equal in deity with this Father of his.” (p. 406)

“But what does it mean for us? . . . It implies God’s lordship in the fact that He turns to us, that indeed he comes to us, that He speaks to us, that He wills to be heard by us and to arouse our response.” (pp. 406–407)

“As creation is *creatio ex nihilo*, so reconciliation is the raising of the dead. As we owe life to God the Creator, so we owe eternal life to God the Reconciler.” (p. 413)

### 2. The Eternal Son

I.1, 414

“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. . . . Down to the very depths of deity, not as something penultimate but as the ultimate things 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.” (p. 414)

“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.” (p. 414)

“Jesus Christ is the true and effective Revealer of God and Reconciler to God because God in His Son or Word does not posit and make known 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.” (pp. 415–416)

“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 *Symn. Nicaeno-Constantinopolitanum* which relates to this problem.” (p. 423)

**Note:** *That is to say, the single most important document in the history of the Christian church’s official statements on Jesus Christ as the Son of God is what we call the Nicene Creed, particularly the second paragraph. The remainder of this section, pp. 423–447, comprises a line by line exposition of that part of the creed.*

1. “We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ.” (p. 423)
2. “We believe in Jesus Christ as the only-begotten Son of God.” (p. 424)
3. “We believe in Jesus Christ as the begotten of the Father before all time.” (p. 425)
4. “We believe in Jesus Christ as light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made.” (p. 427)
5. “We believe in Jesus Christ as being ‘of one substance (or essence) with the Father.’” (p. 438)
6. “We believe in Jesus Christ ‘by whom all things were made.’” (p. 441)

## § 12. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

I.1, 448

**The one God reveals Himself according to Scripture as the Redeemer, i.e., as the Lord who sets us free. As such He is the Holy Spirit, by receiving whom we become the children of God, because, as the Spirit of the love of God the Father and the Son, He is so antecedently in Himself.**

### 1. God as Redeemer

I.1, 448

“We begin a third time with the New Testament witness: Jesus is Lord. But this time we add the query: How do men come to say this? We are presupposing that they believe and therefore speak. They are to be taken seriously in what they say. They are to be nailed to it. In other words, they do not say it as the result of arbitrary reflection but in *acknowledgment* of a fact. They do not say it out of a desire to give the man an office or to give the office a man, but because the man has an office and discharges it. They say it as the beginning and not the end of their thinking about Him. They say it because He is

Lord. . . . How do they come to say this? How do they reach this beginning of their thinking about Him? How does it happen that they believe the Father through the Son and the Son through the Father? How do these contents get into this vessel? How does this predicate, this faith, come to this subject, the subject man? How can anyone have this faith? Can men believe?" (p. 448, emphasis added; note again knowledge as *acknowledgment*, see pp. 187 and 205–208 above)

"This special element in revelation is undoubtedly identical with what the New Testament usually calls the Holy Spirit as the subjective side in the *event* of revelation." (p. 449, emphasis added; note again the understanding of revelation as *event*; see pp. 48–49, 56, 59, 93–95 especially, 101, 109, 260–261, and 384 above)

"The Spirit of God is God in His *freedom* to be present to the creature. . . . God's *freedom* to be present in this way to man, and therefore to bring about this encounter, is the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit in God's revelation." (p. 450–451, emphasis added; for the *freedom* of God, see pp. 42, 117, and 306–307 above)

**Note:** *These major themes of the freedom of God, of the word of God as event, and of human knowledge of that word and of God as acknowledgment, are all coming together again in this presentation of the Holy Spirit.*

"The Holy Spirit is not identical with Jesus Christ, with the Son or Word of God. . . . He is still to be regarded wholly and entirely as the Spirit of Christ, of the Son, of the Word of God." (pp. 451–452; the Son and the Spirit must be distinguished but cannot be separated; see p. 459 below)

"The act of the Holy Ghost in revelation is the Yes to God's Word which is spoken by God Himself for us, yet not just *to* us, but also *in* us." (p. 453, emphasis added)

"The Spirit is the great and only possibility in virtue of which men can speak of Christ in such a way that what they say is witness and that God's revelation in Christ thus achieves new actuality through it. . . .

The Holy Spirit is the authorisation to speak about Christ; He is the equipment of the prophet and apostle; He is the summons to the Church to minister the Word." (p. 454)

"In what has been said we have stated already that according to the testimony of Scripture the Holy Spirit is no less and no other than God Himself, distinct from Him whom Jesus calls his Father, distinct also from Jesus Himself, yet no less than the Father, and no less than Jesus, God Himself, altogether God." (p. 459)

"Grace is the Holy Spirit received, but we ourselves are sinners. This is true. If we say anything else we do not know the deity of the Holy Spirit in God's revelation." (p. 466)

## 2. The Eternal Spirit

I.1, 466

“The Holy Spirit does not first become the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, in the event of revelation. The event of revelation has clarity and reality on its subjective side because the Holy Spirit, the subjective element in this event, is of the essence of God Himself. What He is in revelation He is antecedently in Himself. And what He is antecedently in Himself He is in revelation. Within the deepest depths of deity, as the final thing to be said about Him God is God the Spirit as He is God the Father and God the Son. The Spirit outpoured at Pentecost is the Lord, God Himself, just as the Father and just as Jesus Christ is the Lord, God Himself. . . . The Spirit is holy in us because He is so antecedently in Himself.” (pp. 466–467)

“The fact that the Holy Spirit is the Lord, that He is wholly and utterly God, the divine Subject, in the same sense as the Father of Jesus Christ and in the same sense as Jesus Christ Himself, is without doubt the harder and more exacting demand, not just or chiefly for formal thought, but in face of man’s ideas about himself and also and precisely in relation to God.” (p. 467)

**Note:** *The remainder of this section, pp. 469–489, comprises a line by line exposition of the third paragraph of what we call the Nicene Creed.*

1. “We believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord.” (p. 469)

“He is Lord in inseparable unity with the Father as Lord and the Son as Lord. . . . This togetherness or communion of the Father and the Son is the Holy Spirit. . . . He is the common factor in the mode of being of God the Father and that of God the Son. He is what is common to them, not in so far as they are the one God, but in so far as they are the Father and the Son. . . . The Holy Spirit is what the Father and the Son also are. . . .

“He is the common element, or, better, the fellowship, the act of communion, of the Father and the Son. He is the act in which the Father is the Father of the Son or the Speaker of the Word and the Son is the Son of the Father or the Word of the Speaker.” (pp. 469–470)

2. “We believe in the Holy Ghost, the giver of life.” (p. 471)

“The Holy Spirit is with the Father (and the Son) the subject of creation, He is not just the Redeemer.” (p. 471)

3. “We believe in the Holy Ghost, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son.” (p. 473)

“All our statements concerning what is called the immanent Trinity [*what God is in Himself*] have been reached simply as confirmations or underlinings or, materially, as the indispensable premises of the economic Trinity [*how God reveals Himself to us*].” (p. 479)

**Note:** *At least part of Barth's argument is, I believe, that God is in Himself as He reveals Himself to us, since otherwise it would not be God who is revealed and therefore it would not be God who is revealing. Part of this is that God is a God of truth and not of falsehood. Part of the practical result is that we are to trust that God is, as He has shown us, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that is to say, we do not have to look for some other "real" God hidden behind the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as if they were only masks that hid God from us instead of revealing God to us. God does not merely appear to be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

"Love is God, the supreme law and ultimate reality, because God is love and not *vice versa*." (p. 483; *Oh, what mischief would be avoided if this irreversible direction were observed!*)

4. "We believe in the Holy Ghost 'who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified.'" (p. 487)

## PART II. THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD

I, Part 2

### § 13. GOD'S FREEDOM FOR MAN

I.2, 1

**According to Holy Scripture God's revelation takes place in the fact that God's Word became a man and that this man has become God's Word. The incarnation of the eternal Word, Jesus Christ, is God's revelation. In the reality of this event God proves that He is free to be our God.**

#### 1. Jesus Christ the Objective Reality of Revelation

I.2, 1

In the revelation of God, who as the Lord, is the Father from whom it proceeds, the Son who fulfils it objectively (for us), and the HS who fulfils it subjectively (in us), G is the constant Subject of rev.

Incarnation of the Word = Jesus Christ as God's revelation to us.

The grace of God is his freedom. God not prevented by deity or humanity from being with us, being free for us.

Object of analysis—doctrine of Incarnation of Word of God made flesh.

Question: How the encounter of his revelation with men is real in God's freedom?

(Aim of theology—understand revelation attested in Bible)

Jesus Christ is the reality of God's revelation. Once for all, fulfillment of time. Name of Jesus Christ is primary, Xlgy (Incar) secondary, commentary.

1. The Word or Son of God became a Man and was called Jesus of Nazareth.

Johanine. Christ is Jesus

Those found fulfillment of the conception, and the conclusion itself, of the Son of God, in Jesus.

2. This Man Jesus of Nazareth was God's Word or God's Son. Synoptics, Jesus is Christ. Not deifying of a man. Awareness of having met God. Movement of thought from above downwards.

Both of these are analytic statements. No further synthesis, but only ultimate word, the name Jesus Christ.

Xlgy of understanding New Testament attestation of reality of rev of God can only be an attempt. Listen to name, and to very God and very M

## 2. Jesus Christ the Objective Possibility of Revelation

I.2, 25

God's freedom for us is fact in Jesus Christ, Very God and very Man, in this unity the obj reality of div rev; Jesus existence is God's freedom for Man.

Question: How far is Jesus's exist identical with God's freedom for man?

God's freedom limited to Jesus Christ, to manness of God and Godness of Man.

Poss read off from reality; Jesus can do all that we need; reality of Jesus Christ can be rev just as far as it requires:

1. God free to cross boundary. Majesty in condescension, God's becoming something really foreign to him.
  2. God's Word or Son (God in entire div) became man. God manifest to us as Word or Son of God. dissim and sim of Word and world.
  3. God cognizable to us as Word by assuming form analogous to forms we know. Humanity both veiling.
  4. Jesus Christ remains God. Unveiling in Resurrection. So, in Incar, div becomes latent, but not lessened. W still W.
  5. W becomes Man, flesh, assumes fallen human nature. To be rev, has to be incarnation
- The poss of rev, read off from reality of Jesus Christ, is in above 5 point

## § 14. THE TIME OF REVELATION

I.2, 45

**God's revelation in the event of the presence of Jesus Christ is God's time for us. It is fulfilled time in this event itself. But as the Old Testament time of expectation and as the New Testament time of recollection it is also the time of witness to this event.**

### 1. God's Time and Our Time

I.2, 45

'God has time for us'. We have only that time; God's time for us is time of rev.

–Time: created; fallen' God's for us–rev

–the time of the Lord of time is mastered, therefore fulfilled

–God's rev-freeness and exist for us=having time for us rev becomes history, but history not become rev. God remains Subject. "God reveals Himself":

1. Act of Lordship. Time mastered. History is what it is in virtue of Subject
2. Resistance of man to act of lordship. God in time is offending, because he judges our fallen time, Amid our resistance, rev. comes as servant. God adopts hiddenness prepared by rebellion.
3. Miraculous event, breaking in of new time on old. Rev is miracle because rev is in Resurrection of Jesus.

These sketch mng for us that there is a fulfilled time, that God's rev is hist.

Now, mng of determ and limit o four time by fulfilled time:

1. F. T. takes place of ours as genuine, proper, real.
2. Our T taken away.
3. F of T by Rev not complete, but announce imminence of § 2. i.e., at-handness of kingdom.
4. If T is F in Jesus Christ, our t not endless.

## 2. The Time of Expectation

I.2, 70

–As genuinely expected, Rev is present. Old Testament is witness to this.

Expln of ‘J manifest as expected One in Old Testament’

1. OT. Like NT, witness to Rev–free, once-for-all, concrete act of God. Rev. relational, covenantal. Cov is rev because it expects rev of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the theme.
  2. In both, G remains hidden, and declares himself so by rev. Judgment of godless world. Final hiddenness on cross. Sin is human side of God’s hiddenness.
  3. In both, G is both present and coming. Affects rdg of: people, land, temple, lordship of God, judgment, king.
- Old Testament only confirmed from New Testament point of view, ex eventu.

## 3. The Time of Recollection

I.2, 101

–follows, but bound up with , fulfilled time. New Testament is witness to recollection of rev. which breaks in from above, speaking for itself, and fashioning our hearing.

1. Cov fulfilled in togetherness of God and Man, free self-relating of god to man. Incarnation goal of Old Testament, subject of New Testament. Work of God himself; Mediator
2. Witness to rev of hidden G. G bears own wrath, mys. One has died for all. Res points to passion as rev of God, consummate Incarnation, realize cov.
3. New Testament witness to rev that God present as coming God. Easter narratives talk of pure presence of God recoll! All else hangs on these. Easter stories–stammering. Res not of past, but object of recoll!?! Only God’s rev makes it possible. Recall and expectation. NT eschatology. Recoll time not fulfilled. But partakes.

## § 15. THE MYSTERY OF REVELATION

I.2, 122

**The mystery of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ consists in the fact that the eternal Word of God chose, sanctified and assumed human nature and existence into oneness with Himself, in order thus, as very God and very man, to become the Word of reconciliation spoken by God to man. The sign of this mystery revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the miracle of His birth, that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.**

## 1. The Problem of Christology I.2, 122

Who is Jesus Christ? (Xlgy–person of X) content=G and M; form=Xmas.

Rev is mystery, here ultimate. Path to J. prophetic and apostolic witness to rev. JX is very God and very Man = assumption for all further reflection.

## 2. Very God and Very Man I.2, 132

This ans “who?”; & describes “The word was made flesh.”

## 1. The Word–div, son of God, very God; one, only, true, eternal God

Full deity, Lord of heaven & earth, never ceasing.

1. The Word is the Subject. Word’s becoming flesh is a sovereign divine act of lordship different from creation.

2. Word became flesh in the divine freedom of the Word.

Free love; inward freedom. Miracle, mercy

3. Even in becoming Word still free, sovereign @ of G.

vG & vM equalizing unequal

4. Mary is mother of God.

## 2. Flesh–

1. Flesh=true and real man. Creaturely, birth, death.

2. Flesh=hum ess & exist, kind and nature.

Also a man, but this is work of W, not presupp.

This man not real in self, not 2<sup>nd</sup> beside W.

Not 1 W + 1M, but W is a man, appropriated poss.

God himself in person present in flesh; Subject.

3. Flesh=man who is liable to judgment & verdict of Go

Must be man to be rev, & flesh to be man.

4. Sanctification & blessing, sinlessness, G as subject.

Hallowing, drawing near. G in flesh, div bearer of what man must bear. J

lives by grace. Rev.

## 3. Became–center, mystery of rev. miraculous mercy.

Paraphrase ‘became’ as ‘assumed.’ G not cease being G. inconceivable Incar. Act of W, Lord. Mediator. J is God, manhood is predicate of that.

a) completed event–accomplished, in the fulness of time.

G. not exist for us apart from human being of X.

b) completed event–act. Open mystery. Unity as act of God

Summary: Xlgy–static-ontic, or dynamic-noetic. Riddle without resting

## 3. The Miracle of Christmas I.2, 172

## PART III. THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

## § 16. THE FREEDOM OF MAN FOR GOD I.2, 203

**According to Holy Scripture God's revelation occurs in our enlightenment by the Holy Spirit of God to a knowledge of His Word. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is God's revelation. In the reality of this event consists our freedom to be the children of God and to know and love and praise Him in His revelation.**

## 1. The Holy Spirit and the Subjective Reality of Revelation I.2, 203

## 2. The Holy Spirit and the Subjective Possibility of Revelation I.2, 242

## § 17. THE REVELATION OF GOD AS THE ABOLITION OF RELIGION I.2, 280

**The revelation of God in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the judging but also reconciling presence of God in the world of human religion, that is, in the realm of man's attempts to justify and to sanctify himself before a capricious and arbitrary picture of God. The Church is the locus of true religion, so far as through grace it lives by grace.**

## 1. The Problem of Religion in Theology I.2, 280

## 2. Religion as Unbelief I.2, 297

## 3. True Religion I.2, 325

## § 18. THE LIFE OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD I.2, 362

**Where it is believed and acknowledged in the Holy Spirit, the revelation of God creates men who do not exit without seeking God in Jesus Christ, and who cannot cease to testify that He has found them.**

## 1. Man as a Doer of the Word I.2, 362

## 2. The Love of God I.2, 371

## 3. The Praise of God I.2, 401

**CHAPTER III. HOLY SCRIPTURE** [see § 4.2]

## § 19. THE WORD OF GOD FOR THE CHURCH I.2, 457

**The Word of God is God himself in Holy Scripture. For God once spoke as Lord to Moses and the prophets, to the Evangelists and apostles. And now through their**

**written word He speaks as the same Lord to His Church. Scripture is holy and the Word of God, because by the Holy Spirit it became and will become to the Church a witness to divine revelation.**

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| 1. Scripture as a Witness to Divine Revelation | I.2, 457 |
| 2. Scripture as the Word of God                | I.2, 473 |
| § 20. AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH                  | I.2, 538 |

**The Church does not claim direct and absolute and material authority for itself but for Holy Scripture as the Word of God. But actual obedience to the authoritative Word of God in Holy Scripture is objectively determined by the fact that those who in the Church mutually confess an acceptance of the witness of Holy Scripture will be ready and willing to listen to one another in expounding and applying it. By the authority of Holy Scripture on which it is founded, authority in the Church is restricted to an indirect and relative and formal authority.**

- |                              |          |
|------------------------------|----------|
| 1. The Authority of the Word | I.2, 538 |
| 2. Authority Under the Word  | I.2, 585 |
| § 21. FREEDOM IN THE CHURCH  | I.2, 661 |

**A member of the Church claims direct, absolute and material freedom not for himself, but only for Holy Scripture as the Word of God. but obedience to the free Word of God in Holy Scripture is subjectively conditioned by the fact that each individual who confesses his acceptance of the testimony of Scripture must be willing and prepared to undertake the responsibility for its interpretation and application. Freedom in the Church is limited as and indirect, relative and formal freedom by the freedom of Holy Scripture in which it is grounded.**

- |                            |          |
|----------------------------|----------|
| 1. The Freedom of the Word | I.2, 661 |
| 2. Freedom under the Word  | I.2, 695 |

#### **CHAPTER IV. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE CHURCH** [see § 4.1]

- |                                 |          |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| § 22. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH | I.2, 743 |
|---------------------------------|----------|

**The Word of God is God Himself in the proclamation of the Church of Jesus Christ. In so far as God gives the Church the commission to speak about Him, and the Church discharges this commission, it is God Himself who declares His revelation in His witnesses. The proclamation of the Church is pure doctrine when the human word spoken in it in confirmation of the biblical witness to the revelation offers and**

**creates obedience to the Word of God. Because this is its essential character, function and duty, the word of the Church preacher is the special and immediate object of dogmatic activity.**

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| 1. The Word of God and the Word of Man in Christian Preaching | I.2, 743 |
| 2. Pure Doctrine as the Problem of Dogmatics                  | I.2, 758 |
| 3. Dogmatics as Ethics  | I.2, 782 |
| § 23. DOGMATICS AS A FUNCTION OF THE HEARING CHURCH           | I.2, 797 |

**Dogmatics invites the teaching Church to listen again to the Word of God in the revelation to which Scripture testifies. It can do this only if for its own part it adopts the attitude of the hearing Church and therefore itself listens to the Word of God as the norm to which the hearing Church knows itself to be subject.**

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| 1. The Formal Task of Dogmatics                      | I.2, 797 |
| 2. The Dogmatic Norm                                 | I.2, 812 |
| § 24. DOGMATICS AS A FUNCTION OF THE TEACHING CHURCH | I.2, 844 |

**Dogmatics summons the listening Church to address itself anew to the task of teaching the Word of God in the revelation attested in Scripture. It can do this only as it accepts itself the position of the teaching Church and is therefore claimed by the Word of God as the object to which the teaching Church as such has devoted itself.**

- |                                   |          |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| 1. The Material Task of Dogmatics | I.2, 844 |
| 2. The Dogmatic Method            | I.2, 853 |

Dr. James C. Goodloe IV, *Executive Director*  
**Foundation for Reformed Theology**  
 4103 Monument Avenue  
 Richmond, Virginia 23230

revised February 14, 2010