PART ONE

THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES
DEVASTATING GRACE:
JUSTIFICATIO IMPIII AND I-ENTITY

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INTRODUCTION

In the Western mind personal identity has become increasingly complicated. Lately, the three-dimensional view, which maintains that a person can be wholly present at a given moment, has been replaced by a four-dimensional perception, which claims that “persons are aggregates of momentary person-stages…including every person-stage between origin and end.”\(^1\) Gilles Deleuze even suggests “to stop thinking oneself as an ‘I’ in order to live as a current, as a bundle of currents in relation to other currents inside and outside oneself.”\(^2\) In reaction against the Cartesian ‘I’ of modernity, it would appear that in certain postmodern circles the self as such is in danger of dissolving.

From the perspective of the Reformation, personal identity is first and foremost defined by Christian identity. This, at least, is the basic proposal of this paper. It is argued that personal identity is fundamentally a forensic issue, which is dealt with in the doctrine of justification. As the articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae, justification is crucial for Christian identity. It should, however, not be reduced to the saving of souls, since it involves nothing less than a radically new creation.

WHO AM I?

In a comprehensive volume dealing with *Identity and Anxiety*, Rollo May pays attention to the “centrality of anxiety in our day” as reflected

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