

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Volume II

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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 GOD

Volume II

CHAPTER V. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

II, Part 1

§ 25. THE FULFILMENT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

II.1, 3

The knowledge of God occurs in the fulfilment of the revelation of His Word by the Holy Spirit, and therefore in the reality and with the necessity of faith and its obedience. Its content is the existence of Him whom we must fear above all things because we may love Him above all things; who remains a mystery to us because He Himself has made Himself so clear and certain to us.

1. Man before God

II.1, 3

2. God before Man

II.1, 31

§ 26. THE KNOWABILITY OF GOD

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The possibility of the knowledge of God springs from God, in that He is Himself the truth and He gives Himself to man in His Word by the Holy Spirit to be known as the truth. It springs from man, in that, in the son of God by the Holy spirit, he becomes an object of the divine good-pleasure and therefore participates in the truth of God.

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2. The Readiness of Man

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God is known only by God. We do not know Him, then in virtue of the views and concepts with which in faith we attempt to respond to His revelation. But we also do not know Him without making use of His permission and obeying His command to undertake this attempt. The success of this undertaking, and therefore the veracity of our human knowledge of God, consists in the fact that our viewing and conceiving is adopted and determined to participation in the truth of God by God Himself in grace.

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2. The Veracity of Man's Knowledge of God II.1, 204

CHAPTER VI. THE REALITY OF GOD

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3. The Being of God in Freedom II.1, 297

§ 29. THE PERFECTION OF GOD II.1, 333

God lives His perfect life in the abundance of many individual and distinct perfections. Each of these is perfect in itself and in combination with all the others. For whether it is a form of love in which God is free, or a form of freedom in which God loves, it is nothing else but God Himself, His one, simple distinctive being.

§ 30. THE PERFECTIONS OF THE DIVINE LOVING II.1, 351

The divinity of the love of God consists and confirms itself in the fact that in Himself and in all His works God is gracious, merciful and patient, and at the same time holy, righteous and wise.

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§ 31. THE PERFECTIONS OF THE DIVINE FREEDOM II.1, 440

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CHAPTER VII. THE ELECTION OF GOD II, Part 2

§ 32. THE PROBLEM OF A CORRECT DOCTRINE OF THE ELECTION OF GRACE II.2, 3

The doctrine of election is the sum of Gospel because of all words that can be said or heard it is the best: that God elects man; that God is for man too the One who loves in freedom. It is grounded in the knowledge of Jesus Christ because He is both the electing God and elected man in One. It is part of the doctrine of God because originally God's election of man is a predestination not merely of man but of Himself. Its function is to bear basic testimony to eternal, free and unchanging grace as the beginning of all the ways and works of God.

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2. The Foundation of the Doctrine II.2, 34

3. The Place of the Doctrine in Dogmatics II.2, 76

§ 33. THE ELECTION OF JESUS CHRIST II.2, 94

The election of grace is the eternal beginning of all the ways and works of God in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ God in His free grace determines himself for sinful man and sinful man for Himself. He therefore takes upon Himself the rejection of man with all its consequences, and elects man to participation in His own glory.

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2. The Eternal Will of God in the Election of Jesus Christ II.2, 145

§ 34. THE ELECTION OF THE COMMUNITY

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The election of grace, as the election of Jesus Christ, is simultaneously the eternal election of the one community of God by the existence of which Jesus Christ is to be attested to the whole world and the whole world summoned to faith in Jesus Christ. This one community of God in its form as Israel has to serve the presentation of the divine judgment, in its form as the Church the representation of the divine mercy. In its form as Israel it is determined for hearing, and its form as the Church for believing the promise sent forth to man. To the one elected community of God is given in the one case its passing, and in the other its coming form.

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§ 35. THE ELECTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

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The man who is isolated over against God is as such rejected by God. But to be this man can only be by the godless man's own choice. The witness of the community of God to every individual man consists in this: that this choice of the godless man is void; that he belongs eternally to Jesus Christ and therefore is not rejected, but elected by God in Jesus Christ; that the rejection which he deserves on account of his perverse choice is borne and canceled by Jesus Christ; and that he is appointed to eternal life with God on the basis of the righteous divine decision. The promise of his election determines that as a member of the community himself shall be a bearer of its witness to the whole world. And the revelation to his rejection can only determine him to believe in Jesus Christ as the One by whom it has been borne and canceled.

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CHAPTER VIII. THE COMMAND OF GOD

§ 36. ETHICS AS A TASK OF THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

II.2, 509

As the doctrine of God's command, ethics interprets the Law as the form of the Gospel, i.e., as the sanctification which comes to man through the electing God. Because Jesus Christ is the holy God and sanctified man in One, it has its basis in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Because the God who claims man for Himself makes Himself originally responsible for him, it forms part of the doctrine of God. Its function is to bear primary witness to the grace of God in so far as this is the saying engagement and commitment of man.

1. The Command of God and the Ethical Problem

II.2, 509

In the true Christian concept of the covenant of God with man the doctrine of the divine election of grace is the first element, and the doctrine of the divine command is the second. It is only in this concept of the covenant that the concept of God can itself find completion. For God is not known and is not knowable except in Jesus Christ. He does not exist in His divine being and perfections without Jesus Christ, in whom He is both very God and very man. He does not exist, therefore, without the covenant with man who was made and executed in this name. God is not known completely—and therefore not at all—if He is not known as the Maker and Lord of the covenant between Himself and man. The Christian doctrine of G cannot have “only” G for its content, but since its object is this G it must also have man, to the extent that in Jesus Christ man is made a partner in the covenant decreed and founded by God.

The first element in the concept of the covenant is the doctrine of the election of grace, of predestination. But the question is: What is the purpose of the electing G for the man whom He has elected? The answer is: God wills to rule over man. The divine election is the determination of man

The God who rules wants obedience. God cannot draw man to Himself without involving him in responsibility. There are questions of man's self-determination, responsibility decision, obedience, action. Ruling grace is commanding grace. The one Word of God, in its content, is Gospel; in its form and fashion, it is Law. It is the claiming of man's freedom.

Covenant includes election and sanctification. Ethics belongs not only to dogmatics in general but to the dogmatics in general but to the doctrine of God. The Christian doctrine of G is ethics. The grace of God is the answer to the ethical problem. For it sanctifies man. It claims him for G. It puts him under G's command. It gives predetermination to his self-determination so that he obeys G's command.

The quest of man to give the answer (of existence and goodness) instead of being the answer (by the grace of G in election and sanctification) is sin and, is general ethics).

Christian ethics can annex general ethics.

Christian ethics cannot embark upon apologetics. The only possible meaning of apologetics is a conviction that theological ethics must be measured against a general ethics, with the latter being its judge and authority.

The man who obediently hears the command of God is not in any position to consider why he must obey it.

Not only is a synthesis of theological and general ethics suspect, but so is a diastasis. Theological ethics starting point is that all ethical truth is enclosed in the command of the grace of God.

The Roman Catholic coordination of moral philosophy and moral theology is based on the basic view of the harmony which is achieved in the concept of being between nature and super-nature, reason and revelation, man and God. But then grace is not grace. The fall does not alter man's imitative knowledge and ability to partake of true being without grace.

Grace which has from the start to share its power with a force of nature is no longer grace, i.e., it cannot be recognized as what the grace of God is in the consideration and conception of that divine act, as what it is in Jesus Christ.

To exist as a man means to act. And action means choosing, deciding, What is the right choice? What ought I to do? What ought we to do?

The question of good and evil has been decided and settled once and for all in the decree of God, by the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1) This means, first, that the reality of the good as such, the reality of the command of God as the sum of the good, cannot be treated as a mere possibility.

The command of God is objectively valid.

2) Secondly, theological ethics cannot cease to attest and interpret the reality of God, and therefore His Word and work. In the one image of Jesus Christ we have both the Gospel which reconciles us with God and illumines us and consoles us, and the Law which in contradistinction to all the laws which we ourselves find or fabricate really binds and obligates us. This is the Law to which theological ethics clings. It is ethics of grace or it is not theological ethics.

The grace of Jesus Christ itself and alone is the reality in which from the very start man himself has his reality.

The ethical problem of Church dogmatics can consist only in the question whether and to what extent human action is a glorification of the grace of Jesus Christ. It asks to what extent the sanctification of man in Jesus Christ has taken place.

2. The Way of Theological Ethics

II.2, 543

The Christian doctrine of G, the know of the electing grace of G in X, decides the nature, aim, and special way of theological ethics. So we reject a start in general, philosophical ethics.

The goodness of man consists in the goodness with wh G acts toward man, thru his Word. Man does good in so far as he acts as one who is called by G to responsibility. A Christian knows that G has accepted him in Christ. His action is good because the div address wh is an eternal and temporal event in Christ is good, because God himself is good. The good of human action consists in the fact that it is determined by the div command.

The first thing that theo eth has to show, and to develop as a basic and all-comprehensive truth, is the fact and extent that this command of G is an event: a divine action, and therefore an event—not a reality wh is, but a reality wh occurs. Not to see it in this way is not to see it at all. Our first ask is to understand the command of G as claim, decision, and judgment.

Later volumes will show to what extend the divine command is directed toward man in the relations of creation, reconciliation, ad redemption.

§ 37. THE COMMAND AS THE CLAIM OF GOD

II.2, 552

As God is gracious to us in Jesus Christ, His command is the claim which, when it is made, has power over us, demanding that in all we do we admit that what God does is right, and requiring that we give our free obedience to this demand.

1. The Basis of the Divine Claim

II.2, 552

“For me the good is to cleave to G.” Yes, but why?

- 1) God rules over all things. But man is free in the face of power.
- 2) God is the essence of good. But this is not compelling.
- 3) God is all-sufficient being. But this is not basis for G’s claim.

It is the G in whom we may believe who calls us in such a way that we not only hear but obey.

God has given us himself. He has graciously turned to us. All this is actual in Jesus Christ. The law is enclosed completely in the Gospel.

In Jesus Christ we can see our hum exist wide open to heaven, irradiated purified, held and sustained from above, not rejected by God, but in a love that interpenetrates all things affirmed by Him in the way in which He affirms Himself. G himself confessed our self-will, maintained his cause vs. us, suffered, accomplished faith. In Jesus Christ, God accomplished both His own and him, and therefore it cannot hold us.

The grace of God in Christ finds man as Adam, created in the image of God, and sinfully trying to determine himself for equality with God. The fact that God is gracious to us does not mean that he becomes soft, but that he remains absolutely hard, that there is no escaping His sovereignty and therefore His purpose for man. To know His grace is to know this sovereignty.

What we find in the case of the man Jesus is a valid model for the general relationship of man to the will of God. When grace is actualized and revealed, it always means that the Law is established.

Where the grace of God is proclaimed as the resolve of G, the law is validly established. God has spoken of the good by doing it; He has spoken of himself by delivering himself up for us. It is in this that he is God. This is his majesty. This is how he maintains and proves his authority over man. The law is valid because God himself proves his authority over man. The law is valid because God himself is the doer of the law, because God orders and only orders on the basis of the fact that he himself has given and realized what he orders. The peculiarity of theological ethics is not so much in divine command as in the name of Jesus Christ.

2. The Content of the Divine Claim

II.2, 566

The law is the form of grace. There are only concrete divine claims. Therefore the grace of G—wherever it is actualized and revealed has teleological power. The aim of the grace actualized and revealed in G's covenant with man, is the restoration of man to the divine likeness and therefore to fellowship with God in eternal life.

Man is jolted and impelled by the aim and goal of a future determined for him. Grace is the movement and direction of him in accordance with his determination. It is this telos which prevails.

Acc. To Mt 5:48, the telos is love.

The grace of God, attested to us by the claim of G, wills and created the covenant between God and man. It therefore determines man to existence in this covenant. It determines him to be the partner of God. It therefore determines his action to correspondence, conformity, uniformity with God's action. In this determination consists man's peace with God, his righteousness and holiness, and eternal life.

The grace of God is the existence of Jesus Christ and his people. What are we to do? We are to do what corresponds to this grace. We are to respond to the existence of Jesus Christ and his people. With our action we are to render an account to this grace. By it and by it alone we are challenged. To it and to it alone we are responsible.

There is no question of a conformity to grace that means equality, or deification into a second Christ. It is a question of responsibility. It is a question of displaying the image of God.

The required conformity with the grace of God is this. His action must be determined by the fact that he accepts the gracious action of God as right. When man is summoned to do the right, primarily and decisively he is summoned only to adhere to the fact that the

gracious God does the right. Whatever he himself does, it will be the right if only he is satisfied that the gracious God does the right. "To accept as right" means to lay aside all hostility to G's action, to lay aside all indifference, to lay aside one's superiority and self-will in regard to God's action, to confront God's action with joyful participation, to love God in this his action.

We are to accept it as right that God never meets us except compassionately, except as the One who comes to the help of our misery.

We are to accept it as right that God is our righteousness.

We can sum it all up by saying that what God wants of us and all men is that we should believe in Jesus Christ.

3. The Form of the Divine Claim

II.2, 583

By this we understand the form & manner in wh the command of God meets man, imparts itself to him, and becomes a claim upon him.

The command of God is distinguished in that it is permission: the granting of a very definite freedom.

The command of God sets man free. It will not compel man, but burst open the door of the compulsion under wh he has been living. It will not meet him with mistrust but with trust. It will instill courage, and not fear into him. This is because the command is the form of the grace of God, the intervention of the God who has taken the curse from us to draw us to Himself. The command of God will summon man out of the sphere of harassment. The command: do this, because in so doing you may and will again live of and by my grace. You may do it.

It always speaks concretely.

The command is the form of the Gospel of God in virtue of wh we are free.

The command of God is imperative, and it enforces itself. It secures obedience by itself setting us free. The command of God sets itself vs. human free will (self-will). This command deposes man as judge of good and evil. It circumvents the person who would save and purify and justify and sanctify himself.

The basis of the "must" wh corresponds to the command of God is, then, the fact that what comes from the command of God can only be the deepest and most radical "may" of the man who sees that God is not against him, but for him.

N. B. gospel: be not anxious...be not afraid...In those two imperatives any separation of gospel and law is absolutely impossible

Obligation means permission; and vice versa.

Jesus is free as God Himself is free, because and as he executes the resolve and will of th free love of God. His person is the fulness of the divine command.

The command of God is personal because it claims our obedience in relation to this definite person, Jesus Christ. The divine command demands a genuine decision. Along

with individual commands, it commands myself, myself for Jesus, my subordination to this name and its law. Confronts us with Either–Or.
The decision cannot be other than joyous.

§ 38. THE COMMAND AS THE DECISION OF GOD

II.2, 631

As God is gracious to us in Jesus Christ, His command is the sovereign, definite and good decision concerning the character of our actions—the decision from which we derive, under which we stand and to which we continually move.

1. The Sovereignty of the Divine Decision

II.2, 631

That God is gracious to us in Jesus Christ is the divine decision about our whole being, what we do and do not do. This is the will of God for us. In virtue of this will he has taken the initiative from all eternity and in the heart of time, making himself responsible for our relationship to him and participation in his glory. It requires our obedience, i.e., that we should live in this surrender to God what he both wills and effects.

Between the arrogance of those who regards themselves as judges of what they will and do, and the false humility of those who take no notice of God's judgment because they cannot change it, there is the third possibility—the sense of responsibility of those who know what God alone is their Judge and not they themselves, and that because God is their Judge they have every reason to remember Him in all their willing and doing, to keep him before their minds' eye, and in their own self-examination continually to move towards their examination by Him.

It is the idea of responsibility which gives us the most exact definition of the human situation in face of the absolute transcendence of the divine judgment. We live in responsibility, which means that our being and willing, what we do and what we do not do, is a continuous answer to the Word of God spoken to us as a command. It takes place always in a relationship to the norm which confronts and transcends us in the divine command.

The relation between God and man is not that of a parallelism and harmony of the divine and human wills, but of an explosive encounter, contradiction, and reconciliation, in which it is the part of the divine will to precede and the hum to follow, of the former to control and the latter to submit. Neither as a whole nor in detail can our action mean our justification before God.

What ought we to do? Analysis of the question.

1) Every answer is continually questioned again.

2) ought? The divine truth seeks us; we are confronted by, and subject to, an ought. It must come to me as something alien.

3) we? We who are the covenant partners with God.

4) do? practical question, not a curiosity.

2. The Definiteness of the Divine Decision

II.2, 661

That God is gracious to us in Jesus Christ means a total divine claim to our obedience and a total decision concerning good and evil in the choice of our decisions. It means our total responsibility. For the love of God in Jesus Christ intends and seeks and will s us in our totality. The work of atonement accomplished in Jesus Christ refers to the whole of our lives. And therefore our gratitude for the divine love and its work can only be a whole-hearted gratitude.

My decision—the human ethics decision—is whether in my conduct I shall correspond to the command wh encounters and confronts me in the most concrete and pointed way, whether I shall be obedient or disobedient to it, whether I for my part, shall meet it according to my election (the election of Jesus Christ) as a believer or an unbeliever.

The question cannot be whether he speaks, but only whether we hear.
For obedience and faith begin as we hear.

The fact that the decision of God which claims and judges us in His command is a specific decision is something we must affirm because this is how matters stand according to the witness of Holy Scripture, and therefore the witness of God's revelation of his real relationship to us and our real relationship to him. It is in this way, concretely, that man is commanded in Holy Scripture, and from this we may infer that it is in this way, concretely, that we ourselves are commanded. God's faithfulness is greater than our unfaithfulness.

(1) The divine law in the Bible is always a concrete command. The whole relationship of God with man in the course of the historical unfolding of his covenant of grace, which forms the true content and object of the biblical witness, is continuously realized in the shape of the divine commanding and prohibiting, the divine ordering and direction.

Ten Commandments—tell of God and people. Limits
Sermon on the Mount—tells of KG come in X

(2) This concrete commanding found in the Bible must be understood as a divine command relevant to ourselves who are not directly addressed by it.

The Bible speaks of God's command in order to call our attention not merely to what the will and work and self-revelation were there and then, but to what they are here and now for us ourselves. The good required by the command of God is the good of the divinely controlled history of the covenant of peace and its subsequent developments, the good of God's eternal election of grace, the good which bears the name of Jesus Christ.

The divine command has eternal and valid content for us precisely in its temporary expression. —to be perceived by us if only we will listen to it, and allow that the Biblical witness is right.

3. The Goodness of the Divine Decision

II.2, 708

§ 39. THE COMMAND AS THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

II.2, 733

As God is gracious to us in Jesus Christ, He judges us. He judges us because it is His will to treat us as His own for the sake of His own Son. He judges us as in His Son's death. He condemns all our action as transgression, and by His Son's resurrection pronounces us righteous. He judges us in order that He may make us free for everlasting life under His lordship.

1. The Presupposition of the Divine Judgment II.2, 733
2. The Execution of the Divine Judgment II.2, 742
3. The Purpose of the Divine Judgment II.2, 764

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