

TOWARDS AN ANALOGY OF BEAUTY IN THE THEOLOGY OF KARL BARTH

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for the DPhil in Theology

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Andrew Dunstan, Regent's Park College, Trinity 2019

Hans Urs von Balthasar's interpretation of Karl Barth's theology of beauty remains the dominant one in theological aesthetics. It claims that Barth recovers theological beauty (i.e. divine beauty) but does not acknowledge any genuine relationship, or in other words analogy, between this and worldly beauty (i.e. natural and artistic beauty and human understandings of beauty). He supports this by a suspicion that Barth's concept of analogy itself may be incoherent: a form of 'theopanism' in which the relation between God and world simply alternates between metaphysical dialectic and identity. This thesis establishes an alternative reading of the matter. It argues that Barth does not merely recover theological beauty but also develops an *analogia pulchritudinis*: throughout his career he intentionally develops an analogy between theological and ecclesial beauty and he also consistently affirms that the world's beauty may bear witness to God. It substantiates this claim by means of a more comprehensive analysis than Balthasar attempts. Whereas Balthasar's interpretation is based simply on an analysis of Barth's most extensive account of beauty, *Church Dogmatics* §31.3, this thesis considers this passage in its proper context: both its historical context of Barth's reflections on beauty throughout his career and its immediate literary context of his concept of God's glory in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3. The argument proceeds in three stages. The first section allays Balthasar's fear that Barth's concept of analogy is incoherent. The second argues that Barth develops an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty throughout his work. The final section then illustrates its significance especially for contemporary theological aesthetics.

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Introduction

This thesis builds upon growing dissatisfaction with the dominant interpretation of Barth's theology of beauty by establishing an alternative which is not only more consistent with his work but useful as a contribution to both studies of Barth's theology and contemporary theological aesthetics.

Hans Urs von Balthasar claims that Barth recovers the traditional Christian belief in theological beauty (i.e. the beauty of God *ad intra* and *ad extra*) but does not acknowledge a genuine relationship, or in other words analogy, between this and worldly beauty (i.e. natural and artistic beauty and human understandings of beauty). Perhaps unwittingly this interpretation is supported by Balthasar's suspicion that Barth's concept of analogy itself may be incoherent: a form of 'theopanism' in which the relation between God and world merely alternates between metaphysical dialectic and identity

Since it was a pioneering interpretation of the topic by an expert in both Barth's theology and theological aesthetics Balthasar's reading of Barth's view of beauty, frequently in combination with his suspicion of Barth's concept of analogy, has won widespread acceptance by those in the field of theological aesthetics. For instance Richard Viladesau, one of the most widely respected contemporary authorities on the subject of theological aesthetics, simply echoes Balthasar's conclusion.

Amongst a subset of these theologians with sympathies to Radical Orthodoxy it has found a more novel application. Here in combination with John Milbank's thesis that postmodern critical theory is characterised by an aesthetic prejudice for the sublime (that which confounds representation and hence 'shocks') against the beautiful ('harmonious proportion' which 'delights') it has been used to support the hypothesis that Barth himself has a preference for the sublime and is thus a progenitor of postmodern theory. David Bentley Hart, for instance, reiterates Balthasar's interpretation that Barth does not affirm a relation between divine and worldly beauty but attributes this to Barth's postmodern prejudice for the sublime.

Paul Fiddes is one of the few scholars to entertain the possibility of an alternative to Balthasar's reading. In his work he briefly suggests that a sympathetic reader might find an analogy of theological and worldly beauty in Barth.

This thesis seeks to comprehensively substantiate this alternative interpretation of Barth's view of beauty for the first time. It argues that Barth does not simply recover theological beauty in his work but also develops an *analogia pulchritudinis*. More specifically it claims that throughout his career Barth intentionally develops an analogy between theological and ecclesial beauty and also consistently acknowledges that the world's beauty may bear witness to God. This alternative reading of Barth's understanding of beauty is achieved by means of a more comprehensive analysis than Balthasar attempts. Balthasar's interpretation is based solely upon an analysis of Barth's most extensive account of beauty in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3. By contrast the present study considers this passage in its proper context: both its historical context of his reflections on beauty

throughout his career and its immediate literary context of his concept of God's glory in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3.

Part I: Analogia Gloriae

Chapter 1: *Barth's Concept of Analogy (1919-1968)*

The first section of the thesis lays the groundwork for this new interpretation of Barth's understanding of beauty by countering a significant potential objection to it, namely, Balthasar's suspicion that Barth does not have a coherent concept of analogy in general. Chapter one begins by arguing that in fact Barth consistently develops a coherent and increasingly sophisticated analogy between theological and ecclesial realities throughout his career. It opens with a genealogy of Balthasar's suspicion of Barth's concept of analogy which traces its origin to Erich Przywara. Driven by a fear that Barth's theology would prompt a renewed withdrawal of the German Catholic Church from modern culture which would undermine his own ambitions for it, Przywara claimed that Barth's theology, like Luther's, simply rejects the metaphysical tradition of the *analogia entis*, assumes a metaphysical dialectic between divine and creaturely being, propounds the doctrine of divine *Alleinwirksamkeit*, and is consequently a form of identity-philosophy or 'theopanism'. In response this chapter demonstrates that across the course of his career Barth develops an *analogia crucis* (1919-1924), an *analogia fidei* (1924-1942) and then a distinct form of analogy of being (1942-1968) which are each innocent of these charges. Barth does not reject but develops the tradition of the *analogia entis* through his dialogue with Przywara. His early eternity-time dialectic appears metaphysical but is actually soteriological in nature. Barth gives an increasing role to objective and subjective secular form in his concepts of analogy which means that a determinate form of human activity is essential to all Christian knowledge of God. His theology therefore assumes not an identity but an analogy between God and redeemed humanity. And contrary to

Przywara's fears Barth's mature concept of analogy grounds cultural engagement not retreat.

Chapter 2: Barth's Concept of Natural Revelation (1919-1968)

Chapter two then adds that throughout his career Barth consistently acknowledges that the world *extra muros ecclesiae* may participate in this analogy between God and the Church as well. Contrary to popular opinion Barth never rejected the traditional Christian concept of natural revelation *per se*. Instead he simply renounced one common form of it which assumes that creation's praise of its Creator has a source and content which is completely independent of His self-revelation in Jesus Christ. Because of its potential to both secularise the Christian faith and thwart his efforts to overcome an anthropological basis for knowledge of God Barth consistently denounced this version of the belief throughout his career. He varied only by being increasingly explicit about this judgment and making his own theology increasingly consistent with it. But Barth nevertheless always proposed an alternative, namely, that the heavens' declaration of the glory of God is entirely dependent upon God's revelation of His glory in Jesus Christ for its source, content and character. The fundamental elements of this alternative concept of *revelatio naturalis* were already in place by his lecture on *The Christian's Place in Society* (1919). In the years which followed Barth merely changed the specific framework which he used to explain it from the *analogia crucis* (1919-1924) to the *analogia fidei* (1924-1942) and then his own analogy of being (1942-1968). And as he did the concept not only acquired greater coherence but he became increasingly open to it as well.

Chapter 3: Barth's Analogia Glorae (1940)

Chapter three then brings the preceding insights to a climax by demonstrating that in fact

there is precisely such an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly realities in the background to Barth's most extensive description of beauty: his account of God's glory in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3. For Barth glory is the final attribute or 'perfection' of God which, coupled with His eternity, expresses not only His freedom but His love. God's glory is His right, ability and act to not simply keep His perfect divine being and all-sufficiency to Himself but to manifest or share it with others along with the recognition and worship of Him which this inevitably awakens in them. During the course of his account of it Barth successively ascribes this basic act of 'glorifying' God to five parties: the eternal and incarnate Son of God, the human Jesus Christ, the Church and the world *extra muros ecclesiae*. It is neither completely different in each case, because it always involves attesting God, nor is it completely identical, since in God it takes the form of a self-glorification while for creatures it entails glorifying another. Barth must therefore assume there is an analogical relationship between them. Since the five parties who carry out this act are really just three subjects then it is moreover another analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly realities. It can be described in sum as an *analogia gloriae*. More concretely it envisages that the Father and Son share their glory through the Holy Spirit and the Son of God glorifies the Father throughout eternity. On this basis the Son of God repeatedly manifests His glory, His perfect divine being and all-sufficiency, through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth in history as well. When He does the Holy Spirit unites sinfully impotent humans to the prototypical creaturely glorification of God by Jesus Christ and thereby enables them to know and obey His revealed splendour so that their whole being becomes its image. And during these moments they can also recognise that the world around them glorifies God as well.

Part II: Analogia Pulchritudinis

Chapter 4: Antecedents: Barth's Rudimentary Analogy of Theological, Ecclesial and Worldly Beauty (1919-1940)

Having allayed Balthasar's suspicion that Barth does not have a coherent concept of analogy in general the second part of the thesis then challenges his interpretation of Barth's theology of beauty by demonstrating that Barth not only recovers theological beauty but also develops an *analogia pulchritudinis* in his work: throughout his career he intentionally develops an analogy between theological beauty and ecclesial beauty and he also consistently acknowledges that the beauty of the world *extra muros ecclesiae* may bear witness to God. Chapter four begins by arguing that Barth already has three rudiments of an *analogia pulchritudinis* in the early stages of his academic career (1919-1940). Firstly, in this period Barth develops a rudimentary analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty. His academic appointment to Roman Catholic Münster in 1926 triggered a serious encounter with medieval allusions to beauty for the first time. He recognised this concept had the potential to dissociate his dogmatics from fatalistic Reformed concepts of effectual call, to vindicate it against charges of existential irrelevance and to ground a theological method which was profoundly autobiographical. So he made a rudimentary appropriation of it in *Church Dogmatics I/2* (1938) by acknowledging that the object of theology has beauty, that various forms of Christian witness (Scripture, preaching and the content of theology) must therefore have a corresponding form of beauty, and that theology is exceptionally beautiful and pleasurable work. At this stage, however, these claims remained diffuse, concessive and lacked a theoretical basis. Secondly, parallel to this development Barth also developed a potential conceptual basis for his analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty in the unified and distinct form of simplicity and multiplicity or unity and distinction of his doctrine of

God and his belief that theology veils and unveils its subject matter by speaking definitely and yet modestly about it. Thirdly, from as early as *The Christian's Place in Society* (1919) Barth recognised that natural revelation implied that even natural and artistic beauty and human understandings of beauty could bear witness to God.

Chapter 5: Climax: Barth's Comprehensive Analogy of Theological, Ecclesial and Worldly Beauty in Church Dogmatics §31.3 (1940)

Chapter five then demonstrates that in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3, his most extensive account of beauty, Barth develops these three rudiments into an *analogia pulchritudinis* for the first time. Barth proposes that beauty is the form - both the 'shape' and 'method' - of God's glory. By doing so he now claims that God's glory evokes creaturely glorification not by sheer power as Reformed accounts of effectual call have traditionally implied but by awakening desire and filling with joy. Barth eschews a philosophical in favour of a theological proof of this claim that the form of God's glory is beautiful. By surveying the previous sections of his theology he demonstrates that the Trinity has a beautiful unified and distinct form of unity and distinction or simplicity and multiplicity as one God and three persons and that this is reflected in the form of both the perfect divine being and the incarnation. It is true that this passage therefore does not directly elaborate an analogy of beauty. However when it is read in its literary context of Barth's account of God's glory it implies one. Barth's claim that beauty is the form of God's glory, taken together with his *analogia gloriae*, implies that not only do the glory of the eternal and incarnate Son of God have a beautiful unified and distinct form but that when the Church glorifies God it has a comparably beautiful form and may recognise similar forms and concepts of beauty in the world around it which also glorify God. Far from this being just another unrealised implication of his theology, brief allusions throughout

the account imply that this is what Barth himself actually assumes. In the course of the passage Barth briefly reaffirms his earlier belief that the content of theology should have beauty which mirrors that of its object and admits that philosophical understandings of beauty may become witnesses to the beauty of God's revealed glory.

Chapter 6: Final Confirmation: Barth's Continuing Analogy of Theological, Ecclesial and Worldly Beauty (1940-1968)

Chapter six then shows that this *analogia pulchritudinis* was no mere passing fancy for Barth continues to affirm the major tenets of it throughout the remainder of his career. In *Church Dogmatics IV/3.2* (1959) and *Evangelical Theology* (1962) Barth briefly reaffirms his belief that the *ratio veritatis* has beauty and so theological discourse must, like a pleasing portrait of it, have similar elegance. And in *Church Dogmatics III/1* (1945) and *Church Dogmatics IV/3.1* (1959) Barth reiterates his longstanding conviction that the beauty of the world and the truths of aesthetics may be summoned by God's grace to bear witness to Him.

Part III: Significance

Chapter 7: Implications for Contemporary Theological Aesthetics

The final chapter then illustrates the significance of this new interpretation of Barth's understanding of beauty by arguing that aside from its contribution to studies of Barth's theology it could provide a foundation for theological aesthetics which many may find more attractive than the current alternatives. Since the middle of the twentieth century there has been increasing calls for the addition of theological aesthetics alongside dogmatics and ethics as a subdiscipline of theology. This endeavour is widely understood as a conceptual inquiry into the problems of philosophical aesthetics by means of the

sources and norms of Christian theology. And the most common foundation for it is a systematic theology of beauty. Although Barth himself never put his *analogia pulchritudinis* to this use there is nothing about his theology which would prevent it. Although Barth maintains that theology is the science of the Word of God alone he always acknowledged that because this is a revelation of God it has implications for all things including aesthetics. Barth's systematic theology of beauty has many of the same strengths as other current foundations for theological aesthetics. Like them it is at once rigorously Christian - trinitarian, christocentric and integral - and yet generalisable as well and thus could provide a good model for theological analysis of other aesthetic values. Yet it also lacks many of the weaknesses of the current alternatives. For instance it does not rely upon a speculative and contentious extra-biblical ontology and it largely avoids a neo-platonising tendency to denigrate material beauty.

Introduction

Balthasar's Reading

The true extent of the influence of Hans Urs von Balthasar upon contemporary theological aesthetics is seldom appreciated. It is widely recognised that despite his intentions his unprecedented multi-volume study of beauty and the conditions of its perception, *Herrlichkeit*, ultimately laid a foundation for the endeavour of theological aesthetics to be recognised alongside dogmatics and ethics as a sub-discipline of theology for the first time. However few realise that his interpretation of a major source of inspiration for this work has also left an indelible impression upon the field.

Balthasar's analysis of Karl Barth's brief but provocative thoughts on beauty in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 occupies just a few pages of *Herrlichkeit* but was amongst the first to ever be published. In it Balthasar celebrates his colleague for recovering an interest in beauty or form rather than simply revelation or glory in Protestant theology but concludes that he nonetheless fails to complete the job. According to Balthasar Barth merely recovers the concept of theological beauty, the beauty of God *ad intra* and *ad extra*. He fails to take the further step of acknowledging a genuine relationship - or in other words analogy - between this and the worldly forms of beauty - presumably those in nature, culture and human understandings of beauty - which are more typical of our everyday experience of the value. Although, consistent with his invariably perceptive and charitable exegesis of his friend, Balthasar parenthetically admits that Barth may have meant after all to imply this.

[W]hich way is to be taken... the way of Karl Barth, who rediscovers the inner beauty of theology and revelation itself... Or (and this is perhaps implicitly included in Barth's position)... to probe the possibility of there being a genuine

relationship between theological beauty and the beauty of the world...?.¹

Throughout this same work Balthasar also occasionally expresses significant doubts about the coherence of Barth's concept of analogy in general. Although they were probably never intended to do so in effect these only serve to support his conclusion. For if Barth never managed to develop a coherent form of analogy then of course he simply could not have advanced an analogy of beauty either. Although a comprehensive examination of these concerns must await our next chapter it is vital that we at least acquaint ourselves with them here. In sum Balthasar suspects that Barth's mature form of analogy tries but ultimately fails to overcome the 'theopanism' which he believes characterised Barth's first edition of *Romans*. In other words he fears that Barth's assumption of a metaphysical dialectic between God and humanity means that ironically any reconciliation or relationship between the two in the Christian life can only take the form of an identity between them in which God is and does everything.

When Spinoza says, *Mentis amor intellectualis erga Deum est ipse Dei Amor quo Deus seipsum amat*, this is (in philosophical pantheism) the same doctrine as that of Karl Barth in theological theopanism, because in each case the only possible mediatory position of the *analogia entis* is rejected.²

Reading Dominates

By virtue of his unique expertise in both Barth's theology and theological aesthetics Balthasar's pioneering interpretation of Barth's understanding of beauty, often coupled with his suspicions of Barth's concept of analogy, has been accepted without question by the overwhelming majority of scholars in theological aesthetics and has subsequently

¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, i: *Seeing the Form*, ed. J. Fessio and J. Riches, tr. E. Leiva-Merikakis (2nd edn, San Francisco: Ignatius, 2009), 78 cf. 52-55. Hereafter, *GL1*.

² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, v: *The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age*, ed. B. McNeil and J. Riches, tr. O. Davies et al. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991), 466 n. 25. Hereafter, *GL5*. cf. Balthasar, *GL1*, 55.

become the dominant reading of his view in this field. However, in the hands of this second generation of interpreters it has lost its former complexity. These scholars now neglect the possibility that Barth may have implied an analogy of beauty in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3.

Richard Viladesau, for instance, is widely regarded as a preeminent authority on contemporary theological aesthetics. However he simply echoes Balthasar's conclusion that 'Barth... remain[s] with the "inner beauty of theology and revelation itself"'.³ The Roman Catholic theologian Francesca Murphy follows suit. She insists that 'Barth... tak[es] Christ's descending Form as the sole analogue between God and the world' but Balthasar's theological aesthetics helps us to 'love... the beauty of this world' as well.⁴ Even John De Gruchy, a Protestant theologian and Bonhoeffer scholar who might be expected to have a more sympathetic interpretation, cannot resist Balthasar's judgment or his rationale for it. He agrees that Barth affirms 'God's beauty in the event of Jesus Christ alone' and refuses to relate this to the beauty 'in nature and art as well'.⁵ And he attributes this to 'Barth's actualism' which he assumes is incapable of conceptualising an analogy between divine and worldly things.⁶ Balthasar's interpretation of Barth's understanding of beauty is perpetuated in similar fashion by the vast majority of scholars in theological aesthetics today.⁷

³ R. Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty and Art* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), 30 cf. 25-29.

⁴ F. Murphy, *Christ the Form of Beauty: A Study in Theology and Literature* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 133.

⁵ J. De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation: Theological Aesthetics in the Struggle for Justice* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 117 cf. 111-121.

⁶ De Gruchy, *Christianity*, 117 cf. 115-121.

⁷ Also following this same general interpretation are: P. Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics* (2nd edn, London: SCM, 2002), 60, 18-19; E. Farley, *Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 72-73; S. Wigley, *Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Critical Engagement* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 84, 66; B. Leahy, 'Theological Aesthetics', in B. McGregor and T. Norris (eds), *The Beauty of Christ: An Introduction to the Theology of*

Reading Mutates

But amongst those working in this field who sympathise with Radical Orthodoxy Balthasar's interpretation of Barth's concept of beauty is repeated in a slightly different form. These writers accept John Milbank's thesis that postmodern critical theory is characterised by an aesthetic prejudice for the sublime against the beautiful: they believe that through Kant especially it has inherited a tendency to not only distinguish the experience of 'that which exceeds the possibility of representation' and hence 'shocks' and 'harmonious proportion' which pleases or 'delights' but to extol the former and denigrate the latter. They consequently reiterate Balthasar's conclusion that Barth rejects an analogy between divine and worldly beauty but ultimately attribute this to an aesthetic prejudice for the sublime on his part which, they claim, makes him a pioneer and supporter of postmodern critical theory.⁸

David Bentley Hart, for instance, shares Balthasar's assessment that Barth 'affirm[s] God's glory only through the negation of worldly beauty'.⁹ And like Balthasar he is led to this conclusion largely because he suspects Barth's concept of analogy is really just a form of theopanism. He assumes that Barth places 'God and creation [in] a dialectical opposition' and is convinced that the logical outworking of such an ontology is 'ultimately the same' as 'purely identist systems': 'it reduces God to the status of a mere being'.¹⁰ However Hart critically appropriates Milbank's thesis about postmodern

Hans Urs von Balthasar (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 32 n. 29; J. Dillenberger, *A Theology of Artistic Sensibilities: The Visual Arts and the Church* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 217-218.

⁸ J. Milbank, 'Sublimity: The Modern Transcendent', in P. Heelas, D. Martin and P. Morris (eds), *Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 258-284; J. Milbank, 'Beauty and the Soul', in J. Milbank, G. Ward and E. Wyschogrod (eds), *Theological Perspectives on God and Beauty* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2003), 1-34; J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (2nd edn, Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 278-326.

⁹ D. Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 242.

¹⁰ Hart, *Beauty*, 241-243.

theory.¹¹ And so he ultimately ascribes Barth's disregard for worldly beauty to a prejudice for the 'sublime' and an ontology of violence¹² which makes his theology akin to 'Hegel's "becoming", Heidegger's "temporalization", [and] Derrida's *différance*'.¹³

John Betz likewise believes that Barth eschews an analogy of beauty. And he does so mostly because he too is convinced that Barth 'never attains an analogical perspective'.¹⁴ Betz believes that Barth assumes a 'dialectic' between divine and creaturely being.¹⁵ Ironically this means that God can only work in the world by 'a complete overpowering of the creature, whereby the creature as a secondary cause (*causa secunda*) is obliterated'.¹⁶ And so 'Barth's... talk about the being of God betray[s] an ominous proximity to Hegel... and... "theopanism"... their difference... is only apparent'.¹⁷ But Betz embraces the interpretation of postmodern theory pioneered by Milbank and furthered by Hart.¹⁸ And so he argues that Barth's rejection of an analogy of beauty stems from his 'aesthetic prejudice for the sublime'.¹⁹ According to Betz, Barth has a 'sublime God' akin to Heidegger's 'sublime abyss (*das Nichts*)' which both issue in 'sublime and irruptive content'.²⁰ Together they have inspired a generation of postmodern theorists who likewise harbour an unacknowledged prejudice for the sublime and ontology of violence which militates against an economy of representation.²¹

¹¹ Hart, *Beauty*, 29, 35-44.

¹² Hart, *Beauty*, 242.

¹³ Hart, *Beauty*, 243.

¹⁴ J. Betz, 'Beyond the Sublime: The Aesthetics of the Analogy of Being (Part Two)', *Modern Theology*, 22/1 (2006), 6.

¹⁵ Betz, *Sublime (Part Two)*, 6, 9, 11.

¹⁶ Betz, *Sublime (Part Two)*, 6 cf. 9, 11.

¹⁷ Betz, *Sublime (Part Two)*, 5 cf. 6, 9, 11.

¹⁸ J. Betz, 'Beyond the Sublime: The Aesthetics of the Analogy of Being (Part One)', *Modern Theology*, 21/3 (2005), 370, 404 nn. 15 and 19.

¹⁹ Betz, *Sublime (Part One)*, 370.

²⁰ Betz, *Sublime (Part One)*, 369-370.

²¹ Betz, *Sublime (Part One)*, 369-371.

Counter Reading

Yet a handful of thinkers have resisted this popular characterisation of Barth's view of beauty in favour of an alternative. Taking another interpretative possibility first acknowledged by Balthasar although never pursued by him they claim that Barth did not just retrieve the concept of theological beauty but assumed an analogy between this and worldly beauty as well. Although at present their hypothesis remains unsubstantiated.

This interpretation of Barth's understanding of beauty has been expressed most directly by Paul Fiddes. In his work Fiddes refutes the interpretation of Betz and others and, in the course of arguing instead that Barth hints at a way to give equal emphasis to the sublime and the beautiful in perception of the world, suggests that a 'sympathetic reader' might find an *analogia pulchritudinis* in Barth's writings.²²

This thesis aims to now substantiate this alternative reading of Barth's understanding of beauty for the first time. It argues that Barth not only restores theological beauty but also develops an *analogia pulchritudinis* as well. More specifically it claims that across a significant portion of his career Barth intentionally develops an analogy between divine beauty and the beauty of obedient Christian witness. And he also consistently assumes that the world's beauty may share this analogical relation to God as well.

The basic approach we will use to establish this reading has three distinguishing features. In the first place our analysis will be much more comprehensive in scope than Balthasar's. Balthasar's interpretation of Barth's view of beauty is based solely upon a study of his

²² P. Fiddes, 'The Sublime and the Beautiful: Intersections Between Theology and Literature', in H. Walton (ed), *Literature and Theology: New Interdisciplinary Spaces* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 142.

most sustained account of it in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3. But we will examine both the immediate and broader literary context of this passage as well which are integral to a thorough understanding of it: his concept of divine glory in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 and his observations about beauty scattered throughout his wider *corpus*.

Secondly we will also read Barth's texts in close parallel with his historical context as it is recounted in the best biographical studies of his life currently available. Especially we will follow Bruce McCormack's basic periodization of his theological development.²³ Every interpreter of Barth must assume some understanding of the basic progress of his thought. McCormack's framework has remained popular amongst many Barth scholars since its publication twenty years ago in large part because of its still unrivalled erudition. It is certainly not without problems. However these are largely restricted to his characterization of Barth's reformulation of the doctrine of election in *Church Dogmatics* §32-33.²⁴ And as we shall soon see this has little bearing upon our study.

²³ See B. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936* (Oxford: OUP, 1995).

²⁴ For this part of his interpretation see especially B. McCormack, 'Grace and Being: The Role of God's Gracious Election in Karl Barth's Theological Ontology', in *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 183-200; B. McCormack, 'Karl Barth's Version of an "Analogy of Being": A Dialectical No and Yes to Roman Catholicism', in T. White (ed), *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 88-146. For the main critiques see P. Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2002), 58-64; P. Molnar, 'The Trinity, Election and God's Ontological Freedom: A Response to Kevin Hector', in M. Dempsey (ed), *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 47-62; P. Molnar, 'Can the Electing God be God Without Us? Some Implications of Bruce McCormack's Doctrine of Election for the Doctrine of the Trinity', in M. Dempsey (ed), *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 63-90; P. Molnar, 'Can Jesus' Divinity be Recognized as "Definite, Authentic and Essential" if it is Grounded in Election? Just How Far Did the Later Barth Historicize Christology?', *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, 52/1 (2010), 40-81; G. Hunsinger, 'Election and the Trinity: Twenty-Five Theses on the Theology of Karl Barth', in M. Dempsey (ed), *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 91-114; G. Hunsinger, *Reading Barth with Charity: A Hermeneutical Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015); D. S. Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Preoccupation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 145-154. For McCormack's responses see B. McCormack, 'Election and the Trinity: Theses in Response to George Hunsinger', in M. Dempsey (ed), *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 115-137; B. McCormack, 'Let's Speak Plainly: A Response to Paul Molnar', *Theology Today*, 67 (2010), 57-65. This claim that McCormack misconstrues Barth's doctrine of election appears to be the only significant objection

Finally, we will also preface our study of Barth's view of beauty with a thorough examination of his concept of analogy in general. We have seen that Balthasar supports his interpretation that Barth does not advocate an analogy of beauty in part by his suspicion that Barth does not have a coherent form of analogy at all. Obviously if we are to conclusively substantiate that Barth does in fact assume an analogy of beauty in his work we will need to respond to each of these claims in turn. And because the latter is logically basic to the former it is this charge that we must answer first.

In the first part of our thesis then we will put Balthasar's doubts to rest by demonstrating that Barth does in fact have a coherent form of analogy. Chapter one will show that Barth develops a plausible form of analogy between God and redeemed humanity throughout his career. Chapter two will then add that he also consistently assumes that the world *extra muros ecclesiae* may participate in this. And chapter three will finally demonstrate that in fact Barth presumes precisely such an analogy of divine and worldly realities in the immediate context of his climactic account of beauty, namely, his description of glory in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3.

Building on this foundation in the second part of the thesis we will then counter Balthasar's interpretation by showing that Barth also develops a distinctive form of *analogia pulchritudinis* in his work. Chapter four will demonstrate that in the years prior

that has been made to the content of his interpretation of Barth's theological development. All other criticisms largely just pertain to its style: that it is prone to overstatement (about the difference between it and Balthasar's interpretation of Barth; the importance of Kant to Barth's theology; or the significance of analogy in *Romans*) and interpretive hubris; raises unanswered questions (about the identity of the 'philosophical remnants' Barth claimed to have overcome and the significance of his book on Anselm in doing so); and lacks explicit endorsement by Barth. For these see especially R. Hütter, 'Barth Between McCormack and von Balthasar', *Pro Ecclesia*, 8/1 (1999), 105-109; S. Wigley, 'The von Balthasar Thesis: A Reexamination of von Balthasar's Study of Barth in Light of Bruce McCormack', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 56/3 (2003), 345-359; T. Stanley, 'Returning Barth to Anselm', *Modern Theology* 24/3 (2008), 413-437; Long, *Saving*, 100 n. 3, 104-109.

to *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 Barth already had three rudiments of this thought form: an analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty; a theoretical basis for this conception; and a belief that even worldly forms of beauty may bear witness to God. Chapter five will then argue that in his climactic account of beauty Barth integrates these into an analogy of divine and worldly beauty for the first time. And chapter six will show that he retained his belief in this conception for many years after he wrote this passage as well.

The thesis will then conclude by briefly demonstrating the significance of Barth's distinctive form of analogy of beauty for contemporary theological aesthetics.

Part I: Analogia Gloriae

Chapter 1: Barth's Concept of Analogy (1919-1968)

1.1. Introduction

It will inevitably seem brazen to question Balthasar's appraisal of the integrity of Barth's concept of analogy. The Swiss Jesuit was one of the greatest Christian thinkers of the twentieth century. Of all the themes of Barth's theology with which he was familiar Barth's view of analogy was the area of his greatest expertise.¹ And Barth himself publicly feted him as one of the most astute of his contemporary interpreters.² Yet for all of Barth's commendation he still did not regard Balthasar as an especially 'good' interpreter of his work. In fact he privately declined to formally endorse an English translation of his work for precisely this reason.³ Moreover since Balthasar first publicised his concerns about the coherence of Barth's concept of analogy a host of new primary resources by Barth have become available and these, in turn, have triggered an increasing reappraisal of his interpretation of Barth's thought.⁴ But above all as we have seen it now seems clear that Balthasar's scepticism has come to have a deleterious effect on the discipline of theological aesthetics leading many to doubt that Barth even could postulate an analogy of beauty. And so for this reason especially we simply must take up the task of responding to it.

¹ Analogy was the focus of the only two monographs Balthasar ever wrote on Barth's theology: his famous *Theology of Karl Barth* and the lesser known unpublished work on which it was based, *Analogie: Ein Gespräch mit Karl Barth*. Long, *Saving*, 11.

² K. Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum: Anselm's Proof of the Existence of God in the Context of his Theological Scheme*, tr. I. Robertson (London: SCM Press, 1960), 11, hereafter *FQI*; Long, *Saving*, 105-106.

³ *Karl Barth: Letters 1961-1968*, ed. J. Fangmeier and H. Stoevesandt, tr. G. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 102, 112.

⁴ For example, at the time of writing *The Theology of Karl Barth*, both *Church Dogmatics Volumes III/4-IV/4* and Barth's only complete lecture cycle on ethics, the Münster ethics, were unavailable. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, tr. E. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 38. Hereafter, *TKB*. For this reappraisal see especially McCormack, *Critically Realistic*; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*; and K. Johnson, *Karl Barth and the Analogia Entis* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2010).

In this chapter then we will begin this endeavour by arguing that in fact Barth consistently articulates a plausible form of analogy between God and redeemed humanity throughout the entire course of his career. We will substantiate this argument in two stages. First, we will construct a thorough genealogy of the suspicion that Barth does not have a coherent concept of analogy which currently pervades theological aesthetics. Here we will seek to thoroughly comprehend not only the origin of this critique but its substance as well. Then we will offer a comprehensive response to these concerns. Above all by surveying the relevant points in Barth's development of analogy throughout his career we will demonstrate that such anxieties are ill-founded.

But before proceeding any further it is vital that we make some definite limitations to the scope of our ambition in this chapter. Since the publication of the first edition of *Romans* (1919) there has been, of course, a vast array of criticisms of various elements of the form of Barth's theology. There are important ongoing discussions, for instance, about the virtues of Barth's determinate and actualistic concept of human agency.⁵ Similarly, there is significant debate about the relation of the form of his thought to the pioneers of postmodern theory.⁶ However as we have already suggested the purpose of this chapter

⁵ See for example: N. Healey, 'The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications', *Modern Theology*, 10/3 (1994), 253-270; R. Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, tr. D. Stott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 95 ff.; S. Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 141 ff.; J. Mangina, 'Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 52/3 (1999), 269-305; N. Healey, 'Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 57/3 (2004), 287-299; N. Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics* (Oxford: OUP, 1993); N. Biggar, 'Karl Barth's Ethics Revisited', in D. Migliore (ed), *Commanding Grace: Studies in Karl Barth's Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 26-49; A. Spencer, *Clearing a Space for Human Action: Ethical Ontology in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2003); J. Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995); J. Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998); P. Nimmo, *Being In Action: The Theological Shape of Barth's Ethical Vision* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007).

⁶ See for instance: G. Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995); W. Johnson, *The Mystery of God: Karl Barth and the Postmodern Foundations of Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997); I. Andrews, *Deconstructing Barth: A Study of the Complementary Methods in Karl Barth and Jacques Derrida* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996); W. Lowe, *Theology and Difference:*

is simply to begin the process of reassuring those in the field of theological aesthetics that Barth has a plausible form of analogy and thus could in principle espouse an analogy of beauty in his work. Rather than trying to respond to all of these concerns about the form of his theology then we will restrict ourselves to the specific set of them which continues to exercise those in the field of theological aesthetics. And although it would be nice if we could persuade some in the process, our aim is not to argue the merits of Barth's distinctive form of analogy but simply its plausibility. If this chapter fulfils these admittedly more modest objectives then it will serve its purpose in this thesis.

1.2. *Genealogy of Suspicion About Barth's Concept of Analogy in Contemporary Theological Aesthetics*

Having already briefly established that there is widespread apprehension about the integrity of Barth's concept of analogy in contemporary theological aesthetics we must begin by getting to the root of it, determining both its origin and content, so that we can fashion a response which is truly equal to it. In what follows we shall argue that this peculiar anxiety has its origins in Erich Przywara's highly polemical interpretation of Barth's theology. Przywara was motivated to this interpretation by a belief that Barth's theology encouraged the Church to withdraw from culture and thus posed a direct obstacle to his own agenda for ecclesial reform. He claims that Barth's theology embraces a series of doctrinal commitments which mean that just like Luther he can only conceptualise human religion as a form of 'theopanism': a divine-human 'relation' (if one can call it

The Wound of Reason (Indiana: IUP, 1993); S. Webb, *Re-Figuring Theology: The Rhetoric of Karl Barth* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991); B. McCormack, 'Graham Ward's Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 49/1 (1996), 97-109; B. McCormack, 'Beyond Nonfoundational and Postmodern Readings of Barth: Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology', in *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 109-166; J. Webster, 'Barth and Postmodern Theology: A Fruitful Confrontation?', in G. Thompson and C. Mostert (eds), *Karl Barth: A Future for Postmodern Theology?* (Hindmarsh: Australian Theological Forum, 2000), 1-69.

that) in which God is and does everything.⁷ According to Przywara Barth rejects the traditional concept of the *analogia entis*: the belief in an analogy between God the *causa prima* and the *causae secundae* of the world. Instead he assumes a metaphysical dialectic between the two. Since this effectively places divine and human activity in competition with each other then Barth can only think of religion as an act of God alone. And ironically this means that it ultimately takes the form of a metaphysical identity between God and creatures. Przywara's interpretation was then mediated into the field of contemporary theological aesthetics, although without any malicious intent, by von Balthasar where it continues to exert an influence and at times quite clearly conditions interpretations of Barth's understanding of beauty: *prima facie* ruling out the possibility that he advocates an analogy of beauty. In sum then in this section we will argue that it is Przywara's highly polemical interpretation of Barth that continues to cast its shadow across many who interpret Barth's concept of beauty in the field of theological aesthetics today.

The suspicion of the formal character of Barth's theology which lingers in theological aesthetics today originally began its life in a very different milieu. It arose in response to a very specific historical difficulty which confronted the early twentieth century German Jesuit scholar Erich Przywara. Przywara was not just a theologian but the consummate Renaissance man. His more than 800 publications include works of philosophy, theology, poetry and hymnology.⁸ Few would dispute John's Betz's assessment that '[s]imply put, there is no German Catholic theologian of the first half of the twentieth century who can

⁷ E. Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, tr. J. Betz and D. Hart (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 165: 'God becomes the all'.

⁸ T. O'Meara, *Erich Przywara: His Theology and His World* (Notre Dame: NDUP, 2002), 8.

match the range of Przywara's erudition or the remarkable acuity of his intellect'.⁹ His almost complete neglect in English-language theology to date is thus a remarkable omission which is now thankfully being rectified.¹⁰ Yet there was undoubtedly a centre to Przywara's diverse interests as well. Above all things Przywara was a missionary to modern European culture.¹¹ His *raison d'être* was to see the German Catholic Church realise its mission to engage modern culture with the Christian gospel. And it was precisely because of this consuming ambition that he was inevitably destined for a showdown with the work of Karl Barth.

The German society in which Przywara was raised was swollen with an unusually totalizing form of secular modernism which could countenance no quarter to the Catholic religion. By 1848 Catholic missions had made significant inroads into the Protestant German states, at times even garnering high profile converts. This growing threat provoked two decades of intense anti-Catholic paranoia and hostility in the German states led perhaps most of all by its vocal intelligentsia who feared that the proliferation of monasteries threatened to plunge the modern German nation into a renewed dark age.¹² In 1871, in Prussia at least, this sentiment gained state backing when the Chancellor of the newly unified German Empire, Otto von Bismarck, implemented his *Kulturkampf*: a raft of aggressive policies and measures designed to rout the influence of the Catholic religion in the nation. The 'iron chancellor', a devout Lutheran, had a purely pragmatic

⁹ J. Betz, 'After Barth: A New Introduction to Erich Przywara's *Analogia Entis*', in T. White (ed), *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 39.

¹⁰ Until recently the only English translation of his work had been E. Przywara, *Polarity: A German Catholic's Interpretation of Religion*, tr. A. Bouquet (Oxford: OUP, 1935). However see the following recent volumes: Przywara, *Analogia Entis*; T. White (ed), *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

¹¹ O'Meara, 2, 14, 33.

¹² M. Gross, *The War Against Catholicism: Liberalism and the Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 29-184.

motivation for the sanctions.¹³ When in 1870 the alien influence began to organise itself politically he began to perceive that it posed a direct threat to the fledgling unity of the empire which he had fought so hard to achieve. However secular intellectuals exploited his legislation for their own war on religion in general.¹⁴ The measures included the demolition of Catholic representation in political life; a prohibition of clergy speaking on matters of state; a ban on religious teachers in government schools; laws permitting the government to monitor both the education and employment of Catholic clergy and the expulsion of the entire Jesuit order from the German Empire.¹⁵ At their height, half of Prussian Catholic bishops were imprisoned or in exile, a quarter of parishes were without a priest, half of all monks and nuns had fled Prussia, a third of monasteries and convents were closed, 1800 parish priests were imprisoned or exiled, and thousands of laypeople were imprisoned for aiding the clergy.¹⁶ Though the campaign officially ended in 1878 many of its laws remained in effect for decades after.¹⁷ Przywara, who was born in the Prussian province of Upper Silesia in 1889, consequently grew up in a society still suffering the dizzy aftermath of this protracted assault of social and state hostility.¹⁸

But the German Catholic Church of the time for its part, shackled to the official directives of Rome, could only respond with an equally absolute antimodernism which would tolerate no mix of the sacred with the profane. From 1870 onwards the Holy See responded to attempts at modern reform of the Church by a raft of uncompromising

¹³ Bismarck earned this epithet especially through his readiness to use military power if necessary to secure German unification.

¹⁴ R. Ross, 'The Kulturkampf: Restrictions and Controls on the Practice of Religion in Bismarck's Germany', in R. Helmstadter (ed), *Freedom and Religion in the Nineteenth Century* (Stanford: SUP, 1997), 173-174.

¹⁵ Ross, 174.

¹⁶ Ross, 175-178.

¹⁷ Ross, 173.

¹⁸ O'Meara, 3-6.

‘integralist’ measures. Generally speaking these censured the use of modern philosophy and theology and prescribed a renewed study of scholastic theology and philosophy.¹⁹ Under Pope Pius X in 1907-1910 these edicts reached a climax. The papal encyclical *Lamentabili sane exitu* (1907) condemned a list of errors typical of modern biblical scholarship and theology. Following this *Pascendi Dominici gregis* (1907) comprehensively reviewed and condemned modern thought as a whole and proposed ‘remedies’ to its influence in the Church which included the establishment of diocesan watch committees charged with sniffing out modernist wolves and their sympathizers amongst the flock and the official exclusion of such people from the teaching offices of the Church. An antimodernist oath (1910), although never finally enforced in Germany, similarly required that clergy publicly disavow various canons of modern thought both orally and in writing before being admitted to either ordination or teaching posts in the Church.²⁰ In the eyes of Przywara and others such restrictions and the palpable atmosphere of repression that inevitably followed bred a ‘ghetto Catholicism’ in Germany hopelessly removed from contact with all forms of modern culture.²¹

Przywara and a generation of German Catholics like him, dissatisfied with the defensive posture of the Church and sensing a new opportunity for the gospel in post-war German society, subsequently sought to lay a new foundation for a more moderate and truly catholic response in which the Church would again engage modern culture with the gospel. The uncompromising antimodernism of Pius X came at a considerable social cost to German Catholics like Przywara. It stripped German academics of a freedom which they prized perhaps more than any other culture.²² It imperilled the standing of Catholic

¹⁹ O’Meara, 6, 19-21.

²⁰ O’Meara, 20-21.

²¹ O’Meara, 37.

²² O’Meara, 21.

faculties within German universities. Moreover it compounded the longstanding social stigmatism and ostracism of Catholics in German society: in one of the most developed modern nations Catholics had to content themselves with being seen as ‘provincial, rural, conservative, even enemies of progress’.²³ What is more it seemed to Przywara and others that the end of the First World War had brought about a crisis or turn (‘*die Wende*’) in modernity, an intense questioning of the foundations of knowledge, from which more moderate forms of modern life were emerging which were far more amenable to Catholic thought. Above all this appeared to be true in philosophy where the rise of Husserl and phenomenology heralded a turn away from a neo-Kantian epistemology preoccupied with the determinative influence of human subjectivity towards a new form of objectivity especially in the idea of intentionality: the view that thought is always directed to objects. Przywara and others sensed this as a turn towards something like their own *katholische Sachlichkeit* and even to God Himself.²⁴ For these reasons Przywara and others of his generation emerged as a ‘transitional Catholicism’ in Germany which sought to lay a theoretical foundation for a more moderate Catholic response to modern culture: one which would see the Church again realize its mission to engage modern culture with the gospel, using its thought forms to articulate the Catholic worldview.²⁵ Such a conception would by no means dissent from the directives of Pius X but it would seek to give a broad reinterpretation and gentle correction to them.²⁶ Above all it would establish a more genuinely catholic response to the world.²⁷

²³ O’Meara, 35-36.

²⁴ O’Meara, 17-21, 38-39, 45-47. Przywara especially shares this analysis of modernity in a series of lectures of the time subsequently published as E. Przywara, *Gott. Fünf Vorträge Über Das Religionsphilosophische Problem* (Munich: Oratoriums-Verlag, 1926).

²⁵ O’Meara, 34-35, 37-38.

²⁶ O’Meara, 24.

²⁷ O’Meara, 33-34, 40-41.

The conception which Przywara proposed to bear this burden and which he continually developed throughout his career was the *analogia entis*. In brief, this concept envisages that God is a dynamic unity or rhythm of immanence and transcendence: He is both ‘in’ and ‘over’ or ‘above’ the creation. Conversely, creation has its ground in God and consequently shares in His likeness.²⁸ The idea is the culmination of longstanding metaphysical and theological insights. It continues both the analogical understanding of being which began in earnest with Aristotle and was further developed by Aquinas and also the patristic and Catholic confession of natural theology.²⁹ It purports to be simply a metaphysical expression of the Christian doctrines of *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio continua*.³⁰ For Przywara above all it was a retrieval of Augustine’s concept of God as the One who is both very near to and yet far from us.³¹ The term *analogia entis* itself is one which Przywara revived from Thomas Cajetan, invested with a more comprehensive meaning and made the formal principle of Catholic thought.³² Przywara believed the

²⁸ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 314; Przywara, *Polarity*, 29-30, 33; Betz, *After Barth*, 50-52, 56.

²⁹ Betz, *After Barth*, 44-52. The concept of analogy (ἀναλογία) originated in pre-Socratic mathematics as a proportion between two pairs of numbers. Already here it was a kind of mean: an indirect relation or similarity between two otherwise different things. For instance, two geometric objects may differ in absolute size but share the same dimensions according to ratio. The concept was first applied to metaphysics and epistemology by Plato and Aristotle especially in order to explain the relation between being and becoming. Aquinas would later view it as a mean between univocity (sameness or identity of sense or essence) and equivocity (difference of essence or sense). The thought of Plato and Aristotle, further developed by Aquinas and Cajetan, bequeathed the two forms of analogy which predominated in scholastic thought. An *analogia proportionalitatis* is a similarity between two proportions or relations. Plato, for instance, claimed that equality could be predicated of all citizens of a state inasmuch as each receives the good in proportion to their own distinct nature. An *analogia attributionis* is a similarity between two objects which consists in the fact that what is common to them exists originally and properly in one and then in the second on the basis of its dependence on the first. This attribution can either be intrinsic (where the shared characteristic is inherent or proper to both) or extrinsic (where it is inherent to the first but not to the second). Aristotle, for instance, suggests that health is predicated properly of human beings but is also attributed to urine inasmuch as it is a sign of human health. In this case the attribution is extrinsic because health is not inherent to urine. For more on the history of analogy in general see H. Lyttkens, *The Analogy Between God and the World: An Investigation of Its Background and Interpretation of Its Use by Thomas of Aquino*, tr. A. Poignant (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1952), 15-110; R. White, *Talking About God: The Concept of Analogy and the Problem of Religious Language* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 11-104.

³⁰ Przywara, *Polarity*, 30-32.

³¹ E. Przywara, 'Gott in uns oder Gott über uns? (Immanenz und Transzendenz im heutigen Geistesleben)', *Stimmen der Zeit*, 105 (1923), 344-347. I am grateful for the assistance of Johannes Depnering in translating this article.

³² Betz, *After Barth*, 49-50, 38.

concept to have its ‘classical expression’ in the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), ‘*Inter creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos major sit dissimilitudo notanda*’ (‘The similarity between creature and Creator is such that there is an even greater dissimilarity’).³³ Although the conception might appear to make God permanently accessible and consequently vulnerable to the mastery of secular reason and metaphysics Przywara persistently maintains, with some justification, that it does not support but undermines this enterprise since it envisions that every similitude of the divine in creation is at once infinitely more dissimilar to God. In this sense it is a form of negative theology.³⁴

In greater detail the *analogia entis* actually comprehends two distinct analogies: an immanent and a theological one.³⁵ In the first place Przywara contends that the creation manifests an immanent analogy. He believes that the creation is most characteristically becoming: a unity-in-tension of essence and existence. Creation cannot simply be an identity of essence (i.e. *essentia* - what it is) and existence (i.e. *esse* - that it is). In that case it would already be all that it can be. But in fact creatures are constantly in a state of growing, changing and developing. And so their essence must be simultaneously ‘within’ their existence, so that they are able to pursue it, and yet ‘over’ or ‘above’ it, so that despite constant pursuit it is never completely attained by them. Since the essence of creation is therefore similar to yet different from its existence there is in fact an analogy between them.³⁶

³³ Przywara, *Polarity*, 31; O’Meara, 76.

³⁴ Przywara, *Polarity*, 30; Betz, *After Barth*, 52-54, 68-70, 72-76. Przywara himself at times explains this point by claiming that the *analogia entis* integrates two different forms of analogy: an *analogia attributionis* which expresses a *tanta similitudo* and an *analogia proportionalitatis* which, as a relation between two different proportions, expresses a *maior dissimilitudo*. Consequently while the *analogia entis* is a succinct formulation of natural theology it is not simply reducible to it.

³⁵ Betz, *After Barth*, 63-70.

³⁶ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 159; Przywara, *Polarity*, 31-32; Betz, *After Barth*, 63-64.

For Przywara this immanent analogy of creation which is perceptible to all humans in turn imperfectly discloses a second and properly theological analogy. Precisely because creation is a unity-in-tension of essence and existence, in a state of constant change and becoming, it implies that it is not self-grounded and so it points to God as a limit-concept: to the existence of Being which, as a unity-in-*identity* of essence and existence, is the ground of its existence.³⁷ These two realities are obviously similar in that both entail a unity of essence and existence but different inasmuch as creation is a unity-in-tension of essence and existence but God is a unity-in-identity of the two. There is thus an analogy between them. And because essence (*essentia*) and existence (*esse*) are together constitutive of a being (*ens*) then this is more precisely an analogy of being.³⁸ For Przywara this means that the created order, simply by virtue of its creation, is ‘open upwards’ to God.³⁹ He believes that in practice this means that the entire history of humanity, exemplified in its philosophy, evidences an imperfect knowledge of God: it repeatedly fails to know the true God who is a unity of transcendence and immanence and instead falls into an exclusive emphasis on one of the two sides of this dialectic.⁴⁰

Przywara insists that this theological analogy is mediated perfectly only in Jesus Christ. For Przywara the two natures of Christ perfectly disclose the theological analogy of all being. His divinity and humanity, understood in Chalcedonian terms as without mixture or separation, indicate that here God, who is a unity-in-identity of essence and existence, is both above and within human being, which is a unity-in-tension of essence and

³⁷ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 160, 168; Przywara, *Polarity*, 32; Betz, *After Barth*, 63-66.

³⁸ Przywara, *Polarity*, 32; Betz, *After Barth*, 63-64, 67.

³⁹ Przywara, *Polarity*, 29-30, 32.

⁴⁰ Przywara, *Polarity*, 2-28; J. Betz, ‘Translator’s Introduction’, in E. Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, tr. J. Betz and D. Hart (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 50-53.

existence. For Przywara the relationship disclosed is not a particular but a universal truth. Inasmuch as Przywara understands the knowledge of God revealed in the incarnation to faith to be the perfection of that knowable by all human reason Przywara's conception follows Aquinas' dictum, '*Gratia non destruit, sed supponit et perficit naturam*'.⁴¹

Przywara's *analogia entis* consequently implies that both the world and the Catholic Church can only realize their true natures by coming together rather than separating from each other. On the one hand it suggests that the world can only realize its true nature by engaging with the Catholic Church. Creation is able to recognize its true nature, the fact that it is contingent and that the ground of its existence lies in God, imperfectly by itself. But in order to truly understand this it needs to receive the truth mediated to it by the Church. On the other hand the *analogia entis* implies that the Catholic Church can only realize its true nature by engaging society with its proclamation. The Church can only truly be the ongoing presence of Christ in the world if, like Him, it is both above and within the world. Przywara's conception thus provides the theoretical framework for the German Catholic Church to resume its mission to the world.⁴²

It is important to recognize that from the outset Przywara believed that Barth's theology posed a direct obstacle to these plans for the reform of the German Catholic Church. From the moment of the publication of the second edition of *Romans* Przywara detected in Barth's theology a resurgent Lutheranism which exclusively emphasized the transcendence or distinction of God from society.⁴³ To Przywara it appeared to thereby provide a powerful theoretical incentive for the Church to again retreat from engagement

⁴¹ Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 169-170; T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, i: *Christian Theology (Ia.I)*, tr. T. Gilby (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), q1.a8.ad2; Betz, *After Barth*, 67, 52-54, 64-70.

⁴² Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 81.

⁴³ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 348, 350; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 43-48.

with modern culture. Przywara immediately recognized the direct threat that it posed to his own aspirations for the reform of the Church and so he mounted a polemic against it⁴⁴.

In sum Przywara claims that Barth simply perpetuates Luther's view of human religion.⁴⁵ According to Przywara Barth 'follows Luther's teaching to the last'. Luther is the true 'father' of Barth's theology which is, conversely, simply a 'rebirth' of 'the true historical Luther'.⁴⁶ More specifically Przywara believes that, like Luther, Barth embraces a series of doctrinal commitments whose cumulative logic means that he can only conceptualize the divine-human relation as a form of 'theopanism': a direct identity between the divine being and activity and human being and activity.⁴⁷

In the first place Przywara alleges that Barth simply rejects the traditional theological and metaphysical concept of the *analogia entis*: the belief that there is an analogy between God the *causa prima* and the *causae secundae* of creation. Przywara believes, as we have seen, that Augustine's great legacy to theology and metaphysics was his concept that God is a unity of transcendence and immanence and hence the ground of the *analogia entis*.⁴⁸ However, Przywara claims that Barth follows Luther by making a 'decisive break' (*der*

⁴⁴ Przywara's first major critique of Barth's theology, 'Gott in uns oder Gott über uns?', was published less than twelve months after the publication of the second edition of Barth's *Romans* (1922). See Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 347-355; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 43-48.

⁴⁵ My account of Przywara's interpretation of Barth's theology here is drawn especially from his early article, 'Gott in uns oder Gott über uns?'. However his charges remained largely unchanged in his later works. See E. Przywara, *Schriften* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1962), 2:285-286; E. Przywara, *Humanitas: Der Mensch gestern und morgen* (Nürnberg: Glock & Lutz, 1952), 172 ff.

⁴⁶ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 350, 348, 355.

⁴⁷ Przywara, *Polarity*, 22; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 43-48. Przywara adopted the term 'theopanism' for his own distinctive usage from Rudolf Otto. O'Meara, 200 n. 200. He later became more appreciative of Luther's theology as he continued to develop his doctrine of sin and the cross. See K. Oakes, 'The Cross and the Analogia Entis in Erich Przywara', in T. White (ed), *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 148, 163-165.

⁴⁸ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 344-347.

entscheidende Bruch) with this traditional idea.⁴⁹ Przywara believes that Barth's theology consequently stands in complete 'contrast to the Roman Catholic concept of God... [and] concept of analogy between God and the creature'.⁵⁰ 'Insofar as the Roman Catholic *analogia entis* concept of God means the secretive tension of similar-dissimilar which is equal with the tension of God in us and above us, in contrast the Protestant concept of God completely crosses out the "similar"'.⁵¹

Przywara claims that instead Barth assumes a metaphysical dialectic between the divine being and activity and creaturely being and activity. According to Przywara Barth's concept of God like Luther's before him is not a unity of transcendence and immanence but a 'one-sided transcendence', 'the sheer transcendent God' and 'God above us' alone.⁵² As far as Przywara is concerned this means that for Barth '[e]verything... divine is in principle the diametric opposite (*diametral Entgegengesetzte*) of everything human and visible'.⁵³ And yet Przywara claims that even this does not go far enough. Drawing on the rich imagery of the second edition of Barth's *Romans* (1922) he insists that for Barth God is not simply the opposite of creation, since to say this still implies some relationship between the two, but in fact 'the vertical opposite' (*senkrecht Entgegengesetzte*), 'the pure negation' and 'the No! to the creature'.⁵⁴

[I]ndeed as Barth... remark[s] rightly, more than an opposite, as such a thing includes a relationship. God however as the otherworldly par excellence, the 'vertical opposite', as Barth formulates it, to all things created, is plainly without relationship. In this we see the actual contrast to the Roman Catholic concept of God; instead of the concept of analogy between God and the creature, we have the

⁴⁹ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 348. Betz, *After Barth*, 56-58.

⁵⁰ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 350.

⁵¹ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 350.

⁵² Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 350, 353; Betz, *Translator's Introduction*, 18.

⁵³ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 350, 353; Betz, *Translator's Introduction*, 18.

⁵⁴ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 350.

pure negation... God is plainly and completely... the 'No' to the creature.⁵⁵

Since Barth thus assumes a competitive relationship between divine and creaturely being and agency Przywara believes that he can logically only conceptualise human religion as a case of divine sole causality (*Alleinwirksamkeit*): simply and exclusively a divine act and reality in which creaturely activity and being is only apparent or passive.⁵⁶ Przywara believes that by portraying the Creator as the vertical opposite to the creation Barth thereby effectively places Him in a competitive relationship with it. And he thinks that, as was the case for Luther, this has several unintended consequences for Barth's theology. In the first place it means that the Creator cannot collaborate in bilateral action with His creatures. '[T]he sheer transcendent God cannot be united with his plain opposition'.⁵⁷ Moreover in any supposed instance where they do in either the Church or world God must in fact be the sole actor and reality (*den alleinwirklichen und alleinwirksamen Gott*). 'God is... the sole acting and solely real "Yes", as He is formulated by Barth'.⁵⁸ And conversely the creature must do and be nothing. 'Barth and his friends... consider everything "the positive Yes" as God's work and God's deed, whereas every creature can say to itself always only "No" and is even itself "No"'.⁵⁹ Przywara sees evidence of this doctrine in Barth's denigration of human religion and rejection of a human capacity to receive divine revelation.⁶⁰

Finally, Przywara insists that the culmination of the above logic means that Barth must

⁵⁵ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 350.

⁵⁶ Betz, *Translator's Introduction*, 18-19.

⁵⁷ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 355, 350.

⁵⁸ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 350, 348.

⁵⁹ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 348.

⁶⁰ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 350; Betz, *Translator's Introduction*, 18-19.

believe that human religion, the divine-human relation, takes the form of a direct identity between God and the world. Precisely because Barth believes that God is diametrically opposed to the world and therefore the sole actor and reality in the divine-human relation, he must understand religion as a direct identity between God and the world.⁶¹ God Himself becomes ‘directly’ (*geradezu*) the being of the creature. And conversely the creature is nothing but a facade for God Himself. Barth therefore effectively makes transcendence ‘identical’ (*identisch*) with immanence. And so ultimately ‘everything is sheer transcendental action of God’ and God is not just ‘all in all’ but ‘all alone’.⁶²

God as ‘God above us’ himself becomes directly the being of creation, in that the creation is only an appearance without being of the God who is the sole reality and sole actor. No longer are transcendence and immanence bound together into a tension of opposites but they become identical. In this sense the hidden and incomprehensible God, the *deus absconditus*, as Luther liked to say, is not only ‘all in all’ but ‘all alone’; He is the being of creatures and the action of creatures.⁶³

Przywara’s interpretation of the form of Barth’s theology, originally conceived for a unique historical purpose, then found a new and very different home and life when it was transferred into the field of contemporary theological aesthetics by Hans Urs von Balthasar. As we are about to see this surprising turn of events came to pass because Balthasar’s classic account of Barth’s theological development in *The Theology of Karl Barth* (1951) was fundamentally influenced at every point by Przywara’s interpretation of Barth. Balthasar’s interpretation of Barth’s theological development then, in turn, appears several times within his seminal contributions to theological aesthetics.

Balthasar’s book-length inquiry into the form and significance of Barth’s theology, *The Theology of Karl Barth* (1951), justly continues to be esteemed by both admirers and

⁶¹ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 348.

⁶² Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 355, 348.

⁶³ Przywara, *Gott in uns*, 348.

critics alike as a classic.⁶⁴ Conceived originally not simply as an exercise in ecumenism but in order to support the efforts of Henri de Lubac and Etienne Gilson to overcome the modern neo-scholastic separation of faith and reason endemic to the Roman Catholic Church by drawing attention to the labour of a kindred Protestant spirit in Barth, Balthasar's analysis of Barth's intellectual development is characterized throughout by astute and charitable interpretations.⁶⁵ This is all the more astonishing given that Balthasar lacked both Barth's mature Christology and some of his significant publications in ethics at the time he published his interpretation.⁶⁶ Yet it is quite remarkable that after enduring almost two decades of vigorous re-examination sparked by Bruce McCormack's alternative reading of Barth, to date still few have recognized just how profoundly informed Balthasar's account is by Przywara's interpretation of Barth. Przywara's life and thought had a profound personal impact on von Balthasar. Like Karl Rahner, Balthasar refined his craft under the tutelage of 'the old master' during philosophy studies at the Berchmanskolleg in Pullach (1930-1932).⁶⁷ He later repaid the debt by personally caring for his old friend during long periods of his convalescence. As director of Johannes Verlag, Balthasar personally oversaw the publication of the first three volumes of Przywara's *Schriften*.⁶⁸ Ultimately he was so persuaded by Przywara's *analogia entis* that, with little modification, he made it the centre of his own vast constructive work.⁶⁹ It is perhaps unsurprising then that Przywara's interpretation of the form of Barth's theology also made a powerful impression upon Balthasar. In what follows we will

⁶⁴ e.g. McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 108.

⁶⁵ R. Howsare, *Hans Urs Von Balthasar and Protestantism: The Ecumenical Implications of His Theological Style* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 82-83.

⁶⁶ See n. 4 in this chapter.

⁶⁷ P. Casarella, 'Hans Urs von Balthasar, Erich Przywara's Analogia Entis and the Problem of a Catholic Denkform', in T. White (ed), *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 197.

⁶⁸ Betz, *After Barth*, 40-41.

⁶⁹ Later in his life Balthasar criticized the concept for failing, especially in its emphasis on the *maior dissimilitudo*, to be sufficiently Christological. Casarella, 204-205; Betz, *After Barth*, 40-41.

demonstrate by a careful examination of Balthasar's interpretation of Barth's theological development in *The Theology of Karl Barth* (1951) that in fact Balthasar, like his mentor before him, suspects Barth of theopanism at every stage of his theological development.

In the first place Balthasar contends that Barth advocates theopanism during what he describes as his 'dialectical period': the early years which immediately follow his conversion from Protestant Liberal theology (1915) and culminate in the publication of the second edition of his *Romans* (1922).⁷⁰ Balthasar's judgment is based upon a careful examination of the first and second edition of Barth's commentary on Romans. He contends that despite a greater emphasis on the distinction between God and the world in the second edition the two versions assume the same essential form of thought.⁷¹ Balthasar believes that Barth essentially thinks of the history of the world as unfolding in a threefold movement. In the first place Barth assumes that in its prelapsarian state the world existed in a metaphysical identity with God: God was known directly and exhaustively to humans and so there was a 'total identity with the Creator, without distance and mystery'.⁷² Balthasar comes to this interpretation partially on the basis of Barth's own rich terms and metaphors in the commentaries, especially his oft-repeated expression that primeval existence entailed an original 'immediacy' with God. 'Once more we hear the chords of our "lost immediacy to God"'.⁷³ Balthasar believes that secondly Barth understands that the fall from this original state established a metaphysical dialectic between God and the creation. 'The creature is defined as the pure opposite to

⁷⁰ For Balthasar's interpretation of the form of Barth's theology at this stage see Balthasar, *TKB*, 64-85; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 108-110.

⁷¹ Balthasar, *TKB*, 64, 68-69, 71, 84.

⁷² Balthasar, *TKB*, 65-66, 69-70, 84.

⁷³ Balthasar, *TKB*, 70, 65.

God'.⁷⁴ As far as Balthasar is concerned this idea simply perpetuates a characteristic emphasis of Reformation theology and above all Kierkegaard's concept of a static dialectic or 'infinite qualitative distinction' between God and humans.⁷⁵ Balthasar believes that this conception is responsible for several undesirable consequences. It means that Barth interprets sinfulness as essential to the creation. 'To be a creature is coterminous with being guilty'.⁷⁶ Moreover it leads Barth to reject the concept of analogy *tout court* as sinful at this stage because it presupposes some distance rather than an identity between creatures and God. 'Once more we read that the law of distance, the law of analogy, is sin'.⁷⁷ Finally, according to Balthasar Barth believes that the divine act of redemption in Jesus Christ temporarily restores the world to its protological metaphysical identity with God. '[O]nce more redemption in Christ coincides with the return to unity'.⁷⁸ Balthasar believes that this aspect of Barth's understanding reflects the influence of 'German Idealism' and especially Hegel's philosophical dialectic.⁷⁹ He also perceives a resonance between it and 'Eastern' mysticism or 'Gnostic[ism]'.⁸⁰ Balthasar describes it varyingly as 'pantheism', a 'radical philosophical mysticism' or 'theopanism'.⁸¹

The best way of characterizing this ideology is by describing it as a dynamic and actualist theopanism which we define as a monism of beginning and end (protology and eschatology): God stands at the beginning and the end, surrounding a world-reality understood in dualist and dialectical terms, ultimately overcoming it in the mathematical point of the miracle of transformation... This monism of the Word of God... threatens time and again to swallow up the reality of the world. Though the world... is certainly something and not nothing, it looks so forlorn and hopeless under this harsh glare that one might just as well wish it did not exist.⁸²

⁷⁴ Balthasar, *TKB*, 84, 65-66, 68-70, 82-83.

⁷⁵ Balthasar, *TKB*, 66, 69, 71, 82-83.

⁷⁶ Balthasar, *TKB*, 70-71, 66, 84.

⁷⁷ Balthasar, *TKB*, 70, 66.

⁷⁸ Balthasar, *TKB*, 70, 65-66, 84.

⁷⁹ Balthasar, *TKB*, 82-83, 64-67.

⁸⁰ Balthasar, *TKB*, 66, 71.

⁸¹ Balthasar, *TKB*, 67, 84-85.

⁸² Balthasar, *TKB*, 94.

In the second place Balthasar claims moreover that Barth repeatedly relapses into theopanism throughout the course of the 1920s.⁸³ Balthasar famously claims that Barth has a ‘conversion’ from dialectic to analogy immediately following the publication of the second edition of *Romans* (1922).⁸⁴ He became dissatisfied with his former philosophical form of thought and sought to replace it with a genuinely theological one. However Balthasar understands this as a slow change: it was a ‘gradual process that lasted nearly ten years’ with Barth only finally articulating his first rudimentary form of analogy, the *analogia fidei*, in *Church Dogmatics I/1* (1932).⁸⁵ Balthasar believes that the reason for this is that during this period Barth remained so intellectually captivated by his former philosophical idealism that he repeatedly ‘strove’ and ‘struggle[d]’ to overcome it but frequently fell back into it.⁸⁶ ‘Formally speaking, Barth did indeed hit upon the right starting point [i.e. analogy], but we still see him occasionally vitiating it not out of inconsistency or distraction but because he was still fascinated, overpowered even, with the philosophical ideology and schematism of the *Epistle to the Romans*... a dynamic and actualist theopanism’.⁸⁷ Balthasar sees evidence of this trial and error in a variety of articles that Barth published during the 1920’s.⁸⁸ For instance, he claims that in several of these Barth attempts to elaborate a coherent account of the Church.⁸⁹ However Balthasar believes that the conception that Barth actually ends up formulating, the notion that the true Church and the four *notae ecclesiae* exist only in the event of the gracious redemptive activity of God within it, betrays a slip back into his former theopanism and

⁸³ For Balthasar’s interpretation of Barth’s conversion to analogy see Balthasar, *TKB*, 86-113 especially 93-94, 107-108; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 110-112.

⁸⁴ Balthasar, *TKB*, 93-94.

⁸⁵ Balthasar, *TKB*, 93-94, 107-108.

⁸⁶ Balthasar, *TKB*, 93-94.

⁸⁷ Balthasar, *TKB*, 94.

⁸⁸ Balthasar, *TKB*, 94-107.

⁸⁹ Balthasar, *TKB*, 103-106.

doctrine of divine sole causality.

With this proviso we have... simply returned to the old ideology of the *Epistle to the Romans*... Actualism, with its constant, relentless reduction of all activity to God the *actus purus*, leaves no room for any other centre of activity outside of God. In relation to God, there can only be passivity... Once more everything collapses back into that unholy dualism of *Romans*.⁹⁰

Finally, Balthasar even suspects that Barth's mature form of analogy from 1940 onwards remains a form of theopanism. Balthasar believes that although Barth articulates his 'classical form' of analogy in *Church Dogmatics I/1* (1932) it only attains its 'definitive form' in *Church Dogmatics II/1* (1940).⁹¹ According to Balthasar in *Church Dogmatics I/2* (1938) Barth for the first time elaborates a mature Chalcedonian Christology and makes it the material basis of his concept of analogy.⁹² For Balthasar this has significant consequences. He believes that this Christology presupposes an *analogia entis* in much the same way as it does for Przywara: the unity-in-distinction of the divine and human natures in Christ is possible only on the basis of a prior compatibility between the Creator and creature as a result of creation.⁹³ Thus '[t]he order of the incarnation presupposes the order of creation'.⁹⁴ Balthasar consequently insists that both Barth's *analogia fidei* in *Church Dogmatics II/1* (1940) and his *analogia relationis* in *Church Dogmatics III/1* presuppose an *analogia entis*.⁹⁵ Nevertheless Balthasar appears to remain suspicious that even this mature form of analogy is actually incoherent and a form of theopanism. In the fifth volume of his theological aesthetics he analyses Spinoza's pantheistic metaphysics in which he claims that Spinoza conceptualizes the act of human love for God as equivalent to an act of divine self-love. In a footnote Balthasar claims that Barth's

⁹⁰ Balthasar, *TKB*, 105-106.

⁹¹ Balthasar, *TKB*, 107-108; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 110-114. For Balthasar's interpretation of Barth's mature form of analogy see Balthasar, *TKB*, 107-167.

⁹² Balthasar, *TKB*, 114-120; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 110-114.

⁹³ Balthasar, *TKB*, 112, 114-115; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 114-116.

⁹⁴ Balthasar, *TKB*, 163.

⁹⁵ Balthasar, *TKB*, 110, 163-165; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 116-117, 138-139.

theology is a form of theopanism which advocates essentially the same thing. He suggests that in both cases the conceptions are the consequence of the proponent's rejection of the *analogia entis*. Balthasar does not specify what period of Barth's theology he is referring to here as theopanistic and so it is most natural to assume that he is referring to Barth's theology in general or, in other words, his mature theology.

When Spinoza says, *Mentis amor intellectualis erga Deum est ipse Dei Amor quo Deus seipsum amat*, this is in philosophical pantheism the same doctrine as that of Karl Barth in theological theopanism, because in each case the only possible mediatory position of the *analogia entis* is rejection.⁹⁶

Von Balthasar's paradigm of the formal development of Barth's theology, which as we have seen is profoundly informed by Przywara's interpretation, then appears within his foundational work on theological aesthetics, *Herrlichkeit* (1961-1969), on several occasions and with this for the first time Przywara's interpretation of Barth gains a firm foothold in the field of theological aesthetics. We saw just above that Balthasar raises his suspicion that Barth's mature form of analogy is a thinly-veiled form of theopanism in the fifth volume of his theological aesthetics. However his interpretation of the formal development of Barth's theology also appears in the first volume of this series as well within the very section in which Balthasar offers his interpretation of Barth's view of beauty. Here Balthasar advances his interpretation that Barth's formal development entails a progression from an early stage of dialectic to a later stage of analogy as a heuristic for explaining how Barth was able to restore reflection on beauty to theology when he remained part of a Protestant tradition of thought which was inimical to the idea. Balthasar contends that,

[I]n order to give... theological aesthetics a home within his own theology... it was perhaps necessary to let the first stage of [his] thought die away – a phase whose

⁹⁶ Balthasar, *GL5*, 466 n. 25.

inner form lay in the overpowering and uncompromising rhetoric of Luther and the Reformation with its emphasis on the scandal and offence of the Gospel – in order to await the second stage, which as interior form attained the tranquil, attentive contemplation of revelation which from volume to volume of the Dogmatics increasingly withdraws from polemics and concentrates its efforts on making positive statements.⁹⁷

With these two passages of Balthasar's work Przywara's highly polemical interpretation of Barth had, by means of Balthasar's interpretation of Barth's formal development, come to find a home in theological aesthetics for the very first time. And once there, having doubtless conditioned Balthasar's own influential interpretation of Barth's concept of beauty, his belief that Barth offers no analogy of beauty, it was only a matter of time before it would exert precisely the same pressure on other interpreters of Barth in this field as well.

Through the work of von Balthasar Przywara's interpretation of the form of Barth's theology has subsequently won a considerable number of high-profile adherents in the field of contemporary theological aesthetics. Its effect in a number of these cases at least has been to influence their interpretation of Barth's understanding of beauty: to lead them to conclude that Barth does not postulate an analogy between divine and worldly beauty. This is most evident in the recent work of the Roman Catholic theologian John Betz and the Eastern Orthodox theologian David Bentley Hart both of whom attempt to rehabilitate and extend the work of Przywara in English language theology.⁹⁸

John Betz rehearses the main tenets of Przywara's interpretation of the form of Barth's theology in his two lengthy articles, 'Beyond the Sublime: The Aesthetics of the Analogy

⁹⁷ Balthasar, *GL1*, 55.

⁹⁸ See for instance their recent introduction to and translation of Przywara's important work, Przywara, *Analogia Entis*; and their extensive defences of this concept in Betz, *Sublime (Part One)*, 367-411; Betz, *Sublime (Part Two)*, 1-50; and Hart, *Beauty*, 241 ff.

of Being'. The work is an extensive defence of Przywara's *analogia entis* against its Postmodern critics, especially Barth and Heidegger. In it Betz first unmasks what he claims is an incipient aesthetic prejudice for the sublime against the beautiful which motivates this polemic and then he advances in its place an alternative aesthetic vision of the sublime in harmony with the beautiful which inheres in the *analogia entis*.⁹⁹ In order to defend Przywara's *denkform* against Barth's criticisms he engages what he admits is a highly 'polemical' manoeuvre: turning the tables on Barth he resurrects Przywara's charge that Barth's own *analogia fidei* is no more than a shibboleth and that in fact his theology oscillates between a form of metaphysical dialectic and identity between God and the world. 'Barth never attains an analogical perspective, in spite of his *analogia fidei (relationis)*. Indeed for all its impressive bulk and despite Barth's best intentions his theology teeters between contradiction and identity'.¹⁰⁰ Echoing Przywara Betz contends that for Barth the fall of Adam established a manichaeistic dualism between God and the world. '[T]he world stands in contradiction to God (to the point of the most extreme Manichaeism...)'.¹⁰¹ Like his theological predecessor too Betz perceives that this concept in turn condemned Barth to a concept of divine sole causality. According to Betz since Barth believes that the fall originates in the divine decree then its only plausible resolution lies in a divine act to remedy it. Barth's 'residual Manichaeism... almost demands a divine solution... in order to make good on a fall that was absolutely willed from the start'.¹⁰² Barth's concept of divine revelation consequently 'follows... the Reformation doctrine of God's sole agency'.¹⁰³ It conceives that 'God ends up working everything alone' - even the creature's own 'act of faith' - and consequently 'the creature

⁹⁹ Betz, *Sublime (Part One)*, 367-371, 374-376.

¹⁰⁰ Betz, *Sublime (Part Two)*, 5-6.

¹⁰¹ Betz, *Sublime (Part Two)*, 5-6.

¹⁰² Betz, *Sublime (Part Two)*, 5-6.

¹⁰³ Betz, *Sublime (Part Two)*, 5-6.

is but the site, the placeholder of divine revelation, to which it contributes nothing'.¹⁰⁴ For Betz predictably this concept, in turn, is tantamount to a metaphysical identity between God and the world. It means that 'the creature is absorbed without remainder into the trinitarian process of revelation': it 'necessarily becomes a moment of the Trinity's own life as Father... Son... and Holy Spirit'.¹⁰⁵ And so 'the form of his theology mutates, ironically, from dialectic to identity'.¹⁰⁶ Following Przywara Betz refers to the form of Barth's theology in summary as 'trinitarian Gnosticism' and 'Calvinistic theopanism'.¹⁰⁷

Hart also echoes Przywara's interpretation of the form of Barth's theology in his critically acclaimed *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (2003). And here for the first time it is possible to see that this interpretation conditions his interpretation of Barth's understanding of beauty. In his work Hart simply repeats Przywara's interpretation of Barth's theology in the form that it acquires in von Balthasar. His only modification is to enrich it further, as we saw in the introduction, with John Milbank's theory of a postmodern prejudice for the sublime and an ontology of violence.¹⁰⁸ Hart claims that Barth simply 'reject[s]' Przywara's *analogia entis* through a gross misunderstanding of it.¹⁰⁹ Like Balthasar he believes that this has significant consequences for the form of his thought. Hart argues that although Barth does advance

¹⁰⁴ Betz, *Sublime (Part Two)*, 5-6.

¹⁰⁵ Betz, *Sublime (Part Two)*, 5-6.

¹⁰⁶ Betz, *Sublime (Part Two)*, 5-6.

¹⁰⁷ Betz, *Sublime (Part Two)*, 5-6. In two more recent articles Betz, having benefitted from Kenneth Oakes' work on Barth, makes significant progress towards a more charitable, concessive and optimistic interpretation of Barth. For instance, he concedes that there is a 'legitimate' place for Barth's dogmatic approach to theology alongside the philosophical theological approach of Przywara. However here too he ultimately retains his suspicion that Barth's mature theology 'having rejected an *analogia entis*, is, in fact, ultimately a form of trinitarian Gnosticism'. See Betz, *After Barth*, 57-58 n. 74, 82-87; Betz, *Translator's Introduction*, 19.

¹⁰⁸ For his interpretation of Barth see Hart, *Beauty*, 241-243.

¹⁰⁹ Hart, *Beauty*, 241.

a form of analogy ‘later’ in his career, presumably after an earlier dialectical phase, in the absence of the ‘correct ontological grammar’ of the *analogia entis* it is, we might say, a form of theopanism: it views God and the world as having the form of a metaphysical dialectic and consequently identity.

Barth’s later acceptance of the principle of analogy, in the etiolated... form of the *analogia relationis*, ...without the correct ontological grammar to support it, has the very effect he so dreaded: it reduces God to the status of a mere being, in some sense on a level with us.¹¹⁰

Hart’s rationale is that by rejecting an *analogia entis* between God and the world Barth is logically constrained to understand the two as dialectical opposites. ‘[T]he rejection of the [*analogia entis*]... serves only to objectify God idolatrously as a sublime absence or contradiction: one is left with a duality that inevitably makes of God and creation a dialectical opposition’.¹¹¹ He then reasons further that to conceive of God as the opposite pole to creation is simply to understand Him as a constituent part of the creation and thus identical to it.

[P]urely dialectical and purely identist systems are ultimately the same, imprisoning God and world within an economy of the absolute, sharing a reciprocal identity. If God is thought either as total substance or total absence, foundation or negation, ‘ground of Being’ or static ‘Wholly Other’, God appears merely as the world’s highest principle.¹¹²

And Przywara’s interpretation of the form of Barth’s theology evidently now conditions Hart’s interpretation of Barth’s view of beauty: because of it Hart cannot contemplate that Barth could postulate an analogy between the divine glory and the beauty of the world but only a dialectic between the two. Hart contends that Barth and those like him who reject the *analogia entis* can ‘affirm God’s glory only through the negation of

¹¹⁰ Hart, *Beauty*, 241.

¹¹¹ Hart, *Beauty*, 242.

¹¹² Hart, *Beauty*, 242-243.

worldly beauty'.¹¹³

Przywara's highly polemical interpretation of Barth, through von Balthasar, now casts a pall of doubt across those who interpret Barth's account of beauty in the field of theological aesthetics today. Originally conceived for the purpose of neutralising a theology which Przywara feared would catalyse a new dark age of the church's retreat from culture, as we have seen, it claims that Barth simply continues Luther's theology by rejecting an *analogia entis tout court*. Despite his claims of an 'analogy of faith' and 'analogy of relations', the argument runs that Barth replaces an *analogia entis* with a belief that divinity and humanity are metaphysically opposed; consequently he can only conceive religion as the product of the divine *Alleinwirksamkeit* and hence as a formal identity between God and the world or form of 'theopanism'. If we are to argue that Barth advocates an analogy of beauty in this thesis we must now attempt to respond to these claims.

1.3. *Barth's Development of Analogy (1919-1968)*

Having gotten to the bottom of the scepticism about Barth's concept of analogy which currently pervades theological aesthetics we must now offer a comprehensive response to it. In this section I will argue that Przywara's interpretation of the form of Barth's theology, though perhaps understandable in the case of both Przywara and Balthasar who lacked many of the primary and secondary resources on Barth's theology which we have today, finds little basis or foundation in Barth's theology. Barth at no time during his career simply continued the religion of Luther. Specifically, he did not simply reject the traditional concept of the *analogia entis*. He never assumed instead a metaphysical

¹¹³ Hart, *Beauty*, 242.

dialectic between God and the world. He consequently never conceived that religion is simply a case of the divine *Alleinwirksamkeit*. And so he never viewed the divine-human relation as a form of theopanism or metaphysical identity between God and the world. Instead, in response to the peculiar crisis which he found gripping the Christian Church in the early twentieth century, from the very beginning of his career until its end Barth forged a distinctive new form of analogy, one which developed in sophistication throughout his career especially under the influence of Przywara, until at its end it had attained its final form as a coherent new form of analogy of being. We shall argue, moreover, that not only is the interpretation of the form of Barth's theology which currently grips theological aesthetics ill-founded but so too is its original justification. The fear of Przywara which first gave rise to this interpretation, that Barth's theology provides theoretical justification for the Church to withdraw from engagement with culture, was ultimately mistaken. In fact Barth's theology does quite the opposite. In what follows we will substantiate this argument by means of a careful survey of the most relevant points in the development of the form of Barth's theology. In doing so we shall draw upon significant recent advances in scholarly understanding of Barth's concept of analogy, above all by Ingrid Spieckermann, John Webster, Bruce McCormack and Keith Johnson.¹¹⁴ Our response will not simply bring together their insights but extend them and for the first time apply them in response to the criticism of Barth's theology which, emanating from Przywara, still prevails in contemporary theological aesthetics.

1.3.1. *Analogia Crucis: Urgestalt of the Analogia Fidei (1919-1924)*

Of all the permutations of Barth's theology it is especially his early thought which, as we

¹¹⁴ Especially I. Spieckermann, *Gotteserkenntnis: Ein Beitrag zur Grundfrage der neuen Theologie Karl Barths* (Munich: C. Kaiser, 1985); Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*; Webster, *Moral Theology*; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 88-144; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*.

have seen, is charged by Przywara and his contemporary followers in theological aesthetics with being a form of theopanism. This interpretation trades on a longstanding popular picture of Barth's early theology as one in which he responds to the idolatrous modern concept of absolute human freedom which he found incubating in his own Protestant Liberal and Religious Socialist heritage, unmasked to him for the first time in the crucible of the Great War (1914-1918), simply by rejecting the concept *tout court*. But while Barth himself contributed to this interpretation to some extent it is a far too simplistic picture.¹¹⁵ In fact from the very beginning of his break with modernist theology Barth does not advocate theopanism but rather begins to sketch the rudimentary outline of a new form of analogy, which his interpreters now widely describe as an *analogia crucis*, which was ultimately to prove the *Urgestalt* of his later *analogia fidei*. As we shall see this means, in turn, that Barth did not respond to the inflated human freedom of his modernist forbears by simply rejecting the concept but rather by transforming it. Yet it is likely that Przywara's interpretation of Barth's early theology has gained traction in part for two reasons. In the first place it capitalises on the sheer subtlety of Barth's discussion of human freedom in his early works: in these Barth characteristically responds to the modernist preoccupation with human freedom by mentioning it only fleetingly and indirectly.¹¹⁶ In the second place Przywara and his followers tend to read Barth's early works through the lens of his exaggerated and highly expressive thought in the second edition of *Romans*.¹¹⁷ In what follows we will therefore establish our interpretation of Barth's early theology by both examining several of Barth's early works together in order to amplify his subtle conceptions and also by reading them in chronological order so as

¹¹⁵ See Barth's own admission in this respect, K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics II/1: The Doctrine of God*, ed. G. Bromiley and T. Torrance, tr. T. Parker et al. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 633-638. Hereafter, *CDII/1*.

¹¹⁶ Webster, *Moral Theology*, 19.

¹¹⁷ e.g. Balthasar, *TKB*, 64.

to let each one speak for itself.

By August 1915 Barth had experienced his famous conversion from his early Marburg theology. Although the intricacies of that seismic shift are beyond our current purview it is important to clarify that in essence it involved a transition from an anthropological to a theological basis for knowledge of God.¹¹⁸ Prior to this time Barth shared the Foundationalist religious epistemology of his modern contemporaries which constituted an anthropological basis for knowledge of God. This presumed that unaided human activity could, by means of allegedly self-evident beliefs or intuitions available to it, establish indubitable knowledge of God. Barth's own particular brand of this theological epistemology was a form of Neo-Kantianism which he learned from his professors at Marburg, especially Wilhelm Herrmann. This postulated the existence of a third faculty of human subjectivity, alongside thought and action, which could provide a basis for indubitable knowledge of God, namely, religious experience or feeling.¹¹⁹ Such a Foundationalist approach to knowledge of God, of course, assumed a distinctive Enlightenment or Cartesian anthropology in which human intellectual and moral freedom and agency, being self-established, was presumed to be absolute or indeterminate.¹²⁰ By 1913 Barth, through an encounter with the working masses and Religious Socialism during pastorates in Geneva and Safenwil, had already begun to feel alienated from certain presumptions inherent to this epistemology. But the unexpected events of the following year for the first time propelled a full-scale erosion of his confidence in it. The outbreak of the First World War caused a largely unanticipated conflict of interpretations and hence uncertainty amongst Barth's peers about how to understand this phenomenon

¹¹⁸ My account of Barth's conversion follows McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 43-135.

¹¹⁹ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 54-77.

¹²⁰ Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 17-18, 54-58.

theologically.¹²¹ Herrmann and others, through articles in *Die Christliche Welt* and the famous signing of the 'Manifesto of the Ninety Three' (1914), endorsed German state militarism as an expression of the divine will, while Barth himself believed that he could only oppose it.¹²² Leonhard Ragaz and Herrmann Kutter, the leaders of the Swiss Religious Socialist movement to which Barth belonged at the time, also disagreed about how to interpret the catastrophe of the war: Ragaz believed that it was an expression of the judgement of God while Kutter opposed this interpretation.¹²³ For Barth this protracted episode unmasked the abject failure of this entire approach to knowledge of God and ultimately led him to abandon it. By August 1915, through his encounter with Christoph Blumhardt, Barth had substituted in its place a radical alternative. Knowledge of God must be established upon a truly theological basis, that is, by an act of the divine rather than human subject.¹²⁴ This remained perhaps the most basic distinguishing characteristic of Barth's approach to theology throughout the remainder of his career, though he framed it variously.

Delivered just a few years after his conversion Barth's address to a conference at Tambach in September 1919, 'The Christian's Place in Society', is uniquely illuminating for our purposes for two reasons.¹²⁵ It is one of Barth's first major theological treatises to be written from the perspective of his new theological basis for knowledge of God.

¹²¹ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 113-114.

¹²² McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 111-117.

¹²³ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 117-120.

¹²⁴ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 123-125. I am following McCormack who, like Spieckermann, currently treats Barth's letter to Thurneysen on 6 August 1915 as the first clear indication of his break with liberalism and the emergence of his new theological approach. Although he is still fine-tuning this date. See B. McCormack, 'Foreword to the German Edition of Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology', in *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 303.

¹²⁵ K. Barth, 'The Christian's Place in Society', in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, tr. D. Horton (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), 272-327. Hereafter, *CPS*.

But, unlike the more famous first edition of his commentary on Romans which he had completed a month earlier, this lecture is the first of his new constructive works to directly discuss at length the topic of human activity.¹²⁶ Barth had been asked to speak on the theme of social ethics as a replacement for the Swiss Religious Socialist leader Leonard Ragaz, apparently out of a mistaken belief that he still propounded that ideology.¹²⁷ His audience was composed of men and women who were greatly sympathetic to the ideas of that movement. Although the lecture has a complicated form of argument and terminology which can at times be misleading in it we can already see that Barth's new theological basis for knowledge of God is not a form of theopanism but an early form of *analogia crucis*. In other words while Barth certainly does conceive that the activity of the divine subject establishes human knowledge of God it is already evident that he has made a theological decision that it does not do so unilaterally, at the expense of human activity, but bilaterally, by means of a genuine though subordinate form of human activity. In the words of John Webster, Barth already believes that '[d]ivine omnicausality... is not the same as divine sole causality'.¹²⁸ And this in turn makes clear that although Barth rejected the specific form of epistemology and anthropology inherent to his Protestant Liberal heritage from the outset he did not reject that tradition *tout court*: he carried on its great concern for human being and activity.¹²⁹

In the Tambach lecture Barth employs an early form of the *analogia crucis* which he had first used in his commentary on Romans. As yet it incorporates no genuine Christology: no conception of the incarnate Person of the Son of God and the relation of his two

¹²⁶ Webster, *Moral Theology*, 20.

¹²⁷ E. Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, tr. J. Bowden (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 109-113; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 195-202.

¹²⁸ Webster, *Moral Theology*, 8.

¹²⁹ Webster, *Moral Theology*, 18-19.

natures.¹³⁰ Instead for Barth at this stage divine revelation is simply, on the objective side, a disclosure by God in the life of the historical Jesus of eschatology, eternity or the Kingdom of God: that is, a divinely ordained teleological sequence or ‘movement’ with two ‘moments’, creation followed by redemption, which is the prototype of and hence secretly animates the entire history of the world.¹³¹ Barth assumes that the true history of Jesus Christ consists of his creation followed by his crucifixion and bodily resurrection.¹³² Moreover as he is “‘the firstborn of every creature” Col. 1:15’ this history is the prototype and *telos* of the entire history of the world.¹³³ And so it signifies on the one hand that the entire world is the creation of God and on the other hand that it is now destined for an impending redemption: for the cessation of its present fallen existence characterised by ‘autonomy’ from God and ‘mortality’, and a restoration of its original relation of ‘immediacy’ to the Creator and hence eternal life.¹³⁴ Barth conceives that this eschatological or eternal ‘content’ has a dialectical relation to the temporal history of Jesus of Nazareth.¹³⁵ This has a number of significant implications. It means that ordinarily this eternal content is veiled by the ‘form’ of the historical life of Jesus of Nazareth. As such it can only be unveiled through it by an act of God.¹³⁶ In this act the eternal content takes place within time but does not become part of it: it does not acquire temporality.¹³⁷ And so the disclosure has the character of an event: it has no historical precedents or antecedents and hence no horizontal extension in time.¹³⁸ Barth therefore

¹³⁰ For Barth’s concept of divine revelation in this lecture see especially Barth, *CPS*, 282-291, 274, 322-323 cf. McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 141-155, 195-202.

¹³¹ Barth, *CPS*, 274, 282-283, 285.

¹³² Barth, *CPS*, 274, 283, 286-287, 298-303, 322-323.

¹³³ Barth, *CPS*, 274-275, 288-290.

¹³⁴ Barth, *CPS*, 274, 285, 288-290, 298-303.

¹³⁵ Barth here retains the *Urform* of the eternity-time dialectic which he assumed in the first edition of *Romans* and which he would only fully express in its second edition. Barth, *CPS*, 274, 283, 287; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 143-145.

¹³⁶ Barth, *CPS*, 285-286.

¹³⁷ Barth, *CPS*, 274, 283, 287; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 143-145.

¹³⁸ Barth, *CPS*, 274, 283, 287.

follows Kant as he henceforth always will in assuming that humans can only know that which they can intuit under the forms of space and time. Barth believes that something similar transpires on the subjective side of this relation. Ordinary human cognition has no innate capacity to perceive the eschatological significance of the life of the historical Jesus. However, by an act of God it momentarily acquires a share in the recognition of it.¹³⁹ Of course, when individuals momentarily experience such a consciousness of this eschatology they simultaneously recognise it as the truth about their own life and the entire cosmos as well.¹⁴⁰

We can see here already that Barth's early concept of analogy is in no sense a form of theopanism. In the first place Barth does not assume that the divine being and activity are in a metaphysical dialectic with human being and activity but instead he begins a distinctly theological conception of divinity which proposes that it is compatible with humanity. There are certainly passages in Barth's address which could give the impression that he believes that divine and human being are metaphysically opposed: that they are by nature incompatible either as a result of creation or the fall. Indeed, many in the audience who heard Barth's paper left the conference with a similar interpretation.¹⁴¹ For instance, in order to clarify that his epistemological basis is a truly theological rather than anthropological one Barth repeatedly emphasises the distinction or transcendence of the divine being from the world.¹⁴² More seriously at one point he describes divine and human being at length as 'worlds' which are 'complete in themselves', 'have no connection' to each other and are in a 'thoroughgoing opposition' or 'contrast'.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Barth, *CPS*, 282-284, 288-289.

¹⁴⁰ Barth, *CPS*, 288-290, 295.

¹⁴¹ According to Busch, for instance, Ragaz believed that Barth's address 'vitiated the influence of the [Religious Socialist] movement in Germany by "dialectical distortion"'. Busch, 110-111.

¹⁴² Barth, *CPS*, 285-286, 320-324.

¹⁴³ Barth, *CPS*, 275-281.

However, although Barth's choice of expression might obscure it, as Bruce McCormack has pointed out and as we have just seen for ourselves, in fact the dialectic which Barth assumes at this early stage of his career is not metaphysical but soteriological in nature: it is a dialectic not between divine and human being but between eternity and time.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, far from proposing a metaphysical incompatibility between divine and human being in this lecture we can see that Barth already begins to craft a distinctly theological concept of the divine being and activity which postulates precisely the opposite. He radically redefines the concept of deity from a noetic basis in the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ albeit at this stage devoid of a true Christology or doctrine of reconciliation.¹⁴⁵ For Barth the divine activity is a 'movement whose power and import are revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'.¹⁴⁶ From this starting point Barth, though still some years from his first encounter with Przywara's thought, conceives that the divine being and activity are a unity of transcendence and immanence. For Barth the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ means that 'the separation of the two [i.e. God and world] cannot be ultimate, for then God would not be God'.¹⁴⁷ Instead we must conceive that the divine 'movement from a third dimension... transcends and yet penetrates all these other movements... in space, in time, or in the contingency of things'.¹⁴⁸ At one point Barth can even describe the presence of God in Jesus Christ in terms redolent of Przywara as one in which God is both 'in us, over us, behind us and beyond us'.¹⁴⁹ As we shall see Barth would continue to develop and enrich this theological concept of deity throughout the remainder of his career.

¹⁴⁴ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 97; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 143-145.

¹⁴⁵ Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology*, 24-25.

¹⁴⁶ Barth, *CPS*, 282-291 especially 283, 286.

¹⁴⁷ Barth, *CPS*, 287; Webster, *Moral Theology*, 24-25.

¹⁴⁸ Barth, *CPS*, 283.

¹⁴⁹ Barth, *CPS*, 272-275.

In Barth's address moreover we can see that although he certainly advocates a theological basis for knowledge of God even at this stage he does not mean this to imply the doctrine of divine *Alleinwirksamkeit* but instead he already begins to conceive that divine activity establishes human knowledge of God bilaterally rather than unilaterally: by means of a genuine though circumscribed or determinate form of human activity. As we might expect in Barth's address he distances himself from the anthropological basis for knowledge of God of his Protestant Liberal and Religious Socialist contemporaries and therewith its implicit concept of absolute or indeterminate human freedom. For Barth the historical Jesus and religious experience do not self-evidently reveal the divine.¹⁵⁰ Neither social involvement nor social protest are by their own initiative the bearers of the Kingdom of God upon earth but only 'veil' this.¹⁵¹ Human hearing and speaking is not by its own effort a hearing of and speaking for God. '[W]hat man can avail himself either to pronounce or understand this... word of God? I could no more succeed in speaking it to you than you could succeed in hearing it'.¹⁵² Instead Barth tells us emphatically that knowledge of God is established from a theological basis: by a 'miracle' from 'above' or a 'third dimension' - an act of God in time and space.¹⁵³ However we can see here that Barth has already begun to conceive in a rudimentary fashion that this divine activity only establishes knowledge of God by means of a determinate form of human activity.

For instance, Barth already appears to assume an early version of his later concept of the objective and subjective human form of divine revelation. He contends that the Kingdom of God is disclosed only through the objective human form of the historical life of

¹⁵⁰ Barth, *CPS*, 285-286.

¹⁵¹ Barth, *CPS*, 300, 304, 306.

¹⁵² Barth, *CPS*, 284.

¹⁵³ Barth, *CPS*, 282-289.

Jesus.¹⁵⁴ And humans then comprehend this only through the subjective form of their human consciousness or understanding.¹⁵⁵ Although admittedly at this stage he gives these concepts little definition and especially he does not clarify whether they are in fact active rather than passive forms of human being. But in addition we can see that Barth already assumes that the human response to revelation entails not just human knowledge but also an act of obedience as well, though it is unlikely that Barth himself at this early stage is entirely aware of the significance of this concept. Barth postulates that knowledge of the Kingdom of God disclosed in Jesus of Nazareth compels Christians to engage in both social endeavour and also social protest.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, in light of this Barth boasts that Christians ‘can permit ourselves to be more romantic than the romanticists and more humanistic than the humanists’.¹⁵⁷ We can see then that Barth has not simply rejected the anthropology of his Religious Socialist and Protestant Liberal forebears but has instead begun to transform it. He has, in fact, already begun to steer a middle course between the twin dangers of a Cartesian concept of absolute and indeterminate human freedom and hyper-Calvinist fatalism. Barth believes that a distinctively Christian view of the matter will profess that true human agency is determinate or circumscribed in character: it is exercised within the limits prescribed for it by and thus in concert with the action of its Covenant Lord.¹⁵⁸ Although rudimentary this basic form of anthropology will be the one which Barth retains and develops throughout the remainder of his career.

¹⁵⁴ Barth, *CPS*, 274, 282-283, 285-287.

¹⁵⁵ Barth, *CPS*, 282-284, 288-289.

¹⁵⁶ Barth, *CPS*, 290-298, 308-309.

¹⁵⁷ Barth, *CPS*, 303, 310.

¹⁵⁸ Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 17-18, 54-58. Webster and others following him have rightly pointed out the resonances between Barth’s concept here that human agency is formed within an objective order of the good constituted by God’s acts and contemporary critiques of Cartesian anthropology, especially Charles Taylor’s concept that human moral agency and identity is only formed within a moral ‘ontology’, ‘topography’ or ‘framework’. See Webster, *Moral Theology*, 151-153 cf. C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), 25-52.

Barth consequently already believes that the divine-human relation established by divine revelation is not a form of metaphysical direct identity between God and humanity but rather an indirect identity or analogy. Barth's own incautious terminology in the conference address could easily give the impression that he believes that the relationship established by divine grace has the form of a direct identity between God and the world. For instance he repeatedly describes this relationship as a return to a protological and eschatological 'immediacy' between the two.¹⁵⁹ And we saw that this was a significant part of the reason that von Balthasar came to his interpretation of the form of Barth's early theology. But in fact as McCormack has made clear such turns of phrase are simply a quirk of Barth's distinctive literary style at this stage in his career. Astute readers will recognise it here and throughout Barth's early works as a form of theological expressivism similar to Schleiermacher's *Speeches*.¹⁶⁰ Barth gravitated to this form of expression at this stage of his career both because he was still in search of his own authorial voice and because the highly rhetorical nature of the style provided a helpful tool by which to clear a space for his own theology amidst the obstinate prevailing forms of modern theology.¹⁶¹ Terms such as 'immediacy' were therefore likely intended only to designate the original intimacy that obtained between creature and Creator and should not be taken literally.¹⁶² In view of the frequent misunderstanding that they caused Barth almost immediately abandoned such terms altogether.¹⁶³ But in fact we can see here that Barth has already begun to conceptualise the relationship between God and humanity which is established in the event of divine revelation as a form of indirect identity or

¹⁵⁹ Barth, *CPS*, 285-286, 290.

¹⁶⁰ F. Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, ed. and tr. R. Crouter (2nd edn, Cambridge: CUP, 1996); McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 109-110.

¹⁶¹ Webster, *Moral Theology*, 19.

¹⁶² McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 109-110.

¹⁶³ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 97.

analogy. As we saw above Barth has already begun his conception that divine revelation is doubly mediated by human being. God discloses the content of revelation, the Kingdom of God, through the human life of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁶⁴ This, in turn, is cognised by human knowers, with God's enabling, only through an act of human cognition.¹⁶⁵ There is, then, an indirect rather than direct identity between divine and human knowledge of the Kingdom of God. Barth's own preferred terminology for this relationship is already at this stage 'parable' or 'analogy'.¹⁶⁶ Contrary to Przywara's claim then, Barth has already begun to advocate a distinctly Reformed concept of participation: He understands that in the event of revelation human knowledge and action 'participates' in God's work.¹⁶⁷ 'And who could see the resurrection without himself *participating* in it, himself becoming a *living* being, and entering into the *victory* of life?'.¹⁶⁸

In the months that followed the publication of Barth's revolutionary theological basis for knowledge of God in the first edition of *Romans* (1919) one review after another proved that the great theological *coup d'état* remained lost on the wider public. To most eyes at least it appeared indistinguishable from the prevailing order *du jour*: another form of anthropological basis for knowledge of God.¹⁶⁹ Barth's singular ambition as he penned his first revision to the commentary was consequently to now make the epistemology unmistakable once and for all. He accomplished this above all through a more precise clarification that the acting subject of divine revelation remains throughout His disclosure

¹⁶⁴ Barth, *CPS*, 274, 282-283, 285-287.

¹⁶⁵ Barth, *CPS*, 282-284, 288-289.

¹⁶⁶ Barth, *CPS*, 303, 305-306, 312, 320-321.

¹⁶⁷ Barth, *CPS*, 286-287, 295, 308.

¹⁶⁸ Barth, *CPS*, 295.

¹⁶⁹ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 203, 208.

distinctly divine, a feat which he achieved especially through the adoption of a more radical model of eschatology: a radically futurist consistent eschatology.¹⁷⁰ For this reason, as von Balthasar rightly observed, the second edition of Romans (1922) is more consistently negative towards human religion and activity. Yet even here Barth cannot be accused of promoting a form of theopanism. Since the publication of Ingrid Spieckermann's ground-breaking, *Gotteserkenntnis: Ein Beitrag zur Grundfrage der neuen Theologie Karl Barths* (1985), Barth scholars now almost unanimously agree that in the work Barth develops what they describe as an *analogia crucis* which would prove the *Urgestalt* of his later *analogia fidei*. In other words, he assumes an analogy between divine and human understanding of the meaning of the cross.¹⁷¹

Spieckermann's work demonstrated that in this new edition of Romans Barth's adoption of a radically futurist consistent eschatology now sharpens his eternity-time dialectic. For Barth the Kingdom of God is now the unintuitable 'beyond' of intuitable history.¹⁷² It is neither identical with nature nor, as metaphysics supposes, super-nature: a first cause or ground of being which can be extrapolated from observable phenomena. It is instead the origin and future of this entire temporal realm. Consequently knowledge of it is an 'impossible possibility': it is possible only by an act of God.¹⁷³ In the commentary Barth now applies this eternity-time dialectic more consistently to his objective and subjective concepts of divine revelation. For Barth the former, the object of divine revelation, is God's disclosure of the unintuitable eschatological event of the bodily resurrection through the intuitable historical event of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁷⁴ Barth

¹⁷⁰ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 207-209.

¹⁷¹ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 92-93.

¹⁷² K. Barth, *Der Römerbrief* (Zurich: TVZ, 1940), 118, 213, 342; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 207-209, 245-248.

¹⁷³ Barth, *Römerbrief*, 96, 114; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 207-209, 245-248.

¹⁷⁴ Barth, *Römerbrief*, 5-6, 132, 136, 185, 204; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 251-256.

views the bodily resurrection of Jesus as an unhistorical (*Urgeschichte*) event because although a corporeal transformation it has its basis not in historical causation but the initiative of God. As such it has a dialectical relation to the historical event of the death of Jesus of Nazareth. This by now has a familiar set of implications. It means that the event of the bodily resurrection of Jesus is typically veiled by the form of the historical event of his crucifixion and can only be unveiled through it by an act of God. Moreover when it is disclosed it takes place within history without ever becoming part of it and so the disclosure has the character of a 'pure event': it has neither precedents by which it could be anticipated nor consequences by which it could be recollected.¹⁷⁵ Barth postulates something similar about the latter, the subject's reception of revelation. He views this as an act of God which enables a historical act of human cognition to participate in eschatological human perception of the event of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.¹⁷⁶ For Barth human recognition of the event of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is proper to the new creaturehood which we will inherit in the future Kingdom of God.¹⁷⁷ As such it too has a dialectical relation to historical human cognition. This means that ordinary human cognition has no capacity to perceive the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ but must be lifted by an act of God into this eschatological act of human knowing. Because this too is a projection of the eternal in the temporal this knowledge of God also has the character of an event. By these more exacting objective and subjective formulations Barth is thus able to present a theological basis for knowledge of God which he believes is now definitively secure from the misinterpretation which beset his previous formulation. Because both the divine object and knowledge of it are properly eschatological events which consequently occur in time only actualistically - that is, by

¹⁷⁵ Barth, *Römerbrief*, 5-6; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 251-256.

¹⁷⁶ Barth, *Römerbrief*, 126, 134, 141, 159, 176, 185-186; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 256-259.

¹⁷⁷ Barth, *Römerbrief*, 134, 185-186; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 256-259.

an act of God which has the character of a pure event - they provide neither conditions nor effects by which they could be transformed into an anthropological basis for knowledge of God.¹⁷⁸

It is important to clarify that Barth's *analogia crucis* here is an analogy of knowing rather than being because at this early stage of his career his focus is simply on establishing an alternative theological epistemology.¹⁷⁹ As we have seen Barth's theorem envisages a relation only between divine and human knowledge: human understanding of the significance of the cross is allowed to share in God's self-understanding of it.¹⁸⁰ And at this early stage Barth still does not have a comprehensive doctrine of creation which could clarify the relation between such reconciled human being and human being as created.¹⁸¹

Moreover, as Spieckermann has shown, Barth's *analogia crucis* is in fact the *Urgestalt* of his later *analogia fidei*.¹⁸² It is already, in rudimentary fashion, a theological, Christocentric and actualistic form of analogy. But at this stage it still relies upon an eternity-time dialectic rather than Christology to substantiate this actualism.

¹⁷⁸ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 251-253, 256-259. Thus the rudiments of Barth's actualistic theological epistemology are definitively in place here. Barth conceives that the unique event or act of God to reveal Himself in time alone defines His Being or who He is. This not only precludes the possibility of an anthropological basis for knowledge of God but it also means that the divine being is best defined in terms of an act or event, as living or dynamic, in contrast to substance ontologies. G. Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 1991), 67-70. Barth's actualism here as later differs from Hegel's inasmuch as the act in which God has His being is both unique (Barth will later describe it famously as *actus purus et singularis*) and one in which He remains independent from creation. K. Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History*, tr. B. Cozens and J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1997), 415-421; R. Price, *Letters of the Divine Word: The Perfections of God in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2011), 17-18. This latter characteristic also distinguishes it from process theology. B. McCormack, 'The Being of Holy Scripture is in Becoming: Karl Barth in Conversation with American Evangelical Criticism', in V. Bacote et al. (eds), *Evangelicals and Scripture: Tradition, Authority and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 65 n. 13.

¹⁷⁹ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 92.

¹⁸⁰ Spieckermann, *Gotteserkenntnis* 89-90, 143; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 93.

¹⁸¹ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 113.

¹⁸² Spieckermann, *Gotteserkenntnis*, 143; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 261.

We can see that once again Barth's concept here is in no sense a form of theopanism. In the first place Barth once again does not assume a metaphysical dialectic between divine and human being but rather continues his theological concept of divinity as compatible with human being. Of all Barth's works the second edition of *Romans* perhaps most gives the impression that Barth presumes a metaphysical dialectic between God and humanity. As we have seen the reason it does is because Barth's entire rationale for the revision is to correct the misinterpretation of his theological starting point and so throughout the work he sharpens the eternity-time dialectic and applies it more thoroughly. Concretely this means that Barth frequently employs metaphors to characterise the divine-human relation, like his well-known image of the circle and tangent, which suggest that the divine being is unwilling or unable to be involved in human being.¹⁸³ It also means that when Barth does discuss human activity it is typically only for the rather negative purpose of distinguishing it from the Kingdom of God. However as we have seen Barth here again assumes a dialectic which is not metaphysical but soteriological in nature: it is a dialectic between eternity and time not divine and human being.¹⁸⁴ Moreover he briefly reaffirms his theological concept of divinity which proposes that it is a unity of transcendence and immanence and hence compatible with human being.¹⁸⁵ As we saw just above Barth continues to understand the divine act of the bodily resurrection of Jesus to be the content of divine revelation and hence the noetic basis for his understanding of the divine being and activity. And as we also saw Barth postulates that this divine act takes place within human history, in that it is a bodily resurrection, and yet remains distinct from or transcendent to it, in that its cause is not this-worldly but divine.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 97.

¹⁸⁴ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 97, 109.

¹⁸⁵ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 97, 109; Webster, *Moral Theology*, 28-31.

¹⁸⁶ Barth, *Römerbrief*, 183, 185; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 251-252.

Moreover Barth again does not propose that knowledge of God is established simply by means of divine activity but he maintains his rudimentary concept that it is by a definite form of human activity as well. We can understand the interpretation of Przywara and those like him who conclude that the second edition of Barth's commentary on Romans admits no role or dignity to human activity whatsoever. The fact is, as has often been noted, it is one of the greatest anti-metaphysical manifestos ever written.¹⁸⁷ And so it seems uncompromisingly negative towards human activity. It is unsparing in its deposition of the hubris of human religion. Its ruthless application of the eternity-time distinction strips human activity of its self-appointed sovereignty. The work succeeds through this toppling of idolatrous forms of human activity in clarifying that one possibility alone remains for a human relationship to God: a theological one. And yet even here if we look carefully we can see that Barth still believes that God does not establish this relationship on His own but rather through the involvement of a definite form of human activity. In this work as we have seen Barth once again implements a rudimentary version of his concept of the objective and subjective human form of divine revelation. God reveals the content of divine revelation, the unintuitable eschatological act of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, only by means of the intuitable human event of the death of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁸⁸ Humans participate in eschatological creaturely knowing of this event of the resurrection only through the form of an act of their own fallen human cognition.¹⁸⁹ Although the former is a deliberately passive form of human being intended to emphasise that knowledge of God is a human impossibility and Barth has still done little to clarify that the latter is an active form of humanity his decision to assign a definite role to humans in the formation of their relationship with God lays a

¹⁸⁷ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 243-248.

¹⁸⁸ Barth, *Römerbrief*, 5-6, 132, 136, 185, 204; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 251-256.

¹⁸⁹ Barth, *Römerbrief*, 126, 134, 141, 159, 185-186; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 256-259.

significant foundation which he will develop further in the future.

Finally in light of the above Barth again does not conceive that human knowledge of God takes the form of a metaphysical direct identity but rather an indirect identity or analogy between God and humanity. In the second edition of *Romans* Barth still employs ambiguous terminology like ‘immediacy’ to characterise the reconciliation which God accomplishes between humanity and Himself which has understandably led many like Przywara to conclude that he intends a form of metaphysical direct identity. However as we mentioned earlier such terms are in fact the product of his expressivist style at this stage and are not intended to be taken literally. In fact just as he did in Tübingen Barth here once again conceives that the divine-human relation established in human knowledge of God has the form of an indirect identity or analogy. We have seen that here again Barth understands that divine revelation is doubly mediated. The content of revelation, the eschatological event of the resurrection of Jesus, is mediated through the human event of the death of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁹⁰ Moreover eschatological creaturely knowledge of this is, by divine enabling, mediated through an act of fallen human knowing.¹⁹¹ There is, therefore, at most an indirect rather than direct identity between divine and human understanding of the meaning of the cross. And Barth’s own preferred terminology for this relation remains ‘parable’ or ‘analogy’.¹⁹²

By the Summer of 1922 Barth had assumed his first academic post as professor of Reformed theology at the University of Göttingen and now set out above all to thoroughly acquaint himself with that tradition. In pursuit of this ambition Barth chose to undertake

¹⁹⁰ Barth, *Römerbrief*, 5-6, 132, 136, 185, 204; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 251-256.

¹⁹¹ Barth, *Römerbrief*, 126, 134, 141, 159, 185-186; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 256-259.

¹⁹² Barth, *Römerbrief*, 176; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 259.

as one of his first series of lectures there a penetrating study of the distinctive contribution to Christian life and thought of the founder of that tradition, John Calvin. The lectures, which were posthumously published as *Die Theologie Calvin* (1993) and eventually translated as *The Theology of John Calvin* (1995), complement our analysis of the form of Barth's early theology so far by revealing traces of the motivation which underlies and animates it.¹⁹³ They were written at the purported height of Barth's early inhumane transcendentalism, just months after the publication of the second edition of *Romans*, and moreover still months before he would have the benefit of any remedial influence from Przywara's criticisms of his early theology.¹⁹⁴ Yet already within them we can see that, in spite of his theological basis for knowledge of God, Barth retains the fundamental humanism of his former Protestant Liberal and Religious Socialist heritage: he remains passionately committed to a form of human activity.

On the one hand the lectures show that Barth already has an aversion to abstract concepts of divinity which overwhelm and subdue human activity. This emerges most clearly when Barth gives a preliminary summary of the distinctive features of Calvin's life and thought and unwittingly betrays his own feelings about them in the process.¹⁹⁵ Barth claims that Calvin gives the concept of sovereignty priority in his doctrine of God so that this becomes its primary characteristic. 'The first feature of Calvin's concept of God is the thought of his divine sovereignty'.¹⁹⁶ And he believes that this, in turn, has a host of undesirable consequences. It means that the Lordship of God is emphasised to the exclusion of other metaphors so that Calvin pictures God as simply a 'strong and jealous'

¹⁹³ K. Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, tr. G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). Hereafter, *TJC*.

¹⁹⁴ See the next section of this chapter (1.3.2). McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 93-94.

¹⁹⁵ For this passage see Barth, *TJC*, 116-127.

¹⁹⁶ Barth, *TJC*, 119.

‘Lord’.¹⁹⁷ But more seriously it means that Calvin unwittingly assumes that ‘God’s will is a will for power’.¹⁹⁸ By claiming that Calvin’s concept of God is little more than a projection of Nietzsche’s will for power Barth is obviously insinuating that it competes with and ruthlessly subjugates all other centres of volition and activity outside of itself. And so he perceives it is a grave threat to humanity: it is ‘the great... either-or that h[a]ng[s]... over humanity’.¹⁹⁹ In fact Barth believes that Calvin could consequently interpret his own Christian life only as a form of submission: a surrender of his will, desires and activity to God. ‘[T]herefore obedience to [God’s will] is a will for subjection’: ‘[W]hat did obedience mean but subjection, order, discipline, to which the lively and colourful movement of natural life had to adjust itself?’.²⁰⁰ Barth enumerates various examples of self-denial in Calvin’s life in order to support this claim. He laments that Calvin gave up his ‘natural desire’ to become a quiet scholar and historian.²⁰¹ And he claims that he refrained from ‘joy’ or ‘pleasure’ in the material world and could not even ‘laugh’.²⁰² Barth believes Calvin consequently became the living embodiment of the dictum, “‘Man is something that has to be overcome” (Nietzsche)’.²⁰³ And so there remained in his life only ‘a bitter and almost unbearable seriousness’.²⁰⁴ The severity of Barth’s charge here and his description of its tragic consequences leave us in little doubt that he already finds such an inhumane concept of divinity repugnant. But he would in fact only become increasingly outspoken in his criticism of such formulations throughout the remainder of his career.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁷ Barth, *TJC*, 117.

¹⁹⁸ Barth, *TJC*, 117 cf. 120.

¹⁹⁹ Barth, *TJC*, 123, 121 cf. 120-124.

²⁰⁰ Barth, *TJC*, 117, 120.

²⁰¹ Barth, *TJC*, 120.

²⁰² Barth, *TJC*, 120-121, 125-126.

²⁰³ Barth, *TJC*, 120 cf. 117.

²⁰⁴ Barth, *TJC*, 117.

²⁰⁵ e.g. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/3: The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. G. Bromiley and T. Torrance, tr. G. Bromiley and R. Ehrlich (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), 98-101, 112-119. Hereafter, *CDIII/3*.

On the other hand the lectures illustrate that Barth already assumes that his theology is part of a tradition which values human activity. In order to help explain Calvin's distinct contribution to Christian life and thought in the lectures Barth develops a dialectical typology of the major theological alternatives that emerged at the time of the Reformation. Barth suggests that Medieval Christianity was typified by an exclusive preoccupation with human activity and a belief that by this alone, via the concept of infused grace, one could establish a relationship with God. Barth calls this the 'horizontal'. Barth points out for instance that Scholastic theology assumed that it could establish some knowledge of God by the exercise of human reason alone and mystics presumed that the exercise of contemplation and the *via negativa* could secure their oneness with God. '[T]he Middle Ages... lived wholly and utterly on the horizontal' and 'thinks that somewhere on an extension of this line it will reach the goal of infinity, the invisible things of God'.²⁰⁶ According to Barth Lutheran Christianity, although descendent from this heritage, reacted against it by a one-sided assertion of its polar opposite. Luther's recovery of *sola fidei* and *theologia crucis* led him to an exclusive interest in divine activity or grace and a belief that this alone could reconcile humanity to God. Barth terms this the 'vertical'. Barth believes that because of both his preoccupation with this rediscovery and his fear of compromising it Luther largely neglected to contemplate its implications for human ethics. 'Luther... knew the horizontal but lived wholly and utterly on the vertical'.²⁰⁷ And so Barth claims that Calvin's distinctive contribution to Christianity lay in his synthesis of these two alternatives. He retained Luther's fundamental insight that divine grace alone reconciles humanity to God. However, in sympathy with the concerns of Roman Catholic Christianity, he also went

²⁰⁶ Barth, *TJC*, 48, 45-46.

²⁰⁷ Barth, *TJC*, 48-49, 75.

beyond it by considering what God's grace now demands of human activity or ethics as well. Barth consequently describes this as a concern for the 'horizontal in light of the vertical'. Barth believes that this concern subsequently distinguishes the thought of the Reformed tradition. '[T]he strong desire to shape the world... [h]ere we have the basic tendency... of Reformed theology... the intersecting of the horizontal by the vertical'.²⁰⁸ More importantly throughout the lectures he frequently identifies with this Reformed approach to theology rather than the Lutheran one. For instance he describes Luther's concern as 'deficien[t]' but confesses that '[i]t is the secret of life in general to know what Calvin knew, to look beyond to what is incorruptible, and then to live and act in the world of the corruptible precisely with this higher reference'.²⁰⁹

1.3.2. *Analogia Fidei* (1924-1942)

Interpreters of Barth's theology in the field of theological aesthetics as we have seen fear not only that Barth's early theology in his *Romans* stage is a form of theopanism but that in the period which immediately follows this he continues this conceptuality in some way as well: he either promulgates a concept of analogy which is a thinly disguised form of theopanism (Betz) or he remains so captivated by this idealistic thought-form that he repeatedly relapses into it (Balthasar). But in fact this interpretation too is unfounded. During this period, chastened by Przywara's criticisms of his earlier conceptuality and excited by his discovery of a promising form of Reformed Christology, Barth for the first time develops his *analogia crucis* into an *analogia fidei*. This new conception remains an analogy of knowing rather than being. However Barth's further engagement with Przywara's work towards the end of this period convinces him for the first time that it is

²⁰⁸ Barth, *TJC*, 79-80.

²⁰⁹ Barth, *TJC*, 75-76, 293, 70-71, 184.

in fact a distinctive form of analogy of being and leaves him determined to express this fact.²¹⁰

In the months which immediately followed the publication of the second edition of his commentary on *Romans* (1922) Barth had two encounters which compelled him to transform the form of his theology from that point onwards. On September 30, 1923 Barth received a letter from his friend Eduard Thurneysen which alerted him for the first time to Erich Przywara's critique of his early *denkform* in his article 'Gott in uns oder Gott über uns?' (1923).²¹¹ As we have seen for ourselves in this article Przywara especially faults Barth for presuming a metaphysical opposition between divinity and humanity which precludes the possibility of a genuine doctrine of the incarnation in his theology. We have already shown that this criticism of Barth's theology was in fact mistaken. But Barth seems to indicate that it nevertheless made a profound impression upon him.²¹² It seems likely that, together with his early engagement with Reformed theology, it alerted him to the fact that he needed a genuine Christology for the first time.²¹³ Just a few months later in May 1924 Barth discovered precisely what he was looking for. Whilst lecturing on the Trinity he encountered for the first time in a textbook of post-Reformation theology by Heinrich Heppe the Reformed dogma of anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology. Barth immediately recognised the idea had the potential to revolutionise his concept of analogy and ameliorate some of Przywara's concerns. And so for the first time in his *Göttingen Dogmatics* (1924) he enhanced his *analogia crucis*

²¹⁰ See K. Barth, *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis of Ethics*, tr. R. Birch Hoyle (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 5-6. Hereafter, *HSCL*. Barth, *CDII/1*, 81-83; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 180-181.

²¹¹ K. Barth, *Karl-Barth-Eduard Thurneysen Briefwechsel*, ii: 1921-1930, ed. E. Thurneysen (Zürich: TVZ, 1974), 190; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 93-94.

²¹² e.g. K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, tr. E. Hoskyns (Oxford: OUP, 1933), 20-21.

²¹³ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 320-322; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 98.

with an anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology and thereby formulated a conception he would eventually describe as an *analogia fidei*.²¹⁴

Barth's anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology provides the basis for this revised form of analogy.²¹⁵ For Barth the dogma means that the Son of God assumes a human nature which is *anhypostatos*, or in other words has no personality or existence in itself, and yet is *enhypostatos*, that is, has personality or existence only in union with the divine person of the *Logos*.²¹⁶ It consequently provides the basis for an epistemological dialectic: a dialectic of veiling and unveiling of the Son of God in the human Jesus Christ.²¹⁷ It means that the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth in itself only veils its Subject, the Son of God. And so divine revelation can occur only by an act of the Son of God to unveil Himself through this veil of human flesh and enable faith and obedience in the observer.²¹⁸ As an act of the divine Subject in human history this disclosure is once again an event without precedent or consequences. Barth believes that the human words of Scripture and Church proclamation may reveal God in essentially the same way.²¹⁹ Put simply then the *analogia fidei* postulates a divinely-instigated likeness or similitude between the human speech of Jesus of Nazareth, Scripture or proclamation and the Word of God. It thus remains a theological, Christocentric and actualistic form of analogy.

²¹⁴ Although all the fundamental elements of Barth's *analogia fidei* were already in place in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* (1924) he would not use this term to describe it until *Church Dogmatics I/1* (1932). See K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, ed. G. Bromiley and T. Torrance, tr. G. Bromiley (2nd edn, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 12, 243-244. Hereafter, *CDI/1*. McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 327-328, 359-367.

²¹⁵ K. Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, ed. H. Reiffen, tr. G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 131, 153. Hereafter, *GD*. McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 327-328, 359-367.

²¹⁶ Barth, *GD*, 156-158.

²¹⁷ Barth, *GD*, 138-139, 154

²¹⁸ Barth, *GD*, 136, 144.

²¹⁹ Barth, *GD*, 201, 265.

But the analogy integrates a more complex set of relations as well.²²⁰ Barth infers from the revelation of the Word of God in time that the Trinity exists eternally as a Father and Son who in the unity of the Holy Spirit are object to each other not through some other medium but in their own divine Being.²²¹ ‘God is directly and openly manifest only to himself’.²²² God consequently knows Himself ‘direct[ly]’ or immediately.²²³ And this provides the ontological basis for human knowledge of God in time. ‘God’s relation to us is not accidental. It is necessarily contained and grounded in God’s being... the relation to us [is] intrinsic to him from the very first’.²²⁴ For Barth this takes place when the Son of God who knows Himself directly objectifies Himself to humans through a perceptible creaturely form of being which is distinct from His own. The Holy Spirit then, in concert with this divine self-objectification, enables human knowing to participate in the redeemed humanity of Jesus Christ who knows and obeys the Word of God perfectly. ‘[T]he second miracle of the Holy Spirit is that... we all have a share in what is said to the one: “Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” [Matt.3:17]’.²²⁵ Humans thereby participate in God’s self-knowledge indirectly or mediately. ‘[A]s God reveals himself to us, he is knowable by us... he is knowable indirectly in his knowledge of himself’.²²⁶

Barth’s *analogia fidei* remains throughout this period an analogy of knowing rather than being.²²⁷ Barth’s aim at this stage of his career is still simply to craft a coherent alternative

²²⁰ In the years to come Barth would retain and further sharpen the comprehensive formulation of the *analogia fidei* outlined here. See his most mature account of it in Barth, *CDII/1*, 9-10, 16-17, 48-52.

²²¹ Barth, *GD*, 103.

²²² Barth, *GD*, 446-447, 328-329.

²²³ Barth, *GD*, 329.

²²⁴ Barth, *GD*, 128. This principle is assumed throughout Barth’s preliminary doctrine of the Trinity. See *GD*, 110-130.

²²⁵ Barth, *GD*, 194, 196, 161.

²²⁶ Barth, *GD*, 328-329, 333, 339.

²²⁷ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 99, 112-117.

to the anthropological bases for knowledge of God which remained popular amongst his Protestant peers.²²⁸ And so throughout the *Göttingen Dogmatics* Barth typically identifies the two terms in relation as elements of epistemology rather than ontology. *Deus Dixit* ‘is not matter, thing, or nature. It is word, *logos*, intellectual communication, a revelation of reason, and our being addressed by God is in the most pregnant sense knowledge, appropriation of word, thinking the thoughts of God that are communicated’.²²⁹ Moreover since his early dogmatics aims to serve the purity of the Church’s proclamation, to ensure that its speech about God is truly the Word of God, Barth generally takes human speech or communication as the primary analogate throughout it.²³⁰ And so even when he does admit ontological terms to the relation, like ‘nature’, they are typically understood on the model of the primary analogate as other creaturely ‘voices’, ‘words’ or ‘speech’.²³¹ This tendency remains until the early chapters of *Church Dogmatics II/1* (1940).²³² In addition at this early stage of his career Barth still has not developed a comprehensive doctrine of creation. He has at most a minimal doctrine of creation and anthropology which he uses on an *ad hoc* basis mostly just to establish the fallenness of contemporary humanity.²³³ And so although Barth believes at this stage that the knowledge and speech of reconciled humanity, by virtue of its participation in the humanity of its elder brother Jesus Christ, truly corresponds to the self-knowledge and Word of God, he as yet has no theoretical framework by which to explain how this reconciled humanity relates to humanity as it was created. And that makes it impossible for his *analogia fidei* at this stage to truly be an analogy of being.

²²⁸ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 92.

²²⁹ Barth, *GD*, 62-63, 88, 94-95.

²³⁰ Barth, *GD*, 23 ff.

²³¹ Barth, *GD*, 33-35.

²³² e.g. Barth, *CDI/1*, 90, 95, 109, 113-115, 132-136; Barth, *CDII/1*, 9-10, 26, 48-52, etc.

²³³ Barth, *GD*, 72 ff. See also K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/2: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, ed. G. Bromiley and T. Torrance, tr. G. Thomson and H. Knight (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 40-44. Hereafter, *CDI/2*.

Yet this revised concept of analogy is still in no sense a form of theopanism either. For in the first place Barth, responding especially to Przywara's criticisms of his former *denkform*, now takes even greater strides to theologically redefine the divine being and activity so as to make clear that it is not metaphysically opposed to but is rather within and even upholds human being and activity. His *analogia fidei* makes two major advances along this line.

Firstly, by appropriating an anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology Barth now both jettisons the misleading eternity-time dialectic and conceptualises the divine being and activity as present within human history. As we have seen Barth's original intention in employing the eternity-time dialectic was to safeguard the infinite qualitative distinction between divine and human being and thereby to ensure that knowledge of God could only ever be established from a theological basis. However it had come at a high cost, misleading Przywara and others into the belief that Barth was proposing a metaphysical opposition between divine and human being. Barth's adoption of an anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology, in part triggered by Przywara's criticism of his lack of a doctrine of Christ, now enabled him to put daylight between this charge and his own theology in two ways. As we saw this Christology grounds an epistemological dialectic between the veiling and unveiling of the Son of God in the humanity of Jesus. But this in turn now safeguards the infinite qualitative distinction and hence the theological nature of knowledge of God and thus makes the eternity-time dialectic redundant. And so, negatively, Barth now rejects this misleading concept altogether.²³⁴ But, positively, the anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology also now for the first time conceives that divine

²³⁴ However, Barth's concept of divine revelation never simply left eschatology behind. It always remained eschatological. McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 327-328.

revelation is a truly historical event as well. As we have seen it proposes that the Son of God is the real though concealed Subject of the humanity of Jesus. But this in turn means He is a real and living Subject within human history as well.²³⁵ Barth could therefore now insist that the Son of God 'is in history': He is 'the living Lord in the midst of our contradiction'.²³⁶ And so 'Christian revelation and Christian faith are historical... They belong to prehistory or primal history'.²³⁷

Secondly, Barth resumes and further prosecutes the theological definition of the divine being and activity which he had begun in the previous period to such an extent that he now conceives that the most basic character of God as a whole and in every dimension is that He is a unity of transcendence and immanence and hence the very ground of relationality itself.

We saw earlier that in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* Barth for the first time elaborates a doctrine of the immanent and economic Trinity. His purpose in doing so is to comprehensively make clear that the subject of divine revelation, the one who initiates it, is God alone and thereby to ensure that He remains hidden to us even in His revelation.²³⁸ Although Barth had already stated that God in general is the subject of revelation since He is more specifically a triune subject he now had to clarify that each of these three persons in time are in fact this same God and, moreover, that they consequently have an eternal existence which exceeds and is the ontological basis of their temporal one.²³⁹ Barth once again fashions this concept of the inner and outer life of God from a noetic

²³⁵ Barth still retained the term *Urgeschichte* to describe revelation. But now he used the term to mean 'pre-history' rather than 'unhistorical'. See Barth, *GD*, 148; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 363.

²³⁶ Barth, *GD*, 161, 87, 148.

²³⁷ Barth, *GD*, 148.

²³⁸ Barth, *GD*, 98, 134-135.

²³⁹ e.g. Barth, *GD*, 87.

basis which is properly theological: the Church's confession that 'Jesus is Lord'. 'One should not try to understand, develop, or establish the doctrine of the Trinity except in terms of its specific origin. By its specific origin I mean the confession of revelation in Jesus, the confession *Iēsous Kyrios*'.²⁴⁰ From this theological basis Barth determines that God exists eternally in such a manner that He is both 'above' and also 'within' His own divine being. The One God lives as three persons distinguished by their genetic relations: a Father who is the generative source of the divine being; a Son begotten by Him; and a Holy Spirit who further proceeds from both the Father and the Son.²⁴¹ Barth conceives that on this basis God exists both 'above' and 'within' human history as well. He is the Father who, as the creative source of finite being, stands as Lord 'above' or over it; the Son who is Lord 'in' the midst of this fallen created order; and the Holy Spirit who exercises Lordship even within humans themselves.²⁴² Barth therefore concludes that God is in fact a unity of 'transcendence' and 'immanence'.²⁴³ And in familiar terms he even describes Him as the One 'who is never so distant as when he is near'.²⁴⁴

He is Lord not only *over* all things and *in* all things, but as we are special things among all other things, uniquely at the centre of all things, God is *our* Lord, *mine* and *yours*, the God who stands related to us as I and Thou, as Thou and I, from eternity to eternity.²⁴⁵

He not only stands above the contradiction at its beginning and end; he also stands victoriously within it. His eternity over time becomes an eternity *in* time.²⁴⁶

There is little doubt that Barth especially intends this account of God to be a direct response to Przywara's charges. Barth is attempting to demonstrate that far from

²⁴⁰ Barth, *GD*, 103-104.

²⁴¹ Barth, *GD*, 112, 114, 119-122, 128. For this entire account of the Trinity see Barth, *GD*, 110-130.

²⁴² Barth, *GD*, 111-113, 118-120, 125.

²⁴³ Barth, *GD*, 134-135.

²⁴⁴ Barth, *GD*, 135.

²⁴⁵ Barth, *GD*, 130, 134.

²⁴⁶ Barth, *GD*, 113.

espousing a Lutheran concept of God which is one-sidedly transcendent his own understanding of God at least matches and even betters Przywara's God in us and above us. Although Barth never names Przywara in the passage there are irresistible signs that he intends him as the primary interlocutor. For instance, upon demonstrating that the Church's confession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ implies that God is not only above but also within the world Barth repudiates the thesis that this is a 'general truth' which may be known by other means as mere 'metaphysical chatter'.

In regard to the Son, too, there is no general truth. The Son is not the self-evidently present relation of God to the world.... The name 'Son' is not just a Christian label attached to a fact that is known in some other way, namely, that God is not only beyond the world but also in it... All this is metaphysical chatter.²⁴⁷

Moreover when Barth further extrapolates from the Church's confession of the divinity of the Holy Spirit that God is present not only within the created order in general but in humans personally as well he faults those conceptions of God which by comparison portray Him as simply above and within the world as too 'metaphysical' and insufficiently personal.

Those who in spite of every safeguard would have God's Lordship over and in the contradiction understood as merely a metaphysical, logical, dialectical relation should at least finally waken to the fact that it concerns them, that the contradiction is *theirs*, that the Lord over and in it is *their* Lord.²⁴⁸

And when Barth eventually concludes his doctrine of the Trinity by reminding his students that its purpose has been to establish the divinity of the subject of revelation and thereby the human impossibility of knowledge of God, Barth admonishes those who have accused him of supporting this thesis instead by means of 'a one-sided emphasis on God's transcendence, majesty, or negativity' or 'a much too sceptical philosophy'.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Barth, *GD*, 120.

²⁴⁸ Barth, *GD*, 125-126.

²⁴⁹ Barth, *GD*, 134-135.

Barth retains, sharpens and continues to work out the implications of this understanding of the triune being throughout the remainder of this period. By the time of his first volume of *Church Dogmatics* Barth had come to recognise in this concept of divinity a basis for the divine–human relation which is an exact mirror image of the one assumed by Przywara’s *analogia entis*. Przywara’s concept of analogy as we have seen claims that the relation between divine and human being is the consequence of a capacity inherent to the created order, its contingency, which means that it is ‘open upwards’ towards God. But Barth now insists conversely that the divine-human relation is established on the basis of a capacity inherent to the divine being, the fact that God exists eternally as a Father who does not remain solitary but begets a Son, which means that God is ‘open downwards’ towards human being as well.

It is in this mode of being as the Word or the Son that God is able to become manifest to us. We needed Him, God the Word or the Son, in order that God might become manifest to us. In that way He had to become manifest to us. Why? Because already from eternity, already in Himself, before we or the world existed, He was ready and open for us, He was confederated with us in His Word or Son. God in His Word or Son is identical with God who reveals Himself, who is able to be free for us.²⁵⁰

By the end of this period Barth had developed this concept of deity into his comprehensive doctrine of God as ‘the One who loves in freedom’.²⁵¹ Barth now recognises that the Church’s confession that ‘God is’, in response to the revelation of the triune Subject, must mean that God exists throughout eternity and time most basically as a perfect unity of ‘freedom’ and ‘love’.²⁵² But Barth believes that this in turn means that God’s freedom cannot be an abstract freedom but must be a freedom to love. In other words it is not only a freedom to transcend all that is not God but also a freedom to remain

²⁵⁰ Barth, *CDI/2*, 34-35.

²⁵¹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 257-321.

²⁵² Barth, *CDII/1*, 261-262, 257, 322; Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 43-44.

transcendent even while being completely immanent within it as well.²⁵³

[T]he absoluteness of God properly understood... can signify not only His freedom to transcend all that is other than Himself, but also His freedom to be immanent within it, and at such a depth of immanence as simply does not exist in the fellowship between other beings.²⁵⁴

Barth now understands this unity of freedom and love to be the most basic character not only of the immanent and economic divine being but also of each of the divine perfections as well since they are ultimately identical to it.²⁵⁵ On the basis of this general understanding of the divine being Barth can therefore now claim that, far from being opposed to others, God is in fact the very ground of relationality itself. '[I]t is in God that the father-son relation, like all creaturely relations, has its original and proper reality'.²⁵⁶

If Barth's *analogia fidei* does even more than his *analogia crucis* to exonerate him of an inhumane concept of divinity, it likewise further vindicates him of the charge of divine *Alleinwirksamkeit* too. We will remember that Barth's *analogia crucis* responded to the popular hegemony of anthropological approaches to knowledge of God by postulating a theological basis for it which was nevertheless bilateral rather than unilateral in nature. In other words it already conceived that God typically establishes a relationship with humans by means of, rather than at the expense of, their involvement both objectively and subjectively although it left this relatively undefined. Barth's *analogia fidei* now for

²⁵³ Barth, *CDII/1*, 311-314. Webster: 'God's freedom is... actual as the loving gift and preservation of the creature's life'. Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 43-44.

²⁵⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 313-314.

²⁵⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 341-343; Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 44-46.

²⁵⁶ Barth, *CDI/1*, 430-432. See also Barth, *CDII/1*, 641: "He is in Himself, and therefore to everything outside Himself, relationship, the basis and prototype of all relationship".

the first time comprehensively defines the objective and subjective role of humans in this process as an active rather than passive one.

Barth's earlier *denkform* had proposed that God discloses Himself objectively by means of a very passive form of human being, the event of the death of Jesus of Nazareth, in order to emphasise that knowledge of God is not a human possibility. But Barth's *analogia fidei*, having safeguarded this truth through a more thorough clarification of the divinity of the subject of revelation, now postulates that God makes Himself known by means of an active form of human being: an act of human speaking by Jesus Christ, the prophets and apostles or contemporary preachers.²⁵⁷

Barth had also said little previously about the human subject's appropriation of and response to this divine self-disclosure. But he now for the first time comprehensively defines this too as active rather than passive in nature. By the time he wrote the *Göttingen Dogmatics* (1924-1925) Barth in fact already believed that it was essential to think of the human response to divine revelation as an active rather than passive one. Barth assumes that the Church's confession that it knows the Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit is true.²⁵⁸ However he recognises that this is only possible if the Church's response to revelation takes the form of a genuine act of human knowing.²⁵⁹

Revelation can be subjective only in full action.²⁶⁰

The place in the life of us mortal sinners in which our activity leads to an encounter with God because God is the Creator must really be an activation. In this relation

²⁵⁷ Barth, *GD*, 25, 32-33, 62-63.

²⁵⁸ Barth, *GD*, 176-177.

²⁵⁹ Barth, *GD*, 179-180.

²⁶⁰ Barth, *GD*, 187.

we cannot be mere objects. We must be just as much self-conscious subjects as God himself is... [O]ur encounter with God must be not merely something that comes upon us like fate or a roaring hailstorm. If this encounter means question and answer, speaking and hearing, giving and receiving between us and God, then we must be actors in the relation... Revelation is really present only in action, we laid down already.... We must apply this on the subjective side too. There has to be a recognition, an acceptance, an acknowledgement, a respecting, a bowing down... This is why expressly there has to be knowledge and action, not just sinking and vanishing, not just stillness and passivity.²⁶¹

Barth consequently conceives the Holy Spirit's work as an 'activation' or 'enrichment' of human being.²⁶² Barth deduces from the fact that God reveals Himself to humans in Jesus Christ that when they are left to their own devices humans make their own free self-determination but that this is more specifically a self-determination to sin which leaves them unable to know God.²⁶³ And so Barth believes that the work of the Holy Spirit is to lift this human self-determination into the redeemed humanity of Jesus Christ so that now in addition it is directed from without by the Son of God who, having become the Lord of this acting subject, now enables them to achieve what they previously could not, namely, to know God.²⁶⁴ Barth would retain and further develop this basic understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit from this time onwards.

[The Holy Spirit's] work is the activation of our humanity that is caught in contradiction to the extent that this work of his enables us to see and hear and receive... that it sets us in fellowship with God.²⁶⁵

He is not at all a block or stone in faith but self-determining man. He does not sink into passive, apathetic contemplation in faith, and even if he did he would still do so as self-determining man. Whatever his state of soul, at least in thinking, willing and feeling he is himself and lives his own life. Nevertheless, the point is that in faith he must regard this in no sense diminished self-determination, himself in his own activity, in the living of his own life, as determined by the Word of God. In his

²⁶¹ Barth, *GD*, 179-180.

²⁶² Barth, *GD*, 177; Barth, *CDI/2*, 260.

²⁶³ Barth, *GD*, 174-175.

²⁶⁴ Barth, *GD*, 175-177.

²⁶⁵ Barth, *GD*, 177.

freedom, in the full use of his freedom as a man, he must see himself as another man that he had no power to become... Man acts as he believes, but the fact that he believes as he acts is God's act. Man is the subject of faith. Man believes, not God. But the fact that man is this subject in faith is bracketed as a predicate of the subject God.²⁶⁶

Barth had also previously acknowledged that the human response to revelation incorporates faith but left this undefined. However by *Church Dogmatics I/1* (1932) he comprehensively defines this as an 'act' or 'movement' of knowledge.²⁶⁷ We will remember that Barth's anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology supports a dialectic between the veiling and unveiling of the Word of God in the human Jesus of Nazareth. But this implies that the Word of God is only ever perceived by humans in either its veiling human form or its unveiled divine content and never as a unity or whole. Barth believes that human acknowledgement of the Word of God can therefore only consist in unceasingly following its movement and inferring the unity of the whole from one side or the other.

Finally in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* (1924-1925) Barth now for the first time claims that the human response to revelation entails an act of obedience too.²⁶⁸ Having formerly shown sympathy with a Reformed understanding of the Christian life rather than a Lutheran one Barth now explicitly appropriates it. He assumes that the content of divine revelation is not simply the gospel or in other words the promise of justification, but God Himself and therefore a disclosure of both the gospel and law. And so he believes that the human response to this must incorporate not only an act of faith but an act of obedience as well. 'I say "Faith and Obedience", not just "Faith"... We cannot have knowledge in relation to God without action... There can hardly be any question of

²⁶⁶ Barth, *CDI/1*, 244-246.

²⁶⁷ Barth, *CDI/1*, 207 cf. 174-181.

²⁶⁸ Barth, *GD*, 171-173. 194-195.

quietism’.²⁶⁹ Barth would retain this basic understanding of the nature of the Christian life from this point onwards.²⁷⁰

It should be obvious from the foregoing that Barth’s *analogia fidei*, like his earlier *analogia crucis*, does not then conceptualise a direct identity but rather an indirect identity or analogy between God and humanity. By this stage in his career Barth was in fact now both vocal and emphatic in his rejection of the idea of immediate or direct divine revelation. Since he had always presumed a Kantian epistemology the concept of a *deus nudus* unclothed by a secular form which could alone make it commensurate with human cognition seemed to him to imply an ‘act of violence’ to human beings.

God’s revelation without this veiling... would not be revelation but our death... [I]t would mean... the abolition of the conditions of our existence. In that case revelation would obviously be [an] act of violence.²⁷¹

Instead Barth’s *analogia fidei* now even more clearly than before conceives that human knowledge of God is indirectly identical or analogous to divine self-knowledge because it now even more explicitly than before views the latter as mediated through two forms of human activity. As we have seen Barth believes that the Word of God is spoken to us through the secular form of an act of human speech and therefore ‘indirectly’. And we then participate in the Son of God’s own human knowing of this in Jesus Christ only through the secular form of an act of our own fallen human knowing and consequently ‘indirectly’ as well.

²⁶⁹ Barth, *GD*, 172-173.

²⁷⁰ Barth, *CDI/2*, 205-206, 369-371; K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/2: The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. G. Bromiley and T. Torrance, tr. H. Knight and others (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), 176-198; K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/1: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, ed. G. Bromiley and T. Torrance, tr. G. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 740 ff.; K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/2: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, ed. G. Bromiley and T. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), 728 ff. The latter hereafter respectively *CDIII/2*, *CDIV/1* and *CDIV/2*.

²⁷¹ Barth, *CDI/2*, 36; Barth, *CDI/1*, 93-94; Barth, *CDII/1*, 10-12, 18, 56-57

What does it mean to stand before *God*, to believe in him and to obey him? If we have been right about the objective revelation of God in the incarnation of God, then obviously there can be no question of an immediate or direct relation to God in this subjective possibility either. The incarnation means that God becomes objective and concrete. Coming into history, into the circle of human comprehension, God's Word becomes complex instead of simple. It is adopted and transmitted by the proclamation of the Christian community in distinct communications and demands.²⁷²

But Barth's *analogia fidei* also in fact presumes an additional concept which would henceforth prevent God and humanity from being conflated in the event of reconciliation as well. By the time of the *Göttingen Dogmatics* (1924-1925) Barth had adopted a Christology which, whilst not simply repeating the confession of Chalcedon, nonetheless faithfully adhered to it (451). And although he would develop this during the years which followed it would always remain 'under the guidance of th[at] formula'.²⁷³ But this creed, of course, stipulates that Christ's divine and human natures must be conceived in such a way that they remain 'without confusion, without change' and yet 'without division, without separation' as well. In other words, they must be given the form of unity-in-distinction.²⁷⁴ And as we have seen Barth now took such Christology as the very model for God's self-disclosure in the *analogia fidei*.²⁷⁵

In light of what we have elaborated so far it is important that we point out that while

²⁷² Barth, *GD*, 192, 144, 170, 176, 178, 194, 329; Barth, *CDI/1*, 165-166.

²⁷³ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 116. For example see, Barth, *CDII/1*, 664. Both McCormack and Hunsinger agree on this essential point, that Barth continues to be faithful to Chalcedon. However, McCormack rightly adds that Barth's reformulation of the doctrine of election in *Church Dogmatics II/2* would spark a radical reinterpretation of the Chalcedonian formula in his later Christology in which the substantialist ontology assumed by the definition (in terms like nature and person) is replaced by a thoroughly actualistic one. G. Hunsinger, 'Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character', in J. Webster (ed), *Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 127-142; B. McCormack, 'Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How "Chalcedonian" Is It?', in *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 201-234.

²⁷⁴ e.g. Barth, *GD*, 138-139, 153-154.

²⁷⁵ Webster, *Moral Theology*, 86-94.

Barth's concept of analogy to this point is, as Przywara and others have suggested, fundamentally indebted to Luther's theology it also takes significant steps beyond his thought-forms as well. Barth's concept of analogy takes its fundamental character from an application of two significant concepts of Luther's soteriology to epistemology. His theological basis for knowledge of God is in fact largely an attempt to work out the epistemological implications of Luther's doctrine of *sola gratia*.²⁷⁶ Moreover his consistent conception that fallen humanity remains qualitatively unchanged, retaining its same freedom and possibilities, even as it participates in the redeemed humanity of the Son of God, reflects an attempt to give epistemological expression to Luther's *simul iustus et peccator*.²⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Barth's concept of analogy intentionally moves beyond Luther's formulations where he feels these to be deficient or inadequate. And as we have seen Barth sensed that this was most especially the case with Luther's concept of the Christian life or human response to divine grace. Barth found this a passive anthropology and so he redefined it in order to make it emphatically active. He conceptualised human faith as an active rather than passive response to the Word of God. And he supplemented this with the concept that the Christian life also includes human obedience or action.²⁷⁸

Although Barth's *analogia fidei* remained throughout this period an analogy of knowing rather than being, as Bruce McCormack and others have shown, Barth's further study of Przywara's *analogia entis* in the late 1920's led him to conclude for the first time that it

²⁷⁶ Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 161.

²⁷⁷ e.g. Barth, *GD*, 126-127, 175-178; Barth, *CDI/1*, 237-240; Barth, *CDI/2*, 276-277. Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 161.

²⁷⁸ For further analysis of the distinction between Barth and Luther in this regard see, Webster, *Moral Theology*, 151-178; E. Jüngel, 'Gospel and Law: The Relationship of Dogmatics to Ethics', in *Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy*, tr. G. Paul (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 105-126.

does in fact imply a distinctive form of analogy of being and to resolve to explicate this fact. Barth's move to the predominantly Roman Catholic town of Münster in October 1925 inspired an unprecedented new engagement with the theology of that denomination and above all the work of Erich Przywara.²⁷⁹ This reached a climax when Przywara accepted Barth's invitation to participate in his seminar on Thomas's *Summa theologiae* on February 5-6, 1929. In preparation for the visit Barth had made a thorough study of Przywara's *Religionsphilosophie katholischer Theologie* (1926), his most mature articulation of the *analogia entis* available at the time.²⁸⁰ Barth's correspondence from this period demonstrates the profound impact the encounter had on him: he found Przywara a formidable and stimulating dialogue partner.²⁸¹ And so he spent the Summer which followed devouring Luther and Augustine doubtless in an attempt to further reckon with Przywara's thought. By the end of this period Barth had reached a twofold conclusion: on the one hand he was convinced again that Przywara's *analogia entis* was an inadequate formulation and on the other for the first time he realised that his own *analogia fidei* was in fact a distinct form of analogy of being. And so, as McCormack notes, '[t]he effect of this study was to move Barth to seek to find a way to take on board the concept of the *analogia entis* in his own work'.²⁸²

The only evidence of both sides of this appraisal currently in print is a lecture which Barth presented to a conference of Reformed pastors at Elberfeld on October 9, 1929 which was later published as *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life*.²⁸³ In this essay Barth

²⁷⁹ Busch, 164-165, 168-169, 182-189.

²⁸⁰ For the English translation of this work see Przywara, *Polarity*.

²⁸¹ See Barth, *Barth-Thurneysen Briefwechsel*, 652-655. Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 91-92; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 101-102.

²⁸² McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 100.

²⁸³ Barth, *HSCL*. Another essay which Barth wrote around the same time, K. Barth, 'Fate and Idea in Theology', in M. Rumscheidt (ed), *The Way of Theology in Karl Barth: Essays and Comments* (Allison

interrogates Przywara's *analogia entis* through an examination of its alleged source, namely, the thought of Augustine.²⁸⁴ Barth believes that despite Augustine's insistence that the Holy Spirit and the human spirit are 'not identical' he nevertheless assumes there is a 'continuity' between them as a result of God's act of creation.

According to his teaching, God is not the 'soul' (*animam*): he is above the 'spirit' (of man), and more than it, and still, according to Augustine, he is primarily *in* the soul, its proper origin, but now forgotten, and very probably is only to be recalled to memory when grace gives its aid.²⁸⁵

Barth criticises this interpretation of the continuity between Creator and creature because it fails to simultaneously retain an element of 'discontinuity' between them.²⁸⁶ And this criticism is significant. For Barth is thereby effectively claiming that Przywara's *analogia entis* fails to be a true analogy of being because it does not incorporate both similarity and dissimilarity between the Creator and creature as it professed but merely a one-sided similarity. Barth suggests that in order to take the discontinuity between the Creator and creature seriously we would have to conceive that the two stand in an irreversible relation of Lord and lorded-over.²⁸⁷ And Barth insists that this, in turn, would inevitably rule out the possibility that the continuity between them could exist simply on the basis of creation. It would do so for two reasons. On the one hand if God is truly the Lord then He could not be rendered an object which is permanently accessible and hence vulnerable to human conceptual mastery as He is when the continuity exists as consequence of creation.

Park: Pickwick, 1986), gives only a negative evaluation of Przywara's *analogia entis*. The only other evidence of Barth's positive appropriation of Przywara's concept at this time is his still unpublished lectures on dogmatics in Münster. See McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 100.

²⁸⁴ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 102.

²⁸⁵ Barth, *HSCL*, 3-4.

²⁸⁶ Barth, *HSCL*, 4-5.

²⁸⁷ Barth, *HSCL*, 4-5.

The discontinuity between God the Creator and man, when one considers the relation of Creator and creature, must mean that between being Lord and being lorded over there exists an irreversibility such as excludes the idea of God as an object of whom, in Platonic fashion, we have a reminiscence.²⁸⁸

And on the other hand if the creature is not the Lord but merely the one lorded over then it could have no part in God's free unilateral act of creation and hence no innate knowledge of any continuity that may exist between them.

If [the] creature is to be strictly understood as a reality willed and placed by God in distinction from God's own reality, that is to say, as the wonder of a reality that, by the power of God's love, has a place and persistence alongside God's reality, then the continuity between God and it... cannot belong to the creature itself but only to the Creator.²⁸⁹

Barth eventually concludes that the only way to do justice to the discontinuity between Creator and creature is to conceive the continuity between them as one which is established by a second act, a special revelation, and moreover as one which remains God's possession and never becomes a human possession so that it does not allow humans mastery over God.²⁹⁰ Barth is therefore effectively claiming that only his own *analogia fidei* can conceptualise a unity of similarity and dissimilarity between the Creator and the creature and that it alone consequently qualifies to be considered an analogy of being. And Barth was well aware of this: he describes his concept of analogy as 'the true *analogia entis*'.

[T]he continuity between God and [the creature] (the true *analogia entis*, by virtue of which he, the uncreated Spirit, can be revealed to the created spirit) – this continuity cannot belong to the creature itself but only to the Creator *in his relation* to the creature. It cannot be taken to mean that the creature has an original endowment in his makeup, but only a second marvel of God's love, as the inconceivable, undeserved, divine *bestowal* on his creature.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ Barth, *HSCL*, 4-5.

²⁸⁹ Barth, *HSCL*, 5.

²⁹⁰ Barth, *HSCL*, 5-6.

²⁹¹ Barth, *HSCL*, 5-6; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 100, 104.

In order to satisfactorily make this claim that despite his criticisms Barth admired Przywara's *analogia entis* enough to assume that his own *analogia fidei* is its only true realisation we must obviously explain why just a few years later then in his preface to *Church Dogmatics I/1* (1932) Barth could denounce it so strongly as the 'invention of the antichrist'.²⁹² The explanation, as McCormack has shown, is that Barth's remark is really directed not to Roman Catholicism *per se* but Protestant Liberalism and is intended to definitively vindicate his theology in the face of an increasingly dangerous new political context. Since McCormack and others have already spelled this out in sufficient enough detail to convince even many of Barth's critics we need only briefly rehearse this explanation here.²⁹³ In short, just fifteen days after Barth's triumphant boast that his own *analogia fidei* was a form of analogy of being a threatening new political crisis began to engulf Germany. The stock market crash plunged the German economy even further into recession triggering the collapse of the Weimar government and the unexpected rise of the Nazi party from a minority faction to the second largest party in the new parliament. As a result Barth found himself more alert than ever to the potential political consequences of his theological commitments and especially to the need to avoid a natural theology which could unwittingly provide religious backing to the new political incumbents.²⁹⁴ In the midst of this delicate new political context Barth was then accused by a liberal protestant former colleague, Georg Wobbermin, in a series of articles published in May 1932 of being complicit in Catholicism. Wobbermin claimed that Barth's dialectical theology was responsible for leading Professor Erik Peterson and Swiss pastor Oskar Bauhofar to convert to the Catholic faith. Barth responded the following month by publishing a strident defence of his theology in an open letter.²⁹⁵

²⁹² Barth, *CDI/1*, xiii.

²⁹³ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 104-108; Betz, *After Barth*, 36 n. 4.

²⁹⁴ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 104-105.

²⁹⁵ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 105-106.

Barth's preface to the first volume of *Church Dogmatics*, written in August the same year, was thus simply a further attempt to definitively wrest himself from Wobbermin's dangerous charge by making clear that although Protestant Liberalism and Roman Catholicism both assumed an *analogia entis* his own theology had chosen to have nothing to do with the conception.²⁹⁶

By the time that Barth encountered Gottlieb Söhngen's suggestion that his *analogia fidei* must presume a *participatio entis* and that he must consequently elaborate an account of being in the course of writing *Church Dogmatics II/1* (1940) then it was in fact old news to Barth. He had already himself assumed this for many years and so for the first time he publicly conceded the fact.²⁹⁷

[Söhngen claims that] the *participatio fidei* cannot be opposed to the *participatio entis*. On the contrary, it is a participation in being... A concern for the *actualitas verbi et fidei* must be linked 'with a concern for the *substantia verbi et fidei*. Otherwise the substance of the Word and of faith will be swallowed up by a movement of actuality and of events in which the substance will degenerate into movement... [I]f this is what that doctrine [the *analogia entis*] has to say to our thesis, then we can only observe that there is every justification for the warning that participation in being is grounded in the grace of God and therefore in faith, and that substance and actuality must be brought into this right relationship. If we are going to present our thesis correctly we certainly must not neglect to take heed to this warning and comply with it.'²⁹⁸

It is important to briefly clarify, however, that Barth's *analogia fidei* does not presume the form of *analogia entis* which von Balthasar and Söhngen claimed: a participation of being in Being which simply exists on the basis of the act of creation. We have already demonstrated that in fact from as early as the *Göttingen Dogmatics* (1924-1925) onwards Barth explicitly rejected the concept that revelation discloses such a general truth about

²⁹⁶ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 106-108.

²⁹⁷ Barth, *CDII/1*, 81-83; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 180-181.

²⁹⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 82.

creation.²⁹⁹ And Keith Johnson has provided a much more exhaustive rebuttal of this interpretation as well.³⁰⁰ Instead, as we are about to see, Barth's *analogia fidei* presupposed a *participatio entis* that is real on the basis of and in the event of reconciliation alone. And Barth would eventually explicate this fact by elaborating a Christology which entails a *participatio entis*.

1.3.3. *Analogy of Being (1942-1968)*

At the beginning of this chapter we saw that some scholars in the field of theological aesthetics today are suspicious that even Barth's mature theology may surreptitiously be a form of theopanism. In order to complete our response then we must now briefly show that this fear too is unfounded. We have seen that by the end of the 1920's Barth, deeply impressed by Przywara's *analogia entis*, had made plans to demonstrate that his own *analogia fidei* constitutes a distinctive and superior form of analogy of being - one which is established in the event of reconciliation rather than creation – by elaborating a Christology which implies it. In this section, drawing especially on the work of Keith Johnson and Bruce McCormack, we will now argue that Barth's attendance at a conference in the mid-1930s sparked a complete reformulation of his doctrine of election which, in turn, at last laid the groundwork for him to elaborate this conception.

Barth's participation at the 'Congrès international théologie calviniste' in Geneva in June 1936 would profoundly alter the form of his theology thereafter.³⁰¹ The conference, which took as its theme Calvin's doctrine of election, was to ultimately lead him for the first time to make Christology the noetic basis of his doctrine of election. Prior to the

²⁹⁹ Barth, *GD*, 113, 120, 144; Barth, *CDI/1*, 410, 412; Barth, *CDI/2*, 37, etc.

³⁰⁰ Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 181, 191-230; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 114-117; 137-139.

³⁰¹ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 455.

conference Barth had held an actualistic concept of divine election in which he identified God's eternal Yes and No - His primal election and reprobation - with the unveiling and veiling of the Word of God in the Church's proclamation in time.³⁰² During conference proceedings Barth's brother Peter Barth presented a paper proposing a similar view as a corrective to Calvin's doctrine of election. It provoked fierce criticism which ultimately opened Barth's eyes to a fundamental defect in the view for the very first time.³⁰³ As Barth puts it, he came to realise that the concept makes God's acts in human history a 'mere game': a series of random events with no overarching goal.³⁰⁴ Almost immediately, however, Barth encountered a promising corrective in a paper presented by Pierre Maury entitled 'Election and Faith'.³⁰⁵ Maury's central thesis was that we must not understand the doctrine of election in abstraction from its realisation in time in the person of Jesus Christ. 'Outside of Christ, we know neither of the electing God, nor of His elect, nor of the act of election'.³⁰⁶ Especially, he proposed, we should take Jesus Christ as the primary object of the divine double predestination: both the reprobate and elect one. In Maury's view one of the benefits of doing so is that it would allow us to conceive that in Jesus Christ God in fact elects all human beings for fellowship with himself.³⁰⁷ Barth recognised the great promise inherent in the concept. If his own concept of election was, like this, to be reconceived from a basis in Christology then this would unify all of God's acts in history in the service of a single purpose: God's gracious eternal 'Yes' to

³⁰² Barth, *GD*, 453-456; Barth, *CDI/1*, 159-162; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 456.

³⁰³ K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics Volume II/2: The Doctrine of God*, ed. G. Bromiley and T. Torrance, tr. G. Bromiley et al. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 188-189. Hereafter, *CDII/2*. McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 455-456.

³⁰⁴ Barth, *CDII/2*, 190; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 456.

³⁰⁵ P. Maury, *Erwählung Und Glaube* (Zurich: EVZ, 1940).

³⁰⁶ Maury, 7; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 457.

³⁰⁷ Maury, 12-13, 17; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 457. More recently Matthias Gockel has shown that in fact, to be more precise, although Maury's lecture explicitly identifies Jesus Christ as the object of election he at most implies that he is also the object of reprobation. However Charlotte von Kirschbaum and Karl Barth read the latter into it. See M. Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election: A Systematic-Theological Comparison* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 162 n. 14.

humanity.³⁰⁸

Within months Barth had already attempted a rudimentary integration of Maury's insight during lectures in Hungary and with the publication of *Church Dogmatics II/2* (1942) the comprehensive reform of his doctrine of election was at last complete.³⁰⁹ Like Maury Barth now makes Christology, the Church's confession of the covenant of grace which is established in the God-human Jesus Christ, the realisation in time and hence noetic basis of God's eternal election.³¹⁰ For Barth this simple innovation has two specific implications since the person of Jesus Christ is both divine and human and election logically entails both a subject and an object of election.³¹¹ In the first place it means that Jesus Christ is the electing and elected God.³¹² By this Barth means that the Son of God in eternity, who although *asarkos* is already determined for enfleshment ('*incarnandus*'), is elected by the Father to be in covenant relationship with humanity.³¹³ '[E]ven as God He is elected; the elected of His Father'.³¹⁴ And in the unity of the Holy Spirit He elects His election.³¹⁵ Jesus Christ is then the realisation or taking form of this self-same elected and electing Son of God in time. In the second place it means that Jesus Christ is also the elected and electing human. The human Jesus Christ is elected by the Son of God in unity with the Father to be in covenant fellowship with God. And he too responds by freely electing this election.³¹⁶

'[W]hen we utter the name of Jesus Christ we really do speak the first and final word not only about the electing God but also about the elected man'.³¹⁷

³⁰⁸ Barth, *CDII/2*, 191-192; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 456.

³⁰⁹ For the former see K. Barth, 'Gottes Gnadenwahl!', in *Theologische Existenz heute!* (Zurich: EVZ, 1936).

³¹⁰ Barth, *CDII/2*, 3, 51-76, 99-103.

³¹¹ Barth, *CDII/2*, 103.

³¹² Barth, *CDII/2*, 103.

³¹³ Barth, *CDII/2*, 101-103.

³¹⁴ Barth, *CDII/2*, 103.

³¹⁵ Barth, *CDII/2*, 101-116.

³¹⁶ Barth, *CDII/2*, 103.

³¹⁷ Barth, *CDII/2*, 76.

Barth's decision to make Christology the noetic basis of election, although originally calculated to address a relatively discrete problem with his doctrine of election, ultimately had consequences for the entire form of his theology. As McCormack has demonstrated, it meant that now for the first time Barth's theology became truly Christocentric: for the first time Christology became the noetic and ontic basis of divine and human ontology and thereby controlling for all doctrines.³¹⁸ Previously Barth's concept of divine revelation as the veiling and unveiling Word of God in Jesus Christ, Scripture and Church proclamation had been the focus of his attention and hence the noetic basis of all his doctrines. Barth's single ambition during the first half of his career, as we have seen, was to construct a viable alternative theological epistemology. And so all of his doctrines – including his Christology and doctrine of the Trinity – were made instrumental to his concept of the Word of God: they were derived from it purely in order to substantiate it. Barth's Christology in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* and *Church Dogmatics I/2*, for instance, was almost completely preoccupied with elaborating the *anhypostatic-enhypostatic* human nature of Jesus Christ because its sole purpose was to substantiate the dialectic of veiling and unveiling of the Word of God.³¹⁹ By making Christology the realisation in time of God's primal will regarding divine and human being and their relationship – a will which is both the basis of all His acts in history from creation onwards and hence the ultimate *telos* of them all – Barth for the first time consequently makes the divine election and therefore Christology the noetic and ontic basis of divine and human ontology.³²⁰

³¹⁸ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 121-123; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 454, 460-463.

³¹⁹ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 112-115.

³²⁰ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 454, 460-463; McCormack, *Grace and Being*, 183-200; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 121-123. I am thus agreeing with McCormack over Hunsinger on the relation of the Trinity and divine election. Hunsinger and McCormack agree that after 1942 Barth continues his previous view of the chronological relationship between God's triune Being and His divine decree: he believes they are both eternal and hence simultaneous. However they disagree over whether Barth changes his view on their ontological order. Whereas Hunsinger believes that Barth continues to assume that God's triune Being has ontological priority over His divine decree so that His self-election is merely an affirmation of this,

The being of God is His [i.e. Jesus Christ's] being, and similarly the being of man is originally His being.³²¹

What is more, Barth's Christological reformulation of divine election, his concept that Jesus Christ is the historical realisation of the elected and electing God and elected and electing human, already implies a divine and human ontology in which there is a distinctive form of analogy of being, although it would take some years before Barth would completely explicate it. As we have seen this concept implies that in eternity the Son of God, determined for enfleshment, freely elects His election by the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit to be in covenant relationship with humanity. This then takes form in time as the self-same Son of God in His earthly mission freely elects His election

McCormack claims that Barth now gives God's election ontological priority over His triune Being so that His decision to be God for us is also a decision to assign Himself His eternal triune being. In my judgment McCormack's view is right. However I also accept Kevin Hector's modest correction to it. I believe that although Barth now gives ontological priority to God's decree over His triune being he nonetheless continues to assume the latter has logical priority over the former so that although God's decision to be God for us is a decision to give Himself His eternal triune being He never speaks of the former in abstraction from its triune subject. See, Hunsinger, *Election and Trinity*, 103; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 120-135; McCormack, *Election and Trinity*, 116-119, 122-125, 136-137; K. Hector, 'God's Triunity and Self-Determination: A Conversation with Karl Barth, Bruce McCormack, and Paul Molnar', in M. Dempsey (ed), *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 42-43, 46. Assuming this element of McCormack's interpretation of Barth may appear to unwittingly make my argument vulnerable to a related, though different, charge. Paul Molnar insists that McCormack's belief that Barth makes God's eternal election to be a God with us the ontological basis of His eternal triune being ultimately compromises not the freedom of humanity but rather of God. It relates God's immanent triune being so comprehensively to the economy of grace and hence creation that the latter becomes necessary to it and so not only does God depend upon it to be who He is but He cannot be God without it either. Although Molnar never himself draws the conclusion this too would inevitably make the covenant of grace a form of identity between God and humanity albeit an 'anthropopanism' rather than theopanism. Since Molnar's charge is not only complex but falls outside of the range of criticisms we are responding to in this chapter we cannot attempt to address it here. However Bruce McCormack and Kevin Hector have themselves provided more than adequate responses to it. Especially they have shown that in fact Barth's reformulated concept of election at most implies that the creation is not absolutely but 'contingently necessary' to God in view of the fact that He has *freely chosen* to make Himself dependent upon it and that this is entirely consistent with Barth's theological definition of God's freedom as a freedom to love. Remarkably, although Molnar has subsequently attempted to account for their explanation his criticisms are repeated by Stephen D. Long in his recent book without so much as an acknowledgment of it. See especially, Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, 58-64; Molnar, *Electing God*, 69-70, 74, 85; Molnar, *Response to Hector*, 47-48, 51, 53, 55, 57; Long, *Saving*, 148; B. McCormack, 'Seek God Where He May Be Found: A Response to Edwin Chr. van Driel', in *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 267-269; McCormack, *Response to Molnar*, 63-64; Hector, 35-37, 40-42, 46.

³²¹ Barth, *CDII/2*, 94.

by the Father to be in unity with humanity. Finally, it implies that the human Jesus Christ, in a mirror-image of this act, freely elects His election by the Son of God in unity with the Father to be in covenant fellowship with God.³²² Now there is an obvious similarity between the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ here. But it is not their being *per se*. Barth's Chalcedonian-influenced Christology continues to assume that the divine and human being of Jesus Christ are without confusion and hence qualitatively distinct.³²³ Rather the point of contact is, more precisely, a free act which they both carry out – the act of electing election – in which both receive their true being-for-others.³²⁴ Despite the similarity of this divine and human act, however, there are also significant differences between them. Since the Son of God is of the same divine essence as the Father then His election of the Father's election is a free act in which He *gives Himself* His true being-for-others. By contrast, because the human Jesus Christ has a human essence which is qualitatively distinct from the divine essence of the Son of God, then His election of the Son of God's election is a free act in which He *receives* His true being-for-others. The relation between the divine and human acts is, therefore, not univocal but analogical: it is a relation of similarity-within-difference. Moreover, because these acts are constitutive for true divine and human being this is, more precisely, an analogy of being.³²⁵

Although, as Johnson and McCormack have demonstrated in detail, Barth had already begun to unfold this distinctive analogy of being implied by his Christological reformulation of election in his *analogia relationis* of *Church Dogmatics III/1&2* (1945), perhaps unsurprisingly it was not until he completed his mature Christology in *Church*

³²² McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 121-123.

³²³ Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 214-215.

³²⁴ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 121, 123.

³²⁵ McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 121-123.

Dogmatics IV (1953-1968) that it attained its final and definitive form.³²⁶ Barth's comprehensive account of the person and work of Jesus Christ in these volumes is organised according to the traditional doctrine of the *munus triplex*. From the outset Barth presupposes his earlier dogmatic innovation: he understands his mature Christology to be an account of the realisation in time of the original divine-human relation willed by God from eternity which all of His acts in history – creation included – have hitherto been moving towards.³²⁷ Barth commences, in *Church Dogmatics IV/1*, by describing the priestly work of Jesus Christ: an above-to-below movement in which God justifies human being. Barth presumes, of course, that although God's eternal desire is to share His divine life with human being, not only was this destiny never simply realised at creation but humans have, moreover, disqualified themselves from it through sinful rebellion against Him. As such it can only be realised by an act of God to reconcile humanity to Himself.³²⁸ Barth believes that the confession of the Christian Church on the basis of Scripture is that this is accomplished in Jesus Christ in the first place because in Him the Son of God, in an act of free obedience to the will of the Father, lowers or humbles himself to assume human being and therewith the entire consequences of its sin.³²⁹ Here for the first time Barth explicitly acknowledges that Christology is determinative for the divine being. Barth claims that if this is true of the Son of God in time then it must also be true of the Son of God in eternity as well: He too must freely obey the will of the Father by humbling himself for humanity in some fashion, presumably by electing to be in covenant relationship with them, although Barth does not specify.³³⁰ Barth recognises that this is

³²⁶ Johnson, *Karl Barth and the Analogia Entis*, 213-218, 218-230; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 135-139, 139-144.

³²⁷ Barth, *CDIV/1*, 7-10; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 219-220.

³²⁸ Barth, *CDIV/1*, 10-12; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 221.

³²⁹ Barth, *CDIV/1*, 159-176; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 221.

³³⁰ Barth, *CDIV/1*, 176-178, 192-210; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 220; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 140-141, 143.

a controversial claim.³³¹ However he insists that it does not imperil the equality of the Trinity since obedience does not necessitate inferiority.³³² Nor does it endanger their unity provided that it is remembered that the triune unity is not a solitariness but a unity-in-plurality and is hence best understood as a dynamic unfolding history of relations between the Father and the Son whose fellowship is preserved by the Holy Spirit.³³³

In *Church Dogmatics IV/2* Barth then supplements this account of the priestly work of Jesus Christ with a description of His royal work: a below-to-above movement in which human being is sanctified. Barth believes that the Son of God's justification of humanity also lays the basis for its sanctification. Precisely because in Jesus Christ the Son of God perfectly obeys the will of the Father by assuming human being and suffering its death in order to justify it, He becomes the faithful covenant partner of God. Moreover, because He offers this perfect obedience in union with humanity then, conversely, in Him humanity is exalted to share in the same dignity. In other words it too becomes the covenant partner of God: one who perfectly obeys the will of the Father by being-for-humanity and is therefore the image of God.³³⁴ The history of Jesus Christ is thus the 'history of the placing of the humanity common to him and us on a higher level'.³³⁵ This conception means that Barth now explicitly acknowledges that Christology is also constitutive for human being as well.³³⁶

³³¹ Barth, *CDIV/1*, 195.

³³² Barth, *CDIV/1*, 202.

³³³ Barth, *CDIV/1*, 202-204; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 141-142. For ongoing debate about whether Barth's concept compromises divine unity and equality see, T. White, 'Intra-Trinitarian Obedience and Nicene-Chalcedonian Christology', *Nova et Vetera*, 6/2 (2008), 377-402; T. White, 'Classical Christology After Schleiermacher and Barth: A Thomist Perspective', *Pro Ecclesia*, 20/3 (2011), 244-248; K. Johnson, 'When Nature Presupposes Grace: A Response to Thomas Joseph White, O.P.', *Pro Ecclesia*, 20/3 (2011), 264-282; T. White, 'On Christian Philosophy and Divine Obedience: A Response to Keith L. Johnson', *Pro Ecclesia*, 20/3 (2011), 283-289.

³³⁴ Barth, *CDIV/2*, 20-31; Johnson, *Analogue Entis*, 221-222.

³³⁵ Barth, *CDIV/2*, 28.

³³⁶ Barth, *CDIV/1*, 92; Johnson, *Analogue Entis*, 220.

In *Church Dogmatics IV/3.1* Barth finally adds an explanation of the prophetic work of Jesus Christ. Barth contends that Jesus Christ is not only the accomplishment of reconciliation – the justification and sanctification of human being – but also the revelation or proclamation of this good news to the world as well.³³⁷ And so by the Holy Spirit He sovereignly summons human beings to share in His work of being-for the world by proclaiming the work of reconciliation to it as well.³³⁸ Barth consequently believes that when human beings, through the enabling of this same Spirit, freely know and obey this good news by being free-for the world by proclaiming the gospel to it then they not only correspond to and participate in their true human being in Jesus Christ but thereby they likewise become the image and likeness of the eternal Son of God as well.³³⁹

Having now demonstrated that Barth did finally fulfil his ambition, first awakened through the profound impression left upon him by Przywara's *analogia entis* in the late 1920s, to develop his *analogia fidei* into his own distinctive form of analogy of being, we must now point out the tremendous significance of this development. It means that, contrary to Przywara's claim, Barth never simply rejected the long metaphysical and theological tradition of the *analogia entis* which Przywara understood himself to be heir to. But rather, having encountered it through Przywara, he developed or transformed it. Barth's analogy of being, as we have seen, integrates many of the fundamental features of Przywara's own. At heart it conceptualises a correspondence – a relation of similarity-

³³⁷ K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/3.1: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, ed. G. Bromiley and T. Torrance, tr. G. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 3, 38, 46. Hereafter, *CDIV/3.1*. Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 223-224.

³³⁸ K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/3.2: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, ed. G. Bromiley and T. Torrance, tr. G. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 606. Hereafter, *CDIV/3.2*. Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 223-224.

³³⁹ Barth, *CDIV/3.2*, 532-533 Barth, *CDIV/2*, 452; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 223-225; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 143-144.

within-difference – between divine and human being. Moreover it contends that this is realised, at least in part, through a below-to-above movement of humanity to God.³⁴⁰ However, Barth completely transforms these elements above all to make them consistent with the Lutheran doctrines of *sola gratia* and *simul iustus et peccator*.³⁴¹ In Barth's conception, as we have seen, the point of similarity or correspondence is not being *per se* but an act which constitutes the divine and human being.³⁴² The relation or correspondence between the divine and human being-in-act is, moreover, realised not in the event of creation but reconciliation and therefore properly speaking in the person of Jesus Christ.³⁴³ Although this occurs through a below-to-above movement of humanity to God this, in turn, has a properly theological basis: it is only possible because of an above-to-below movement of the Son of God to justify humanity. Finally, because the relation of correspondence is only established by divine reconciliation in Jesus Christ it is a relation which fallen humanity shares in not permanently but only in the form of an event: when the Son of God acts to proclaim the good news of His reconciliation of the world through the humanity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit enables humans to know and obey this by being-for others.³⁴⁴

We can see that Barth's mature form of analogy is once again by no means a form of 'theopanism'. In fact by making Jesus Christ the realisation in time of divine election God's sovereign eternal decree now effectively becomes the ontological basis for – and underwrites – each element of the divine-human relation which Barth has been developing since the earliest stages of his career.

³⁴⁰ Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 220-221.

³⁴¹ Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 222-223.

³⁴² Barth, *CDIV/3.2*, 597; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 225, 228; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 143.

³⁴³ Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 222-223.

³⁴⁴ Barth, *CDIV/3.2*, 533; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 225; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 143.

In the first place Barth's mature form of theology does not conceptualise the divine being and activity as opposed to human being and activity. On the contrary, it now makes God's eternal election the ontological basis or guarantor of the distinctly theological concept of deity as a unity of freedom and love which Barth has been developing since his Tambach lecture. In Tambach (1919) as we have seen, even before Barth had encountered Przywara's claims of inhumane transcendentalism, he extrapolated from the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ a definition of the divine being and activity as a unity of transcendence and immanence. In the *Göttingen Dogmatics* (1924) and following, with Przywara's charge now ringing in his ears, Barth developed this conception even further in the same direction. Defining the triune being from the Word of God, Barth proposed that God is, in eternity and time and in all His perfections, like Augustine's God both 'above' and 'in' us, most basically a unity of 'freedom' and 'love', and consequently the very basis of relationality itself. Barth's decision from *Church Dogmatics II/2* (1942) onwards to make the God-human Jesus Christ the historical realisation of God's eternal will now means, as Barth himself recognises, that God in His freedom has in fact eternally chosen to limit His divine being and activity to be what it is in Jesus Christ, namely, being and activity which is in covenant relationship with human being and activity. In short, the reformulation means that God's eternal decree is now the ontological basis of – and therefore the guarantor that – God's being is a unity of freedom and love³⁴⁵.

In the second place Barth's mature form of theology like its predecessors does not

³⁴⁵ This complements the analysis of Kenneth Oakes which demonstrates that, also contra Przywara's claim that nature is opposed to grace for Barth, in fact Barth's reformulated supralapsarian concept of election means that he now understands creation to be secretly orientated to and hence in a real sense prepared for the establishment of the covenant of grace. See K. Oakes, 'The Question of Nature and Grace in Karl Barth: Humanity as Creature and as Covenant Partner', *Modern Theology*, 23/4 (2007), 595-616; K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/1: The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. G. Bromiley and T. Torrance, tr. J. Edwards et al. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), 94-97, 228-232. Hereafter, *CDIII/1*.

presume the doctrine of divine *Alleinwirksamkeit*. Instead it further enhances the involvement of objective and subjective human activity in the establishment of the divine-human relation in two final ways. From the outset of his career, as we have seen, although Barth rejected the concept of indeterminate or absolute human freedom held by his Protestant Liberal and Religious Socialist peers, he nevertheless believed that God establishes a relationship with humanity not unilaterally but bilaterally, by means of two forms of definite or circumscribed human activity: objectively, the human life and death of Jesus Christ and, subjectively, an act of fallen human cognition. In the years which followed he continued to develop these concepts of objective and subjective human being above all by emphasising that they were active rather than passive in character. In Barth's mature concept of analogy he now enriches these concepts even further. In the first place he now definitively secures their involvement in the establishment of the divine-human relation by giving them an ontological basis in God's eternal election.³⁴⁶ As we have seen, Barth maintains that God's eternal will is realised in time by the free obedience of the human Jesus Christ to the will of the Father in which He loves His fellow humanity by proclaiming the gospel to them and thereby becomes the true covenant partner and image of God. This, however, has two implications. It means that the Son of God reveals His divine being – His eternal freedom for humanity – only through the objective human form of Jesus Christ's own freedom for humanity. Moreover it means that humans can only participate in covenant relationship with and likeness to God through the subjective form of their own corresponding act of obedience or freedom for their fellow humanity. In sum, then, '[t]he fulfilment of the election involves the affirmation of the existence of elected man... There is... a simple but comprehensive autonomy of the creature which

³⁴⁶ For a similar point see Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 49-50, 59-63.

is constituted originally by the act of eternal divine election and which has in this act its ultimate reality'.³⁴⁷ In the second place Barth's concept that God's eternal will is realised in a human act of obedient proclamation of the gospel to the world implies that this human activity is now God's chosen and valued - though of course not necessary - partner in His mission to establish the covenant of grace with the world.³⁴⁸

Since Barth's mature form of analogy assumes neither a metaphysical dialectic between divine and human being nor consequently that the relation between them simply entails divine sole causality, then this form of analogy is not a kind of theopanism or direct identity between God and humanity either. In this conception instead Barth now also provides a final definitive safeguard for a relation of indirect identity or analogy between them. We have seen that from the beginning of his career Barth had, with mixed success early on, attempted to convey that the relation between God and humanity which is realised in the Christian life has the form of an indirect identity or analogy. In Barth's mature account of this relation he now anchors this conception by giving it an ontological basis in God's eternal election in Christ. He contends that God's eternal will is realised in the person of Jesus Christ. However Barth's mature Christology, as we have seen, remains faithful to the fundamental theological values of the Chalcedonian formula by conceiving that the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ are without confusion and hence

³⁴⁷ Barth, *CDII/2*, 177-178; Barth, *CDIV/2*, 800.

³⁴⁸ Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 228. These two points should also forestall a potential counter-objection which Betz briefly entertains. He warns that if Barth's mature theology does in fact assume that God's eternal election to be God for us is the ontological basis of His own eternal triune being as McCormack claims then human history would inevitably be reduced to 'a function of God's own "history" and inner life' and hence evacuated of its freedom and so Barth would remain culpable of Przywara's charge of theopanism. It is telling that Betz is the only one to entertain such an objection. As we have seen the vast majority of criticisms of Barth's reformulated doctrine of election have worried that it does precisely the opposite, namely, compromise God's freedom. But in any case as we have just demonstrated Barth's reformulated doctrine of election has precisely the opposite effect than Betz imagines: it definitively secures human freedom in relationship with God in several ways for the first time. Betz, *After Barth*, 57-58 n. 74.

‘only indirectly and not directly identical’. Therefore it is impossible ‘that His manhood is as it were swallowed up or extinguished by Godhead’³⁴⁹. Barth’s mature form of analogy, like its predecessors, continues to presume that in fact the reconciliation of humanity to God is only accomplished by means of a double mediation of the divine being and activity by human being and activity. The Son of God’s eternal act of obeying the Father by loving humanity is only disclosed to humans through Jesus Christ’s human act of obedience to the Father by loving humanity in which He is the true human image of God. Here the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ are ‘indirectly’ rather than directly identical.³⁵⁰ Humans then only participate in this human likeness to God through their own corresponding act of obedient love for their fellow humanity. Here, too, according to Barth the humanity of Jesus Christ and the humanity of the Christian are only indirectly rather than directly identical.³⁵¹ Because his mature form of theology thus attempts to preserve and even elevate the dignity of a limited or creaturely form of human freedom in Christian faith Barth himself is now impatient with claims that he advocates ‘theopanism’.

‘It is apparent at once that the formula ‘God everything and man nothing’ as a description of grace is not merely a ‘shocking oversimplification’ but complete nonsense... [I]n reconciling the world to himself in Christ, God is indeed everything but only in order that man may not be nothing, but rather, that he may be God’s man, and as such that he may – in his own place, on his own level and within his own limitation, be everything’.³⁵²

Finally, we must point out that Barth’s mature form of analogy not only transcends Przywara’s polemical interpretation of his theology but it now at last also offers a

³⁴⁹ Barth, *CDIII/2*, 207-208, 219; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 213-214; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 116, 143; McCormack, *Barth’s Historicized Christology*, 213-229. Although these quotes relate to Barth’s *analogia relationis* as we have said this in itself was the rudimentary outworking of his mature Christology and form of analogy.

³⁵⁰ Barth, *CDIII/2*, 219-220; Barth, *CDIV/1*, 203-204, 208-209.

³⁵¹ Barth, *CDIV/2*, 28-31; Barth, *CDIII/2*, 47-49.

³⁵² Barth, *CDIV/1*, 89.

resolution to the very historical anxiety which gave rise to it in the first place. We will remember that Przywara's entire *raison d'être* was a missionary one.³⁵³ Confronted with the seemingly intractable dialectic of aggressively secular modern German State and isolationist antimodern German Catholic Church in early twentieth century Germany he sought, above all by means of the *analogia entis*, to lay a firm theoretical foundation upon which the German Catholic Church could again realise its mission to engage modern culture with the Christian gospel. It was above all because he feared that Barth's theology would thwart that ambition, founding a renewed cultural retreat, that he conceived his polemical interpretation of it in the first place.³⁵⁴ However, as we have seen and as Johnson has demonstrated in more detail, Przywara's anxiety was ultimately unfounded: Barth's mature form of theology at least does not in fact provide theoretical grounds for cultural retreat but rather engagement. For it maintains, as we have seen, that the Church can only realise its true nature – it can only be the redeemed and true humanity – when like Jesus Christ it obediently serves humanity by engaging the world with the Christian gospel.³⁵⁵

1.4. Conclusion

Przywara's interpretation of the form of Barth's theology, through the mediation of von Balthasar, continues to captivate the imagination of those working in the field of theological aesthetics today, blinding them to the possibility that Barth could articulate an *analogia pulchritudinis*. Motivated by a fear that Barth's theology would pioneer a renewed retreat of the Church from modern culture which would undermine his own ambitions for its reform, Przywara unleashed a battery of interrelated charges against

³⁵³ See section 1.2 of this chapter.

³⁵⁴ See section 1.2 of this chapter.

³⁵⁵ Barth, *CDIV/1*, 650-651; Barth, *CDIV/3.2*, 650-652, 780; Johnson, *Analogia Entis*, 228-230.

Barth's theology. He claims that Barth, like Luther, rejects the traditional metaphysical and theological concept of the *analogia entis*. He consequently must assume a metaphysical dialectic between God and humanity which, in turn, means that divine-human relations simply entail divine action alone. As such Barth's analogy of faith is a thinly disguised form of theopanism or identity-philosophy. We have, however, given reason to think that this is a caricature which fits awkwardly with Barth's theology. Barth never simply rejected the concept of the *analogia entis* but through Przywara's mediation developed it to make it consistent with his own Protestant convictions. His early eternity-time dialectic certainly appears metaphysical but is actually soteriological in nature. Not only did Barth quickly dispense with it but from the very beginning of his career he was crafting a distinctly theological conception of divine being and activity as free to love - to embrace and uphold - human being and activity. Although Barth's overarching ambition was to craft a distinctly theological basis for the divine-human relation which would be consistent with *sola gratia*, for Barth divine omnicausality never meant sole causality: from the outset of his career he gave an increasing role to a determinate form of human activity in the establishment of this relation, both objectively and subjectively, one which avoided the Scylla of Cartesian indeterminate human freedom and the Charybdis of hyper-Calvinist fatalism. Barth consequently always understood the relation of God and humanity realised in the event of reconciliation to be an indirect identity or analogy.

But not only was Przywara's caricature of the form of Barth's theology unfounded, so too ultimately was the fear which first motivated it: Barth's mature concept of analogy at least provides theoretical grounds for cultural engagement not retreat. Having given grounds for trusting the integrity of Barth's concept of analogy between God and redeemed

humanity we must now press on a step further and show that in fact throughout his career he consistently accepts that the world beyond the bounds of the redeemed community may participate in this relation as well.

Chapter 2: Barth's Concept of Natural Revelation (1919-1968)

2.1. Introduction

The belief that God bears witness to Himself not merely by means of His redemptive intervention in history culminating in Jesus Christ but through the existing order of creation as well has of course long been a staple of the Christian faith. The ancient psalmists already assumed that although God reveals Himself through the Law to Israel '[t]he heavens declare the glory of God' throughout the earth (Psalm 19). More specifically they believed that the order of creation attests the wisdom and power of its Creator and its governance proclaims His goodness (Psalm 104).³⁵⁶ The Apostle Paul would later add that since human conscience also communicates His moral will to humanity both Jews and Gentiles alike are 'without excuse' for their failure to know and obey Him (Romans 1:18-20; 2:12-15).³⁵⁷ By the time of Augustine of Hippo this general conviction was increasingly expressed in the familiar metaphor that God publishes knowledge of Himself in the two 'books' (*libri*) of Scripture and nature.³⁵⁸ And in the hands of John Calvin and his heirs at least the former came to be construed more typically as the 'spectacles' necessary to perceive and interpret the latter.³⁵⁹

It is therefore remarkable that many today imagine that Karl Barth simply rejects this longstanding Christian conviction *tout court*. Even seasoned theologians often make this

³⁵⁶ J. Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology: The Gifford Lectures for 1991* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), 84-85, 87.

³⁵⁷ Christopher Rowland, 'Natural Theology and the Christian Bible', in R. Re Manning (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 26-27.

³⁵⁸ Augustine, 'Creation is a Great Book (Sermon, Mai 126, 6)', in *The Essential Augustine*, ed. and tr. V. Bourke (2nd edn, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1974), 123; A. Hall, 'Natural Theology in the Middle Ages', in R. Re Manning (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 59, 69-70.

³⁵⁹ J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. H. Beveridge (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2008), I.4.1; R. Re Manning, 'Protestant Perspectives on Natural Theology', in R. Re Manning (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 201-202.

assumption apparently on the basis of popular stereotypes of Barth's theology.³⁶⁰ No less than the former course director of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, Rodney Holder, for instance, alleges that 'Barth's starting point is his desire to deny all knowledge of God apart from God's own gracious revelation of himself... in Christ'.³⁶¹

In this chapter we must now correct this popular misunderstanding of Barth. For, as we have seen, Balthasar's suspicion about the integrity of Barth's concept of analogy has led many in theological aesthetics to assume that Barth was not capable of professing an analogy of divine and worldly beauty. In our attempt to overcome this belief so far we have provided reassurance about the fundamental coherence of Barth's analogy between God and redeemed humanity. But in order to complete our argument we must now take the further step of showing that in fact Barth permits the world *extra muros ecclesiae* to participate in this relation as well and so he could in principle hold an analogy of divine and worldly beauty.

In this chapter then we will argue that, contrary to popular belief, Barth does not reject the traditional Christian concept of natural revelation *per se*. Instead throughout his career Barth simply rejects one form of it, namely, an 'independent' concept of *revelatio naturalis*. But even as he does he nevertheless consistently accepts another, specifically, a 'dependent' form of natural revelation. As shall soon become clear these are the terms that Barth himself prefers to describe his perspective on the matter.

³⁶⁰ G. Hunsinger, 'The Yes Hidden in Barth's No to Brunner: The First Commandment as a Theological Axiom', in *Evangelical, Catholic and Reformed: Essays on Barth and Other Themes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 52; G. Hunsinger, 'Secular Parables of Truth', in *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), 235; J. McDowell, 'A Response to Rodney Holder on Barth and Natural Theology', *Themelios*, 27/2 (2002), 40.

³⁶¹ R. Holder, 'Karl Barth and the Legitimacy of Natural Theology', *Themelios*, 26/3 (2001), 24, 34. This interpretation is also entertained in Barr, 124. For a criticism of this point and others in Holder's interpretation of Barth on natural revelation see McDowell, 32-44.

But it is important that we make clear from the outset that these are claims about Barth's view of natural revelation and not natural theology. Natural revelation as we have suggested is just the belief that God reveals Himself by means of various aspects of the created order such as its order, history and human conscience.³⁶² Natural theology often presupposes such an idea but is by contrast the belief that God may be known to some degree on the basis of natural human powers alone.³⁶³ While Barth consistently accepted a version of the former he never wavered in his opposition to the latter and he consequently also laboured to distinguish his view from it³⁶⁴, although this point has seldom been recognised in scholarship on his theology.³⁶⁵

In this chapter we will substantiate our claims by giving an overview of the development of the major tenets of Barth's view of natural revelation. This will both consolidate and extend the insights of existing secondary studies above all by developing an analysis of this theme of Barth's theology of unprecedented scope. And because Barth's rejection of natural revelation is the more familiar of these two claims it is to this which we shall turn first.

³⁶² W. Abraham, 'Revelation', in I. McFarland (ed), *Cambridge Dictionary of Theology* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 445.

³⁶³ For a helpful overview of the major historical definitions of natural theology see A. McGrath, *Re-Imagining Nature: The Promise of a Christian Natural Theology* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 14-24.

³⁶⁴ See for instance Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 117-118.

³⁶⁵ Two notable exceptions are Hunsinger, *Secular Parables*, 255 and McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 306 n. 51. The failure to recognise this distinction has contributed to the claim by some scholars that late in his career Barth changed his mind and accepted a form of natural theology. See for example, R. Anderson, 'Barth and a New Direction for Natural Theology', in J. Thompson (ed), *Theology Beyond Christendom* (Eugene: Pickwick, 1986), 241-266; Barr, 13-14, 133-134.

2.2. *Barth's Rejection of Independent Natural Revelation*

There is good reason why many today might suppose that Barth simply rejects the traditional Christian concept of natural revelation altogether. In the anglophone world at least Barth is still perhaps most famous for his transcendentalism and christocentrism. To most he is the theologian who insists there is an infinite qualitative distinction between Creator and creature yet concedes the Word of God reveals itself actualistically through the three forms of Jesus Christ, Scripture and preaching.³⁶⁶ These convictions seem to *ipso facto* rule out the possibility that God reveals Himself through the locus of nature as well.³⁶⁷ And Barth's infamous rejection of natural theology only seems to confirm that this is what he believes. But as we have suggested Barth is not actually opposed to the concept of natural revelation *per se* but merely one popular form of it. He rejects those views of natural revelation which conceive that it is completely independent of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. In other words, those which assume that nature's testimony to God has another power or source than God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ and a different content to it as well and so could in principle exist alongside it as a secondary source of revelation. Barth persistently opposed such a view of natural revelation throughout his career. He varied mostly just in how explicitly he stated this stance and how consistent his own theology was with it. As we are about to see although he first directly acknowledged this view in the first volume of his *Göttingen Dogmatics* (1924) it was not until his reformulation of the doctrine of election (1942) that his theology finally lived up to it.

Barth does not directly say that he rejects independent forms of natural revelation in his

³⁶⁶ D. Densil Morgan, *Barth Reception in Britain* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2010), 173-175, 280.

³⁶⁷ This inference is drawn, for instance, by Holder, 24, 34; Barr, 124; J. Bowden, *Karl Barth* (London: SCM, 1971), 106, 111.

early publications (1919-1924). However few would deny that these works clearly imply such a view. In our last chapter we saw for ourselves that Barth's overwhelming ambition in these early writings is to comprehensively eliminate any anthropological basis for knowledge of God, any grounds upon which humans could know God simply by their own initiative, in order to establish a truly theological basis for knowledge of God, a recognition that we may know Him only by His own self-revelation to us. The chief tool which Barth uses to achieve this is an increasingly radical eternity-time dialectic which gradually strips history of any inherent eternal significance. In his *Tambach* lecture (1919), for instance, Barth already insists that eternity and time are in such 'thoroughgoing opposition' that they 'have no connection' to each other at all.³⁶⁸ But fearing that the former may still be mistaken as the ground of the latter in the second edition of *Der Römerbrief* (1922) he construes it even more radically as the unintuitable future or 'beyond' of the whole temporal realm.³⁶⁹ The most relevant consequence of this soteriological configuration to Barth at this stage is illustrated vividly by his notion that God may only be known in the death of Jesus of Nazareth. In other words religion, the attempt to know God by human works, is futile.³⁷⁰ However it obviously excludes any possibility of the created order autonomously revealing God as well.³⁷¹ And there are moments when Barth himself comes close to acknowledging that this is what he believes. At one point for instance, perhaps thinking of the traditional belief that natural revelation is a testimony to God in nature, history and conscience, he insists that 'the power of God can be detected neither in the world or nature nor in the souls of men'.³⁷²

³⁶⁸ Barth, *CPS*, 275-281.

³⁶⁹ Barth, *Römerbrief*, 118, 213, 342.

³⁷⁰ Barth, *Römerbrief*, 5-6, 132, 136, 185, 204.

³⁷¹ Alister McGrath draws a similar conclusion. See A. McGrath, *Emil Brunner: A Reappraisal* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 61.

³⁷² Barth, *Römerbrief*, 36-37 cf. Barth, *GD*, 91.

But by the time of his *Göttingen Dogmatics* (1924) any remaining ambiguity about Barth's position on natural revelation had all but disappeared. As we saw in our last chapter in late 1921 Barth commenced his first chair in theology at the University of Göttingen. But this drastic change in responsibility from merely denouncing a prevailing theological epistemology to teaching systematic theology now brought him into contact with the traditional Christian concept of *revelatio naturalis* for the first time.³⁷³ And so in these lectures Barth for the first time explicitly rejects any form of it which remains abstracted from the self-revelation of the Word of God in Jesus Christ. However he does so on the basis of an indirect rather than direct analysis of the concept. In the years to come Barth would explain that as a Reformed theologian he believed that the object of theology is the Word of God alone. And so theology could not turn its attention to other subjects alongside this or it would invalidate itself altogether. At most it could consider them *en passant* in the course of describing its own object. For this reason Barth generally refrained from making any appraisal of natural revelation unless it was logically implied by his exposition of the Word of God itself.³⁷⁴ And so in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* he shares his view of natural revelation in the course of teaching several other Christian doctrines.

In the first significant example of this Barth is seeking to provide his students with a more detailed explanation of his claim that the content of divine revelation is God Himself. He has established that the subject of this speaking, the one who carries it out, is God. And

³⁷³ Busch, 125-127.

³⁷⁴ e.g. K. Barth, 'The First Commandment as an Axiom of Theology', in *The Way of Theology in Karl Barth: Essays and Comments*, ed. H. Rumscheidt, tr. G. Hunsinger et al. (Pennsylvania: Pickwick, 1986), 73-75; K. Barth, 'No! Answer to Emil Brunner', in K. Barth and E. Brunner, *Natural Theology: Comprising 'Nature and Grace' by Prof. Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply 'No!' by Dr Karl Barth*, ed. J. Baillie, tr. P. Fraenkel (London: Centenary Press, 1946), 74-77; Barth, *CDII/1*, 164-170.

so he concludes that its content, what it communicates, could only be this same speaking subject as well.³⁷⁵ But Barth recognises that this implies that the content of revelation is more specifically the entirety of God. And this in turn leads him to directly reject the popular view of natural revelation for the first time since it typically claims, by contrast, to be a disclosure of only a part of God: His being, unity and role as Creator rather than His acts, triunity and role as Redeemer. Barth regards this as a comparatively reductive, naturalistic and ultimately superfluous view of revelation and so he rules out conceiving of natural revelation as something ‘independent’ of the self-revelation of the Word of God.³⁷⁶

[N]atural... revelation... (as distinct from the supernatural or Christian revelation)... includes not only the voice of God in nature, as the name indicates, but also such things as conscience, the moral light of nature, religious feelings or dispositions or tendencies in us, mathematical and philosophical axioms, what better pagans know about the existence and unity of God, and the creation and overruling of the world by him, and non-Christian analogies even to such central Christian mysteries as the Trinity and the incarnation... Theologians usually regarded and employed this natural revelation as a good and useful narthex or first stage on the way to the true Christian revelation. The older Reformed theology in particular attached high importance to this preliminary structure... For my part, although I am Reformed, I want no part of it... It has no independent existence.³⁷⁷

In a later passage Barth is attempting to define the mystery of God in order to establish the possibility of a doctrine of God. He describes it as the fact that God reveals Himself through a creaturely medium which simultaneously conceals Him and then distinguishes it from any inherent characteristic of creaturely being with which it might be confused like the limits of human reason. But this leads him to reiterate his earlier rejection of the belief that creaturely being autonomously reveals God even more comprehensively than before. He now explicitly renounces at least three popular versions of it. Firstly he rejects

³⁷⁵ Barth, *GD*, 87-88.

³⁷⁶ Barth, *GD*, 91-93.

³⁷⁷ Barth, *GD*, 91-93.

any independent form of positive natural revelation or, in other words, any assumption that the positive characteristics of creation autonomously bear witness to attributes of God like His wisdom, power and goodness. Secondly he renounces any independent negative natural revelation, any notion that the negative attributes or limitations of creaturely being, such as the limits of human reason, may by themselves reveal God's judgment upon humanity. Barth directly rules out these ideas by insisting that the '[c]reation in itself bears witness to the fall of angels and humans, not to their Creator, whether in its positive or negative aspect'.³⁷⁸ And finally Barth even rejects any static form of natural revelation within special revelation. In other words he refuses to concede that although the creation does not autonomously reveal God to those whose minds remain darkened by sin it does to all who have been enlightened once and for all by faith, since in such a view natural revelation would once again become a source of knowledge of God which differs from His self-revelation in Jesus Christ. Barth insists, for instance, that '[r]evelation is not a levelling roller that sets everything, even everything conditional, in relation to the unconditional'.³⁷⁹

God and humanity, God and nature, God and history – all very good, but softly please, for the question is – a real question – whether we can say all this. It is not self-evident that the cosmos with all its phenomena is identical with the whole creation that reverently sings a song of praise to its Creator. This can never be taken for granted. Too much is at stake for us to be able to say this even in faith. Revelation is not a levelling roller that sets everything, even everything conditional, in relation to the unconditional, as even an eminent theological thinker like P. Tillich seems to think... It is not so even when we have truly understood... that God does not reveal himself in the positive things of the objective world but, according to Job [Job 38:1], in its puzzles and terrors, in the whirlwind, in the things that bring into question both our consciousness and the universe... Neither nature in itself nor history in itself is revelation in any sense. Creation in itself bears witness to the fall of angels and humans, not to their Creator, whether in its positive or negative aspect.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁸ Barth, *GD*, 365-367.

³⁷⁹ Barth, *GD*, 365-367.

³⁸⁰ Barth, *GD*, 365-367.

Although these excerpts from his Göttingen lectures represent some of Barth's first recorded impressions of *revelatio naturalis* he would in fact continue to reject independent forms of natural revelation in the same characteristically indirect or *en passant* manner for the rest of his career.³⁸¹ In the years to come he merely articulated this point of view even more elaborately, comprehensively and consciously than before. In the second volume of his *Church Dogmatics* (1940), for instance, Barth spends four lengthy passages denouncing the notion.³⁸² He now specifies that the views of natural revelation which he opposes are those which construe it as having a different source and content than the self-revelation of the Word of God.³⁸³ And he typically describes them as 'independent' forms of natural revelation.³⁸⁴

It is likely that Barth originally inherited this scepticism towards independent forms of *revelatio naturalis* from his early theological mentor Wilhelm Herrman who mediated the more general Protestant Liberal distrust of natural theology to him.³⁸⁵ However Barth ultimately retained the stance because he increasingly recognised that the theological cost of conceiving natural revelation as a second source of knowledge of God alongside the supernatural revelation of the Word of God was too high a price to pay. It laid the basis for an abstract and idolatrous concept of God by enabling belief in a unitary ground of existence which differed radically from the 'textured... God of the gospel' – the Triune

³⁸¹ For further examples of Barth's rejection of independent forms of natural revelation see: K. Barth, *The Knowledge of God and Service of God According to the Teaching of the Reformation*, tr. J. Haile and I. Henderson (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960), 35-36, 38-40, hereafter, *KGSG*; Barth, *CDII/1*, 97-116; Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 86-103. For further examples of his indirect approach to doing so see Barth, *No!*, 74-77; Barth, *KGSG*, 9-10; Barth, *CDII/1*, 84-128, 134-142, 162-178, 666; Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 38-165.

³⁸² Barth, *CDII/1*, 84-128, 134-142, 162-178, 666.

³⁸³ Barth, *CDII/1*, 109-112.

³⁸⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 102, 107-108, 116-117.

³⁸⁵ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 55, 66-67; K. Oakes, *Karl Barth on Theology and Philosophy* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 22-23.

God of redemption – whom Christians worshipped and proclaimed.³⁸⁶ It undermined the distinctives of the Protestant faith like *sola scriptura*, *solus christus* and *sola gratia*.³⁸⁷ It paved the way for Pelagianism by providing the means for God to be known by human works.³⁸⁸ It opened the door to the gradual domination of revelation by reason and hence the secularisation of the Christian faith as well.³⁸⁹ But above all Barth recognised that it provided a foothold for the return of the very theological epistemology which his entire work sought to overcome, namely, an anthropological basis for knowledge of God. And so although he occasionally used philosophical arguments by Kant and others in support of his perspective these were only ever at most ‘secondary confirmation[s]’ of a position which he had reached on profoundly theological grounds.³⁹⁰

And yet although Barth rejected independent forms of *revelatio naturalis* from the very outset of his academic career it took him many years to make his own theology completely consistent with this position. For, as Barth himself eventually admitted, his early theology unwittingly supports independent forms of natural revelation in at least two ways.

In the first place his use of critical and existential philosophy as an ancillary support for his theology gives the impression that he assumes an independent form of negative natural

³⁸⁶ Barth, *GD*, 344-345; Barth, *CDII/1*, 79-84; Oakes, *Barth on Theology and Philosophy*, 29-32, 246; T. F. Torrance, ‘The Problem of Natural Theology in the Thought of Karl Barth’, *Religious Studies*, 6/2 (1970), 131.

³⁸⁷ Barth, *First Commandment*, 69-73; Barth, *No!*, 78, 82-83, 90, 100-105; Hunsinger, *The Yes*, 52-53; Holder, 23-24.

³⁸⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 134-136, 165-172; McGrath, *Emil Brunner*, 59-62; H. Bouillard, ‘A Dialogue with Barth: The Problem of Natural Theology’, *Cross Currents*, 18/2 (1968), 210-211.

³⁸⁹ Barth, *GD*, 345; Barth, *First Commandment*, 73-75; Barth, *CDII/1*, 136-140, 172-178; Hunsinger, *The Yes*, 53-54; P. Molnar, ‘Natural Theology Revisited: A Comparison of T.F. Torrance and Karl Barth’, *Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie*, 21/1 (2005), 65.

³⁹⁰ Barth, *GD*, 75, 348-350; Oakes, *Barth on Theology and Philosophy*, 247-249; J. Hart, *Karl Barth vs. Emil Brunner: The Formation and Dissolution of a Theological Alliance, 1916-1936* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 2, 74.

revelation. Throughout these early years as we just noted Barth often supports his theological epistemology, his claim that God is known through God alone, with Kant's philosophical epistemology and arguments against the classic proofs of God which demonstrate that humans cannot know God by pure reason.³⁹¹ However he occasionally reinforces his theological anthropology with existential philosophy as well. In both the *Göttingen Dogmatics* (1924) and *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf* (1928) Barth supplements his doctrine of the Word of God with a provisional description of its hearers.³⁹² Since the Word of God is the revelation of God to humanity Barth concludes that humanity is supposed to be united with God and yet has become alienated from Him and hence from its authentic self as well.³⁹³ Although Barth intends this description of 'pilgrim man' (*homo viator*) to be a theological anthropology he acknowledges that it finds 'secondary confirmation' in existential anthropology.³⁹⁴ And at times through careless expression he implies that it may even be known in or equivalent to the latter as well.³⁹⁵ Barth's use of philosophy in this way inevitably led some at the time to conclude that he assumes that the alienation of humanity from God described by critical and existential philosophy corresponds to the estrangement from Him which is the consequence of human sin (Genesis 3) so that humans may at least perceive the divine judgment under which they stand simply by the exercise of their own reason.³⁹⁶ Such a conclusion, for instance, appears to lie at the root of Emil Brunner's perplexity at Barth's

³⁹¹ Barth, *GD*, 348-350; Oakes, *Barth on Theology and Philosophy*, 247-248; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 42, 66-67, 130.

³⁹² Barth, *GD*, 69-86; K. Barth, *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf*, ed. G. Sauter (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1982), §5-7.

³⁹³ Barth, *GD*, 72-74; Barth, *Christliche*, 93-100; Oakes, *Barth on Theology and Philosophy*, 103, 118-120.

³⁹⁴ Barth, *GD*, 72, 75; Oakes, *Barth on Theology and Philosophy*, 103-105, 248.

³⁹⁵ Barth ultimately introduces this account of humanity as an 'existential' one in *christliche Dogmatik* much to his later regret. Barth, *GD*, 75; Barth, *Christliche*, 69-71; Oakes, *Barth on Theology and Philosophy*, 104, 118-119; Hart, *Karl Barth vs. Emil Brunner*, 69, 86-87.

³⁹⁶ See Barth's admission of this in Barth, *CDI/1*, 125-131; Hart, *Karl Barth vs. Emil Brunner*, 69, 74, 86-87.

public rejection of natural theology in the early 1930s.³⁹⁷

In the second place Barth's *analogia fidei* (1924-1940) also inadvertently supports an independent form of *revelatio naturalis*. As we saw in our last chapter Barth eventually acknowledges that his *analogia fidei* presupposes a *participatio entis*. This *denkform* was originally designed to provide an alternative to the prevailing hegemony of Protestant Liberal theological epistemologies. And so it merely postulates a participation of redeemed human knowledge in divine self-knowledge.³⁹⁸ But from early on Barth realised that such a purely noetic relationship between humanity and God amounts to a fairly reductive view of Christian faith. And so he assumes that it is equivalent to a participation of human being in the divine being as well.³⁹⁹ But since Barth had not yet developed an alternative this admission was vulnerable to being interpreted as an endorsement of the traditional Christian Neo-Platonic version of the concept which views this *participatio entis* as one established by God's work of creation and merely perfected by His redemption.⁴⁰⁰ And if that was what Barth assumed then it would provide an ontological basis for an independent form of natural revelation. For it would mean that creatures share the attributes and likeness of their Creator simply by virtue of their creation.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁷ Hart, *Karl Barth vs. Emil Brunner*, 114, 131 cf. 69-74. For incisive analysis of the differences between Barth and Brunner in this debate see T. Hart, 'The Capacity for Ambiguity: Revisiting the Barth-Brunner Debate', in *Regarding Karl Barth: Toward a Reading of His Theology* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster), 139-172.

³⁹⁸ Barth, *GD*, 62-63, 88, 94-95; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 92, 99, 112-117.

³⁹⁹ Barth, *HSCL*, 5-6; Barth, *CD II/1*, 82; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 100, 104-106.

⁴⁰⁰ K. Johnson, 'Natural Revelation in Creation and Covenant', in B. McCormack and T. White (eds), *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: An Unofficial Catholic-Protestant Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 142-145. This interpretation was advanced, for instance, by von Balthasar. See Balthasar, *TKB*, 110-114, 163, 323-325.

⁴⁰¹ Johnson, *Natural Revelation*, 142-145

It was not until the early 1940s that Barth finally closed these loopholes in his theology and so ensured that it backed up his longstanding disavowal of independent forms of natural revelation. By the early 1930s Barth ceased his former habit of buttressing his theology with critical and existential philosophy because he judged that their potential to mislead interpreters far outweighed any benefit they gave to it.⁴⁰² And his reformulation of the doctrine of election in 1942 prevented his *analogia fidei* from unwittingly funding an independent form of *revelatio naturalis* as well. As we saw in our last chapter this finally clarified that the *participatio entis* implied by his *analogia fidei* was a product not of God's creative but rather reconciling work and hence that it was only real in this event. Barth now identifies the divine-human person of Jesus Christ as the realisation in time of both the subject and object of God's primordial election.⁴⁰³ This implies that God's eternal decree is both a decision by the eternal Son of God *incarnandus* to accept the Father's election for Him to be in covenant relationship with humanity and conversely a determination for the human Jesus Christ to accept the Son of God's election for him to be in covenant fellowship with God.⁴⁰⁴ Since Barth takes a supralapsarian interpretation of election he views God's eternal desire for this covenant relationship as the ontological basis or 'material presupposition' of His creative work.⁴⁰⁵ But this, in turn, means that the created order is teleologically ordered to the covenant – it provides the 'formal presuppositions' of it or the 'theatre' in which it will take place – but it does not yet share in it. And so the covenant between God and humanity is realised in the person of Jesus Christ alone.⁴⁰⁶ By ruling out any relationship between the creature and Creator simply

⁴⁰² K. Barth, *How I Changed My Mind* (Richmond: John Knox, 1966), 42-44; Hart, *Karl Barth vs. Emil Brunner*, 119-122; Oakes, *Barth on Theology and Philosophy*, 249.

⁴⁰³ Barth, *CDII/2*, 3, 51-76, 99-103.

⁴⁰⁴ Barth, *CDII/2*, 103; McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 121-123.

⁴⁰⁵ Barth, *CDIII/1*, 228-232.

⁴⁰⁶ Barth, *CDIII/1*, 94-97.

on the basis of its creation Barth now eliminates any possibility that it could independently reveal Him as well.⁴⁰⁷

2.3. *Barth's Acceptance of Dependent Natural Revelation*

Although many continue to assume that Barth rejects the traditional Christian concept of *revelatio naturalis* altogether we have just demonstrated that in fact he only rejects one popular form of it which interprets creation's praise of its Creator as completely independent of His redemptive self-disclosure in Jesus Christ: as having both a different source and content to it. From early on Barth recognised that such an interpretation would enable natural revelation to become a second source of knowledge of God alongside the Word of God and thereby to inflict incalculable damage upon Christian theology and so he refused to entertain it. But this remains merely one side of what he believes about the matter. For throughout his career Barth also consistently affirms an alternative which construes natural revelation instead as entirely dependent upon and hence part of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. By doing so he rules out the possibility that it could ever again become a secondary source of knowledge of God and hence a threat to theology. The fundamental characteristics of this alternative concept of *revelatio naturalis* remain constant throughout Barth's career: its source, content and character are always the same as God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. However Barth changes the specific framework or form of divine revelation which he uses to explain it and this in turn enables him to make the concept increasingly coherent and to gradually become more open to it. In what follows we shall substantiate our claim that Barth persistently embraces this alternative view of natural revelation by providing an overview of the major milestones in its development.

⁴⁰⁷ Johnson, *Natural Revelation*, 145-147.

2.3.1. *Natural Revelation in the Analogia Crucis (1919-1924)*

Barth acknowledges that the creation may bear witness to its Creator on the basis and as part of His redemptive self-disclosure to it even at the very beginning of his academic career when he was supposedly at the height of his world-denying transcendentalism. At this early stage in his development Barth explains this concept by means of his *analogia crucis*. But it already has all the essential characteristics of his more mature versions of it: it shares the same source, content and character as divine revelation in Jesus Christ. Yet as we shall see this framework ultimately undermines the concept in at least two significant ways: it leaves it incomplete and it provides theological justification for Barth to suppress it.

We saw briefly in our last chapter that Barth elaborates a version of his *analogia crucis* in his Tambach lecture (1919). He had been invited to address a conference of German Christians who, having witnessed the sweeping social reforms achieved by the German revolution and attempted by the communist Spartacist uprisings, were contemplating embracing Religious Socialism in order to transform society in light of their own distinctively Christian ideals instead: using ‘the thought-forms of Jesus as the law for every economic, racial, national and international order’.⁴⁰⁸ Since Barth was filling in for one of the leaders of this movement he was expected to give a sympathetic introduction of it to them. But instead he repudiated its very foundation.⁴⁰⁹

Barth began his lecture by acknowledging that the Christian is both the hope and need of society as his audience believed.⁴¹⁰ However he then quickly asserted that ‘the Christian’

⁴⁰⁸ Barth, *CPS*, 279, 272-273; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 195-196.

⁴⁰⁹ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 196.

⁴¹⁰ Barth, *CPS*, 272, 281-282.

is not simply another part of society, like a particular set of values as his audience supposed, but rather something eternal within it: the redemptive intervention of God and the Kingdom He has inaugurated by means of it in one part of society, namely, the human Jesus of Nazareth.⁴¹¹ But at this stage of his career as we have seen Barth believed there is a dialectical relationship between eternity and time. And so he claimed that ‘the Christian’ is within society without ever sharing its temporality and so ordinarily lies veiled beneath it. And this, in turn, meant that it was impossible for humans to grasp it in order to transform society as Religious Socialism proposed.⁴¹²

But later in the lecture Barth conceded to his audience that ‘the Christian’, this secret Kingdom of God, can nevertheless be unveiled in society by a twofold act of God.⁴¹³ Although the intuitable history of Jesus of Nazareth merely culminates in his crucifixion for sin and hence autonomy from God and mortality and so is devoid of eschatological significance in itself Barth proposed that God occasionally unveils His unintuitable real history through it.⁴¹⁴ He shows that this man was subsequently resurrected from this state back to fellowship with God and immortality⁴¹⁵; and thus, by implication, that He was originally created by God as well⁴¹⁶; and that His history of creation followed by redemption is moreover the real history of society itself.⁴¹⁷ But since this eternal content remains dialectically opposed to time it never becomes a part of it.⁴¹⁸ And so God’s revelation of it has the character of a pure event with no historical extension beyond this

⁴¹¹ Barth, *CPS*, 273-274.

⁴¹² Barth, *CPS*, 273, 275-283, 321-322; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 144-146, 197-198.

⁴¹³ Barth, *CPS*, 282, 285, 287, 289.

⁴¹⁴ Barth, *CPS*, 278-281, 285-287; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 142-143.

⁴¹⁵ Barth, *CPS*, 283, 286-287, 322-323; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 143.

⁴¹⁶ Barth, *CPS*, 298-303.

⁴¹⁷ Barth, *CPS*, 274-275, 288, 290.

⁴¹⁸ Barth, *CPS*, 273, 283, 321-322.

act.⁴¹⁹ Barth then added that although our human cognition ordinarily has no capacity to perceive this eternal significance of the cross God occasionally gives us a share in the recognition of it.⁴²⁰ And so when He does we simultaneously recognise it as the truth about ourselves and the society around us as well.⁴²¹

But we must now point out that in this lecture Barth subsequently admits to his audience that when God enlightens us with this knowledge of ‘the Christian’ or Kingdom of God we can momentarily recognise analogies or parables of it in the society which surrounds us as well. He suggests this is possible in two senses. Firstly, we can temporarily see evidence in the present social order, despite its fallenness, that it too was originally created by God. And so the natural, social, commercial, political and intellectual life of society may all bear witness to the creation of society which God has revealed in Jesus.⁴²² In addition Barth claims that at these times we can momentarily recognise various protests against the present social order as signs that it too is being redeemed by God. And so revolutionary uprisings like the youth movement’s protests against authority for its own sake, opposition to the absolutization of the family, expressionist reforms to the autonomy of art, and even the Spartacist revolt against work for its own sake may attest the redemption of society from its current autonomy which God has inaugurated in Jesus.⁴²³ Barth warns that these elements of society and attempts to reform it are not the Kingdom of God itself but merely analogies of it.⁴²⁴ And they are not self-evidently so either. But when we view them with the knowledge of the Kingdom of God which God alone can

⁴¹⁹ Barth, *CPS*, 282-285; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 144-146.

⁴²⁰ Barth, *CPS*, 282, 284-289.

⁴²¹ Barth, *CPS*, 290, 295.

⁴²² Barth, *CPS*, 298-310; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 199.

⁴²³ Barth, *CPS*, 291-298; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 199.

⁴²⁴ Barth, *CPS*, 320-327.

give us we can momentarily recognise them as parables of it.⁴²⁵

Insight into the true transcendence of the divine origin of all things permits... us to understand particular social orders as being caused by God... God desires to be known and honoured as Creator even in the simple acts and facts of human life... Even in the profligate, degenerate, and confused ways of men. Even the *regnum naturae* is the kingdom of God... in spite of.... the veil which now covers its glory.⁴²⁶

Even the *regnum naturae*, the vast time-being, within the frame of which all thought, speech, and action now take shape, may always become the *regnum Dei*; and such it will be when we are in the kingdom of God and the kingdom of God is in us. This is not worldly wisdom. This is truth in Christ. This is the solid and fundamental biblical perception of life.⁴²⁷

Barth then finally suggests to his audience that when we momentarily identify parables of ‘the Christian’ or Kingdom of God in society we must respond to them in a twofold way. In the first place we must ‘understand’ their deeper significance. In other words we must no longer view them simply as they appear, as elements of a broken society and protests against it, but as they truly are: parables of God’s creative and redemptive work. And then secondly we must ‘participate’ in them as well. In other words we must freely join in these facets of society and protests against it and thereby echo God’s own affirmation of and protest against it – His ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ to it – in Jesus Christ.⁴²⁸ Barth clarifies that such a response is really a critical rather than simple world affirmation and denial. We are to devote our attention and allegiance not to society itself since that would be sheer idolatry but ‘through’ it to what it points to or signifies, namely, the Kingdom of God.⁴²⁹ Although Barth acknowledges that the latter can easily collapse into the former.⁴³⁰ Barth claims that by doing so we will find a deeper motivation for these

⁴²⁵ Barth, *CPS*, 292, 295, 300, 303-304.

⁴²⁶ Barth, *CPS*, 299-300.

⁴²⁷ Barth, *CPS*, 310.

⁴²⁸ Barth, *CPS*, 291-310; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 199.

⁴²⁹ Barth, *CPS*, 300, 309, 305.

⁴³⁰ Barth, *CPS*, 302.

attitudes to society than society alone can provide. And so we will be more world-affirming than the humanists and more world-denying than the romanticists.⁴³¹

A humble but purposeful and really happy freedom of movement will always, to some degree, be allowed us even in this age - the freedom, that is, of living in the land of the Philistines: the freedom of going in quiet strength in and out of the house of publicans and sinners; in and out of the house of the mammon of unrighteousness; in and out of the house of the state, which, call it what you will, is the beast of the bottomless pit; in and out of the house of secular social democracy; in and out of the house of falsely heralded science and the liberal arts.⁴³²

We can see that even at this early stage of his development Barth already views natural revelation as entirely dependent upon and part of divine revelation in Jesus Christ. In the first place Barth clearly believes that natural revelation has its source in that redemptive disclosure of God. As we have seen Barth denies that society has any inherent ability to bear witness to the Kingdom of God. He insists that ‘social life... in itself discloses nothing heavenly whatsoever’.⁴³³ Instead he believes that this capacity is entirely extrinsic to it: it is temporarily given to society by God’s redemptive revelation in Jesus. God unveils the kingdom He has inaugurated through the cross of Christ and gives us the ability to perceive it and this knowledge in turn enables us to identify signs of the Kingdom of God in society and so enables society to bear witness to it for the first time.⁴³⁴ In the second place Barth believes that natural revelation shares the same content as God’s redemptive revelation in Jesus. As we saw in our last chapter at this stage of his development Barth’s concept of divine revelation still lacks a genuine Christology: an understanding of the incarnate Person of the Son of God and the relation of His two natures. And so during this period Barth interprets the content of God’s revelation in

⁴³¹ Barth, *CPS*, 303.

⁴³² Barth, *CPS*, 308-309, 293-294.

⁴³³ Barth, *CPS*, 292, 295, 300, 303-304.

⁴³⁴ Barth, *CPS*, 294, 297 cf. 291-310.

Jesus as simply eschatology or ‘the Kingdom of God’.⁴³⁵ But because of this as we have seen in this lecture Barth typically describes the referent of natural revelation in a similarly abstract manner as ‘the Kingdom of God’ as well.⁴³⁶ Finally, Barth also assumes that natural revelation shares the same actualistic character as divine revelation. We have seen that Barth’s concept of divine revelation has the character of an event. Barth’s eternity-time dialectic means that God’s revelation of His kingdom through the crucifixion of Jesus endures only as long as His act and Barth claims that God only temporarily loans us eyes and ears to perceive it as well.⁴³⁷ But it is clear that Barth believes that natural revelation consequently has the same punctiliar character as well. He repeatedly claims that ordinarily society does not attest the Kingdom of God. But whenever God reveals it through Jesus and enables us to perceive this it momentarily does.⁴³⁸

Though we are keenly alive to the limitations of purely objective thinking and doing, we shall be prepared to respect them... for, being purely objective, they *might* come to be filled with the purity of the Original – as indeed they always are for those who have eyes to see.⁴³⁹

Why is it so difficult, so almost impossible... to feel a suggestion of the Origin in what we do and see others do every day?... How is it that it is not given to some to see, and though given to others, is given even to these so seldom and so meagrely?⁴⁴⁰

Two additional features of Barth’s concept of natural revelation in this lecture would also remain staples of it for the years to come. Firstly, Barth seeks to justify it by means of some of the classic passages on *revelatio naturalis* in Scripture. At this stage he just briefly suggests that his belief that the creation bears witness to its Creator only by means

⁴³⁵ Barth, *CPS*, 282-291, 274, 322-323 cf. McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 141-155, 195-202.

⁴³⁶ Barth, *CPS*, 299-300, 310.

⁴³⁷ Barth, *CPS*, 282-285.

⁴³⁸ Barth, *CPS*, 308, 310, 314.

⁴³⁹ Barth, *CPS*, 308.

⁴⁴⁰ Barth, *CPS*, 314.

of His miraculous intervention in it fits the assertion of Romans 1:19-20 that ‘that which may be known of God is plain to [humanity], for *God* has made it plain to them’.⁴⁴¹ However in the years to come Barth would develop an increasingly elaborate and sophisticated exegesis of this and other passages like it to support his view of natural revelation. This would reach a climax in the second volume of his *Church Dogmatics*.⁴⁴² Secondly, Barth takes Jesus’ parables of the kingdom as the prototype of his concept of *revelatio naturalis*. Barth finds these a helpful model for his own view of natural revelation for three reasons: he claims they take the world in its fallenness rather than an ideal world as the raw material for the parable; they treat it as only an analogy of the kingdom rather than the kingdom itself; and they assume that it is not self-evidently a parable of the Kingdom of God but only becomes one when God provides people with ‘eyes to see and ears to hear it’.⁴⁴³ Barth would continue to treat Jesus’ parables of the kingdom as the prototype for his own concept of natural revelation for the remainder of his career.⁴⁴⁴

But Barth’s use of the *analogia crucis* to explain his view of natural revelation also unwittingly undermines the concept in at least two significant ways at this stage. In the first place it leaves it an incomplete explanation of natural revelation. We have seen that Barth’s *analogia crucis* effectively provides the theoretical basis for his view of natural revelation. It explains not only how parables of the Kingdom of God are established in society but their referent and character as well. Yet it fails to answer at least one fairly essential question, namely, why there are hidden signs of God’s redemptive work in Jesus scattered throughout society in the first place. In other words what Barth’s *analogia*

⁴⁴¹ Barth, *CPS*, 303-307.

⁴⁴² Barth, *CDII/1*, 97-126.

⁴⁴³ Barth, *CPS*, 303-307.

⁴⁴⁴ See for example Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 112-113.

crucis lacks is a doctrine of creation which could explain why society contains anticipations of the redemption which God accomplishes in Jesus Christ which can subsequently be used to bear witness to it. And without some explanation of that Barth's alternative view of *revelatio naturalis* would inevitably remain an incomplete and thus implausible one. As we shall see this would continue to be true of it until Barth's development of his mature concept of divine revelation in the second volume of his *Church Dogmatics* (1942).⁴⁴⁵

In the second place Barth's *analogia crucis* also provides theological justification for him to suppress his belief in natural revelation. Up to this point we have suggested that Barth's *analogia crucis* proposes that the content of divine revelation - what God reveals through the intuitable history of Jesus of Nazareth - is simply His unintuitable real history, the fact that He was both created and redeemed by God, which is the real history of society as well. And so it requires the Church to respond by both affirming that the present social order reflects the Kingdom of God and engaging in it and also recognising that it does not and so protesting it. But we must now point out that in fact Barth's concept of divine revelation claims more specifically that there is not a 'symmetry' but a teleological order between these two events in the real history of Jesus: His creation was followed or 'surpassed' by His redemption in both sequence and 'worth'. And so Barth insists that it requires the Church to prioritise its response to society in a corresponding manner: to assert and protest the dissimilarity of the present social order to the Kingdom of God

⁴⁴⁵ My interpretation of the significance of this omission differs slightly from Johnson. Whereas he assumes that the lack of this theological ontology meant that Barth couldn't truly embrace a concept of natural revelation prior to 1942 I am claiming that this omission merely undermined the coherence of it. This modest difference of opinion is largely just a reflection of the differing scope of our analyses. While Johnson focuses almost entirely on Barth's mature (post-1942) concept of natural revelation I am analysing his development of the concept right throughout his career. Johnson, *Natural Revelation*, 145-147.

much more frequently and vocally than it affirms its correspondence to the Kingdom of God. In other words he claims there is theological grounds for the Church to suppress its belief in natural revelation.⁴⁴⁶

The fact of growth will not allow us to overlook the truth that the antithesis is more than mere reaction to the thesis; it issues from the synthesis in its own original strength; it apprehends the thesis and puts an end to it, and in every conceivable moment surpasses it in worth and meaning.⁴⁴⁷

God the Creator, of whom we have been thinking, is also God the Redeemer, in whose footsteps we must follow... and the onward march of God in history, in which we are voluntarily taking part, necessitates our advancing from the defense to the attack, from the Yes to the No, from a naïve acceptance to a criticism of society. We may deny ourselves the universal No no less than the universal Yes, for both are one; or rather... we may deny ourselves the No even less than the Yes, for it follows after it.⁴⁴⁸

2.3.2. *Natural Revelation in the Analogia Fidei (1924-1942)*

Barth continues to acknowledge that the creation may praise its Creator in response to and as part of His redemptive self-disclosure to it throughout the midst of his academic career in his first lectures on theology. He now explains this belief by means of his *analogia fidei*. But its essential characteristics remain the same: it is still a concept of natural revelation which shares the same source, content and character as God's supernatural revelation in Jesus. However this different framework now enables Barth to gradually become more open to or accepting of it than he had been before. In this section we will illustrate this by briefly comparing several different accounts of Barth's view of natural revelation from this period.

Barth gave a remarkably direct and concise reaffirmation of his belief that the world *extra muros ecclesiae* can bear witness to God on the basis of His redemptive self-revelation to

⁴⁴⁶ Barth, *CPS*, 310-319

⁴⁴⁷ Barth, *CPS*, 311.

⁴⁴⁸ Barth, *CPS*, 316.

the Church in some of his very first lectures in dogmatics at Göttingen (1924-1925). But although what he divulges there already hints at some of the changes he had made to the concept since Tambach it is an account of it which he gives just a few years later which illustrates their true scope.

Heaven and earth and all creation are called upon to be witnesses to the event, to be an echo of God's Word, also to proclaim this Word, to participate in the one revelation as pointers and reflections... Neither nature in itself nor history in itself is revelation in any sense... It can become revelation insofar as it participates in that event, insofar as it is known to have been created by the Word (this one Word), insofar as through the Word (this one Word) it comes back to its origin. But here again truth lies only in the act, the event, the Holy Spirit... through whom Christ rose from the dead [Rom.1:4] and gathers his community from among the nations.⁴⁴⁹

Barth was invited to present a lecture to the Congress of the Continental Association for Home Mission in Amsterdam at the end of a brief tour of Holland in 1926.⁴⁵⁰ He subsequently entitled his address '*Kirche und Kultur*' ('Church and Culture') and used the opportunity to update the view of the relationship between the two which he had proposed in his Tambach lecture: to make it consistent with his revised concept of divine revelation and ensure it provided a credible alternative to the view of the matter which was now being popularised through an article by Paul Tillich with the same name.⁴⁵¹ In the course of pursuing this ambition Barth gives an updated version of his concept of natural revelation.

In the lecture Barth assumes a slightly more elaborate version of his *analogia fidei*. We will recall that by this time Barth had enriched his concept of divine revelation with an

⁴⁴⁹ Barth, *GD*, 366.

⁴⁵⁰ Busch, 171.

⁴⁵¹ P. Tillich, 'Church and Culture', in *The Interpretation of History*, tr. N. Rasetzski and E. Talmey (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1936). This work is Barth's most frequent interlocutor throughout his lecture. See K. Barth, 'Church and Culture', in *Theology and Church: Shorter Writings, 1920-1928*, tr. L. Pettibone Smith (London: SCM, 1962), 334 n. 1 and 340 n. 1. Hereafter, *CC*.

anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology and thereby transformed his *analogia crucis* into an *analogia fidei*. This *denkform* consequently now proposed that the content of divine revelation is not simply eschatology or ‘the Kingdom of God’ but the living person of the Word of God Himself; and that it ordinarily lies veiled beneath the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth not because of an eternity-time dialectic but because this humanity is devoid of inherent personality. And so this living subject the eternal *logos* can only be known by unveiling Himself through it - creating a similitude between the human speaking of Jesus of Nazareth (or Scripture or preaching) and Himself - and granting the Holy Spirit to its intended recipients so that they can hear and obey Him.

Barth adopts this basic concept of divine revelation in his lecture on Church and culture but enriches it in two ways.⁴⁵² In the first place he assumes that the content of this divine revelation is more specifically the Son of God’s reconciliation of humanity’s spirit and nature. Drawing upon a rudimentary view of reconciliation which he had presupposed since the first edition of *Romans* Barth assumes in this lecture that the distinguishing characteristic of fallen humanity is an internal contradiction between its spirit and nature, or in other words its inability to fulfil the ethical ideal of the law, which in turn is a secondary consequence of the external antithesis between itself and God. And so in the lecture Barth assumes that what is revealed through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth is more specifically the Son of God’s overcoming of this internal contradiction between humanity’s spirit and nature by his perfect obedience to God’s will and thereby his overcoming of its external contradiction as well.⁴⁵³ In the second place Barth interprets this Word of God who reconciles the antitheses of humanity as being in ‘meaning’ the

⁴⁵² Barth, CC, 335-336, 340-341.

⁴⁵³ Barth, CC, 338-339, 343; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 142-143, 151, 239.

Word of Creation, ‘content’ the Word of Reconciliation, and ‘form’ the Word of Redemption. We have seen that Barth’s *analogia fidei* now conceived that the content of divine revelation is not opposed to time but part of it and not an eschatological history but a living subject instead. But the former change now required Barth to distinguish three rather than two main acts within salvation history: creation, reconciliation and redemption. And the latter meant he now had to attribute them to the living person of the Word of God rather than an eternal sequence of events as well.⁴⁵⁴

Early in the lecture Barth clarifies that he intends to develop his view of the relationship between Church and culture from an obedient hearing of this Word of God rather than the neutral or detached standpoint which Tillich assumes in his account of the matter.⁴⁵⁵ He begins by developing a distinctively theological definition of culture from it. Barth concedes that culture appears to be just the sum of all the aims of human activity which in turn stimulates it as sociology claims but insists that in truth it is humanity’s pursuit of one ambition, namely, to overcome the dialectic of spirit and nature which plagues its existence. As we have noted Barth believes that the Son of God reveals through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth His reconciliation of humanity’s spirit and nature and enables us to perceive this. But according to Barth this, in turn, makes us aware that humanity is currently riven by a contradiction between its spirit and nature for the first time and determined to overcome it. And since Barth assumes that sinful humanity is synonymous with culture he concludes that this is the real problem and task of culture as well.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁴ Barth, CC, 344; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 366-367.

⁴⁵⁵ Barth, CC, 340-341.

⁴⁵⁶ Barth, CC, 337-339.

Barth then uses this theological definition of culture to illuminate what each of the three acts or ‘points of view’ of the Word of God imply about it. The Word of God originally created and hence destined humanity to be a synthesis of spirit and nature. And so Barth concludes it is also the ‘promise’ of the realisation of culture as well.⁴⁵⁷ The Word of God additionally reconciles humanity to God by putting to death its present existence with its contradiction between ideal and life and rising to a new life which is a perfect synthesis of the two on its behalf, and then commanding humanity to live out this resurrected life in its own existence now. And so it is also the command or ‘law’ of culture.⁴⁵⁸ And finally the Word of God will one day fulfil humanity’s feeble attempts to achieve its promised and commanded nature by raising it to a new life which is a perfect unity of spirit and nature as well. And so it is also the ‘limit’ of culture or, in other words, a warning against any attempt at its autonomous self-realisation.⁴⁵⁹

Barth then claims that when the Word of God reveals His promise of culture, His creation of humanity to be a synthesis of inner and outer, through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth and enables us to believe and obey it then we can temporarily recognise specific cultural endeavours, attempts to realise spirit in nature, as reflections of this promise and so conversely they may bear witness to it.⁴⁶⁰

Does not this promise appear to shimmer ahead of men everywhere where they are engaged in the struggle for form and realization, with labour and confusion enough, but with unappeasable restlessness and inexhaustible productivity? This promise... is not denied but confirmed by the Gospel... For, as in Christ the separation between God and man is not a final reality, so also its consequence and punishment, the separation in man himself, the rift which splits his whole being, is not final. The struggle to overcome this division, the work of culture, *can* therefore be a reflection from the light of

⁴⁵⁷ Barth, CC, 341-343.

⁴⁵⁸ Barth, CC, 344-346; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 142-143, 151, 239.

⁴⁵⁹ Barth, CC, 347-349.

⁴⁶⁰ Barth, CC, 343-344.

the eternal Logos who became flesh, and yet was is and is to be king in the whole domain of nature. Culture *can* be a witness to the promise which was given man in the beginning. 'It *can*', I say. In Christ, it *is*.⁴⁶¹

Finally Barth claims that this threefold significance of the Word of God for culture 'connects' the Church to culture in three distinct ways or, in other words, requires the Church to take a corresponding threefold approach to it. Firstly, because the Word of God promises the realisation of culture the Church cannot simply withdraw from but must get involved in it. It must do so whenever it recognises a specific cultural pursuit as a reflection of the promise of culture revealed by the Word of God. Barth urges the Church to exercise caution when it makes such an identification. However he considers it unlikely that it would never have the opportunity to do so and believes it would be greatly impoverished if that were the case.⁴⁶²

The can be no... general sanctifying of cultural achievement, such as Schleiermacher accomplished... but there is even less place for a basic blindness to the possibility that culture may be revelatory, that it can be filled with the promise. The Church will need to consider carefully whether it knows what it is doing when in a concrete case it affirms the presence of the promise. But it would be astounding if no cases for such recognition were to be found by the Church; and the Church would certainly be badly off if it refused to recognize any.⁴⁶³

Secondly, since the Word of God commands culture the Church must advocate true culture, the struggle to give form to spirit, in society.⁴⁶⁴ Finally, because the Word of God reveals the limit of culture, the fact that it will only be realised in the *eschaton* by the intervention of God, Barth contends that the Church must critique culture. It must take no part in its futile attempts at autonomous self-realisation and warn that its aspirations can only be fulfilled by the redemptive intervention of God.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶¹ Barth, CC, 343.

⁴⁶² Barth, CC, 343-344.

⁴⁶³ Barth, CC, 344.

⁴⁶⁴ Barth, CC, 346-347.

⁴⁶⁵ Barth, CC, 349.

We can see that in this lecture Barth once again views natural revelation as entirely dependent upon the self-revelation of the Word of God in Jesus. He continues to believe that it has its source in that redemptive self-disclosure. Barth still assumes that culture has no intrinsic ability to bear witness to God's promise of culture. 'I repeat: no independent, actual relation between God and nature, God and history, God and human reason, can be asserted'.⁴⁶⁶ But instead this capacity is extrinsic to it: it is momentarily given to it by the Word of God. The Word of God temporarily reveals the promise of culture, that humanity was created to be a synthesis of spirit and nature, through the humanity of Jesus and enables us to trust and obey this. And this knowledge, in turn, enables us to briefly recognise specific attempts to realise ideals in society as reflections of this promise and so, conversely, enables them to bear witness to it. '[I]n the world of nature, of history, of reason, relation to God depends on the one possibility which sinners have not destroyed... on God's claim on man [which] becomes effective essentially through the reconciliation'.⁴⁶⁷ Barth also still believes that natural revelation has the same content as divine revelation. By this stage of his development as we have seen Barth had enriched his concept of divine revelation with a Christology. And so he believes that the content of divine revelation is no longer simply eschatology or the 'Kingdom of God' but the living person of the 'Word of God'. For this reason throughout his lecture Barth describes the content of natural revelation as the Word of God or His 'promise' of culture as well.⁴⁶⁸ Finally Barth also continues to assume that natural revelation shares the same actualistic character as divine revelation. Throughout his lecture Barth repeatedly describes the unveiling of the promise of the Word of God through Jesus and our faith and obedience to it as an 'event' without before or after.⁴⁶⁹ And so he believes that our

⁴⁶⁶ Barth, CC, 342.

⁴⁶⁷ Barth, CC, 342.

⁴⁶⁸ Barth, CC, 343-344.

⁴⁶⁹ Barth, CC, 343 cf. 335-337.

ability to recognise reflections of it in culture and conversely their ability to bear witness to it are likewise only fleeting as well. ‘Culture *can* be a witness to the promise which was given man in the beginning. “It *can*”, I say. In Christ, it *is*’.⁴⁷⁰

However Barth’s change of the framework which he uses to explain his view of natural revelation in this lecture now enables him to make one significant change to it: it opens the way for him to gradually become more accepting of it. We will remember that Barth’s *analogia crucis* proposed that the content of divine revelation is an eternal sequence of events involving creation followed by redemption which is the real but hidden history of both Jesus and the entire world. But by enriching his concept of divine revelation with an anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology Barth’s *analogia fidei* now conceived that what is revealed through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth is the living person of the Word of God who is the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer instead. In other words the *analogia fidei* no longer claimed that the content of divine revelation was a divinely ordained sequence of events. But this in turn meant that there was no longer any theological justification for the Church to suppress its belief in natural revelation either: to prioritise asserting and protesting the dissimilarity of the present social order to the Kingdom of God over acknowledging its correspondence to the Kingdom of God. However Barth now suggests that there is a strategic reason for it to do so instead. Since *Kulturprotestantismus* has historically given one-sided emphasis to the Word of God as the ‘promise’ of culture Barth insists that what the Church most urgently needs to rediscover at present is the polar opposite, namely, the Word of God as the ‘limit’ of culture or in other words the eschatological form of the Word of God. And so the Church must continue to prioritise its assertion and criticism of the dissimilarity of culture to the

⁴⁷⁰ Barth, CC, 343-344.

Word of God over its acknowledgement that culture reflects the promise of the Word of God. But as we shall see with the theological justification for it now stripped away it would only be a matter of time before Barth would give up trying to suppress belief in natural revelation altogether.

What the Church of our time needs most of all to relearn in relation to the problem of culture is, in my judgement, what I have called the form, the eschatological form, of the Word of God... There have been other times than ours, and there will again be others. Our time directs us, if we are not wholly deceived, in this direction.⁴⁷¹

In the years immediately following his Amsterdam lecture Barth gave several further accounts of his view of natural revelation by means of his *analogia fidei*.⁴⁷² However it was not until chapter five of his *Church Dogmatics* (1940) that he developed it in any further significant way. Barth's objective in this chapter was to establish a noetic basis for his doctrine of God. But his determination from the actuality of knowledge of God by His Word and Spirit that God is knowable by His grace or revelation alone required him to refute the counter-thesis of natural theology that God may be known by an independent form of natural revelation as well. In order to repudiate the exegetical foundations of this belief Barth briefly commends a version of his own dependent view of natural revelation as the better reading of these passages.⁴⁷³

Barth still insists that the created order - both 'man' and 'his cosmos' - has no inherent ability to witness to its Lord.⁴⁷⁴ However he now claims that the Son of God simply reveals Himself, the eternal Lord of the entire universe, through the humanity of Jesus of

⁴⁷¹ Barth, *CC*, 353-354.

⁴⁷² See for instance Barth, *KGSG*, 35-44.

⁴⁷³ For this account see especially Barth, *CDII/1*, 108-125.

⁴⁷⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 110, 112.

Nazareth and enables us to know and obey Him.⁴⁷⁵ This, in turn, enables us to recognise signs - 'echoes' or 'reflections' - of His Lordship in the created order.⁴⁷⁶ When we do the present created order with its impotence is inevitably 'transcend[ed]' or 'surpassed'. And it temporarily becomes 'another' - 'another man' and 'another place' - which now bears witness to its Lord Jesus Christ.⁴⁷⁷ And so the prophecy is provisionally fulfilled: '[t]he kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord' (Rev.11:15).⁴⁷⁸

From this brief description of his view we should easily recognise that Barth still conceives of natural revelation as entirely dependent upon and part of God's special revelation and so we need not labour that point. However he now develops this concept in four significant ways.

In the first place he now often explicitly describes it as a 'dependent' form of natural revelation.

[E]verything that the Bible says about the witness of man in the cosmos can be understood only as this man is made and summoned to be a witness by revelation itself: made to be something that... he is not in himself; summoned to do something which... he... cannot do in himself... [M]an in the cosmos is to be understood only as a dependent witness.⁴⁷⁹

Secondly Barth now recognises that the created order bears witness to its Lord essentially by participation in the protological and eschatological humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. Barth now realises that when the Son of God reveals Himself through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth the limitations of the present created order are eclipsed and it is transformed into 'another' place which bears witness to Him because it temporarily

⁴⁷⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 110-111 cf. 115-117.

⁴⁷⁶ Barth, *CDII/1*, 110-111, 115.

⁴⁷⁷ Barth, *CDII/1*, 110-111, 116.

⁴⁷⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 117.

⁴⁷⁹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 105, 116.

participates in the unparalleled work of the human Jesus of Nazareth: both His death to the old Adam and His resurrection as the new and true Adam who perfectly knows and serves His covenant Lord.

His knowledge about himself is fundamentally surpassed, but at the same time also included in a higher knowledge, and, despite its limitation, raised into this higher knowledge. He is put in the wrong with his own will and accomplishment. And for this very reason he is instituted as an unwilling representative and proclaimer of the right... He is disqualified from being an independent witness, and so qualified to become a real and dependent witness... This man is also present - namely in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He also is to be engaged in the work of its proclamation; for he also has in his way become objectively another by its happening; to him also it is now plain that he belongs to Jesus Christ and stands to serve Him.⁴⁸⁰

By pointing to man in the cosmos, [these passages] point to a certain extent through him to the man of the revelation of God, i.e., to the man who, in the covenant of God with his people... is a participant in the divine good-pleasure and therefore in the knowledge of God.... They point through him to the One with whom God is well-pleased, to the man Jesus of Nazareth... the origin and future of man in the cosmos.⁴⁸¹

In the third place Barth now also realises that his concept of natural revelation is entirely consistent with the Protestant doctrine of *iustitia dei* and the alien righteousness of Christ because although the protological and eschatological witness of the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth is entirely extrinsic to the created order it is effectively imputed to it by the self-revelation of the Word of God.

[These passages] do not point to a truth which man in the cosmos already possessed somewhere and somehow... [but] to his truth as in and with this same revelation of God... it has already broken in upon him and mastered him as his original and future truth, alien, transcendent and irresistible... His property as a witness - the distinctive expressions of the doctrine of justification cannot be avoided here - is imputed, reckoned or ascribed to him.⁴⁸²

Fourthly, Barth now finally gives up trying to suppress belief in natural revelation

⁴⁸⁰ Barth, *CDII/1*, 116-117.

⁴⁸¹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 112-113 cf. Barth, *CDI/1*, 240-242.

⁴⁸² Barth, *CDII/1*, 112-113.

altogether and so for the first time becomes truly open to or accepting of it. We have seen that at Tambach (1919) Barth claimed that what is revealed through the intuitable history of Jesus of Nazareth is effectively a divinely ordained priority of redemption over creation. And then at Amsterdam (1926) in the absence of this he himself recommended that the Church prioritise a rediscovery of the redemptive form of the Word of God. Later in this same volume of *Church Dogmatics* (1940) during his account of the eternity of God Barth acknowledges that since the beginning of career he has attempted to correct Protestant Liberalism's one-sided emphasis on the presence or 'supra-temporality' of God by means of a one-sided emphasis on His futurity or 'post-temporality'.⁴⁸³ But he now admits that this was not only unbiblical but ultimately futile as well: it only polarised people against his theology.⁴⁸⁴ It is likely Barth was thinking especially of the overwhelmingly negative public reaction to his one-sided '*Nein!*' to Brunner (1934) a few years earlier.

It was necessary and right in the face of the Immanentism of the preceding period to think with new seriousness about God's futurity. But it was neither right nor necessary to do this in such a way that this one matter was put at the head of all Christian teaching, just as the previous epoch had wanted to make... God's presence the chief point in Christian doctrine. Such concentrations in theology must be completely avoided.⁴⁸⁵

And so he now gives up this approach altogether and emphasises all aspects of aspects of God's eternity equally instead: His pre-, supra-, and post-temporality.

The errors of those centuries are not overcome by suppressing the element of truth which lay at the basis of the errors. They can be overcome only by seeing and establishing this truth in the context from which it should never be separated. In this context it has been necessary recently to speak much more clearly and positively, for example, about the relationship between Church and State, than was for a long time possible in the unavoidable opposition to the one-sidednesses and omissions of Neo-Protestantism.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸³ Barth, *CDII/1*, 634. For this whole account see p. 631-638.

⁴⁸⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 635, 634, 637.

⁴⁸⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 636.

⁴⁸⁶ Barth, *CDII/1*, 637-638.

But by doing so Barth now effectively gave up his calls for the Church to suppress its belief in natural revelation as well. And so he becomes genuinely open to and accepting of it for the first time.

2.3.3. *Natural Revelation in the Analogy of Being (1942-1968)*

Finally Barth still believes that nature may reveal God on the basis and as part of His revelation of grace within it even in his mature thought and at the very twilight of his career. Barth now explains this belief by means of his mature concept of analogy. However its fundamental characteristics remain the same as ever: it still shares the same source, content and character as divine revelation. But this change of framework now enables Barth to make one final significant improvement to it, namely, to make it a truly coherent concept of natural revelation for the first time.

Barth's account of 'The Light of Life' in the fourth volume of his *Church Dogmatics* (1959) will need little introduction. It remains one of the most famous passages of his entire work. Barth's aim herein was to complete his Christology by supplementing his previous explanation of the priestly and royal work of Jesus Christ with a comprehensive account of His prophetic office.⁴⁸⁷ But in order to do so Barth had to clarify the status of other supposed prophecies or revelations besides this. The fruit of these reflections would ultimately prove his most mature account of natural revelation.⁴⁸⁸

Barth begins the passage by elaborating a version of his mature form of analogy. By this stage of his development we will recall that Barth had undertaken a sweeping

⁴⁸⁷ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 38.

⁴⁸⁸ Johnson, *Natural Revelation*, 147.

Christological reformulation of his doctrine of election which provided the ontological basis for an analogy of being. Barth now identified the divine-human person of Jesus Christ as both the subject and object of God's eternal decree. But this implied that the Son of God *incarnandus* eternally accepts the Father's election for Him to be a God who exists in unity with the human Jesus of Nazareth and conversely that the human Jesus of Nazareth is eternally predestined to accept His election to be in fellowship with the Son of God.

Barth begins his account of the prophetic office of Jesus Christ with a summary of His priestly and royal work which is entirely consistent with this view of election. According to Barth Scripture testifies that Jesus Christ is both a God who freely humbles Himself to exist in unity with a creature and conversely a creature who, under the direction of this divine subject, freely accepts His exaltation to live in fellowship with God. However His is no ordinary life but the history of redemption which 'embraces' and 'determines... all other histories'. And so as He lives it He reconciles the world to God.⁴⁸⁹ But precisely by doing so He also reveals this work to the world as well.⁴⁹⁰ And so Jesus is the one true prophet who fulfils the hopes of Israel and the one and only light of life.⁴⁹¹ But Barth believes that Scripture does not self-evidently bear witness to Him. And so He can only be known by revealing Himself through it and enlightening readers with the Holy Spirit so that they can perceive Him.⁴⁹²

Having established that Jesus Christ is the one and only prophet and light of life Barth

⁴⁸⁹ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 39-43.

⁴⁹⁰ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 46-48.

⁴⁹¹ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 48-72, 86.

⁴⁹² Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 43-45.

then explains what this means for other purported revelations or ‘little lights’: both the ‘ordinary’ witnesses of the Bible and Church and the ‘extraordinary’ one of the world *extra muros ecclesiae*.⁴⁹³ Barth is adamant that it does not rule out their existence *per se* but merely ‘delimits’ them by clarifying that they are not in themselves the Word of God and therefore cannot exist independently of Him.⁴⁹⁴ Barth believes that the created order has no inherent capacity to reveal God but ordinarily bears witness only to itself.⁴⁹⁵ However when the light of life Jesus Christ illuminates Himself through the pages of Scripture and gives us eyes and ears to perceive Him He occasionally ‘commission[s]’ and ‘empower[s]’ the world around us to bear witness to Him as well.⁴⁹⁶ When He does it no longer declares itself but the word which He utters to it albeit now in its own tongue and from its own very different point of view. And so He speaks His word through it.⁴⁹⁷ The Church must test whether such secular words are truly the Word of God by checking their consistency with Scripture and the creeds of the Church, their fruit in the secular world and implications for the Church.⁴⁹⁸ However when it verifies that they are then it must recognise them as an extraordinary means of His communication to, rule over and preservation of His earthly body and so ascribe them the provisional and local authority which is appropriate to them rather than the universal and timeless authority which is unique to Scripture. And so the Church must ‘hear’ and ‘receive’ what they say into its faith and practice.⁴⁹⁹

In the very light of this narrower and smaller sphere of the Bible and the Church, we cannot possibly think that He cannot speak, and His speech cannot be attested, outside this sphere. We who in contrast to others have our place and task here... can and must expect that His voice will also be heard without.

⁴⁹³ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 86-135.

⁴⁹⁴ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 96-99; Hunsinger, *Secular Parables*, 243.

⁴⁹⁵ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 117-118, 139-140, 143.

⁴⁹⁶ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 111.

⁴⁹⁷ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 110-111, 115, 123.

⁴⁹⁸ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 125-130.

⁴⁹⁹ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 130-135.

We can and must be prepared to encounter ‘parables of the kingdom’, in the full biblical sense, not merely in the witness of the Bible and the various arrangements, works and words of the Christian Church, but also in the secular sphere, i.e., in the strange interruption of the secularism of life in the world. In the narrower corner in which we have our place and task we cannot but eavesdrop on the world at large. We have ears to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd even there too.⁵⁰⁰

It will be apparent from this description that even at this late stage of his career Barth still conceives of natural revelation as entirely dependent upon and part of God’s redemptive self-revelation in Jesus Christ. It has its source in that remedial self-disclosure. Barth still believes that the created order has no inherent capacity to bear witness to God but only itself. ‘The world as such can produce no parables of the kingdom of God’.⁵⁰¹ Instead this capacity is entirely extrinsic to it: when the light of life Jesus Christ shines through Scripture and grants us the Holy Spirit so that we can perceive Him He occasionally commissions and illuminates reflections of Himself in the world *extra muros ecclesiae* as well. ‘[H]ow can such words ever succeed in attesting and corresponding to the one Word of God...? ...Those who speak them must in some way be commissioned, moved and empowered to attest it. And what can do this but the one Word of God, Jesus Christ Himself?’.⁵⁰² Barth clearly also still thinks that natural revelation shares the same content as divine revelation. He insists that these secular words ‘say the same thing as the one Word of God’ ‘without subtraction, addition or alteration’ only now ‘from a different source and in another tongue’ and hence a different angle so that ‘[t]he truth proper to the one Word of God... dwell[s] within them’.⁵⁰³ Finally Barth also still assumes that natural revelation shares the same actualistic character as divine revelation. We have seen that Barth believes Scripture does not inherently bear witness to the light

⁵⁰⁰ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 96, 117.

⁵⁰¹ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 117-118, 139-140, 143.

⁵⁰² Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 111.

⁵⁰³ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 110-111, 115, 123.

of life Jesus Christ and so He can only be known by His epiphany of Himself through it and granting readers the Holy Spirit so that they can perceive this. And so divine revelation is an event which only endures as long as this act. However because Barth believes that it is only through this self-manifestation that Jesus commissions and empowers the world *extra muros ecclesiae* to bear witness to Himself and grants us eyes and ears to perceive it then natural revelation also has the character of a fleeting event. ‘Under this hand... these everyday happenings become what they were not before, and what they cannot be in and of themselves’.⁵⁰⁴

Barth now makes four final major improvements to this alternative concept of *revelatio naturalis*. In the first place he now explicitly clarifies that it is a concept of natural revelation and not natural theology. Barth insists that his view of secular parables differs from a natural theology in both source and content. Natural theology assumes that the created order has a capacity to know and proclaim the Word of God but his own concept of *revelatio naturalis* claims precisely the opposite, namely, that the one true light of life Jesus Christ has a capacity to make an otherwise impotent created order know and proclaim His word. And while natural theology obtains an abstract conception of God as the unitary ground of existence which differs considerably from the one revealed in Scripture Barth’s view of secular parables proposes that the created order echoes the self-revelation of the Triune God through Scripture exactly.

[I]n order to perceive that we really have to reckon with such true words from without, we have no need to appeal either for basis or content to the sorry hypothesis of a so-called ‘natural theology’... By way of natural theology.... There can be attained only abstract impartations concerning God’s existence.... What we have in view are attestations of the self-impartation of the... Father in the Son by the Holy Ghost, which show themselves to be such by their full agreement with the witness present in Scripture... Nothing could be further from our minds than to attribute to the human creature as a such a

⁵⁰⁴ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 110, 113, 118.

capacity to know... the one Word of God, or to produce true words corresponding to this knowledge... What we have in both cases is the capacity of Jesus Christ to... take into His service, to empower for this service, to cause to speak in it, men who are quite without any capacity of their own.⁵⁰⁵

In the second place Barth now explicitly acknowledges that hearing and receiving natural revelation does not undermine the Church's commission to know and preach the Word of God alone. Barth already suggested this was true for those prophets and apostles who testified to the existence of natural revelation in Scripture in the second volume of his *Church Dogmatics* (1940).⁵⁰⁶ But he now admits that it is true for the rest of the Church as well. Since natural revelation merely repeats the self-revelation of Jesus Christ through Scripture but in a different tongue and from a different point of view then it does not distract the Church's attention from Scripture but provides a commentary upon it which enables the Church to understand it even more deeply than before. Moreover because *revelatio naturalis* is just a reflection of the Word of God which is revealed in Scripture to the Church throughout the world *extra muros ecclesiae* as well then it should not hinder but help the Church to fulfil its commission to proclaim the Word of God to the ends of the earth since it will enable the Church to realise that the Word of God has already gone ahead of it and reigns over that outer darkness even now.

[T]he community which lives by the one Word of the one Prophet Jesus Christ.... must accept the fact that there are such words and... must hear them too, notwithstanding its life by this one Word and its commission to preach it... Words of this kind cannot be such as overlook or even lead away from the Bible. They can only be those which, in material agreement with it, illumine, accentuate or explain the biblical witness in a particular time and situation... They can only be words which will lead the community more truly and profoundly than ever before to Scripture.... [I]t must really hear them, although without prejudice to its own mission to preach the one Word of God... We do not refer to words which might tempt it from this task or make it unwilling or incompetent to discharge it. We simply refer to those which make it apparent that the war in which it is engaged has already been fought

⁵⁰⁵ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 117-118; Hunsinger, *Secular Parables*, 255.

⁵⁰⁶ Barth, *CDII/1*, 110-113.

to a finish by its Lord, that the world in which it has to work has not been abandoned by Him even apart from the action or assistance of the community, that it is not wholly destitute of the Word which the community has been set among it to proclaim.⁵⁰⁷

Thirdly, Barth now believes that natural revelation should be allowed to reform the Church's doctrine. Because true secular words are extraordinary means of Jesus' communication to and ruling and preserving of His earthly body Barth insists that once they are verified by the Church it must not only hear and receive what they have to say but allow this to 'reform' its traditional beliefs and practices: not to 'contradict' what they say but to 'supplement', 'exten[d]', 'correct' and 'revise' it. As Keith Johnson notes this exceeds the authority which even Thomas Aquinas assigned to natural revelation.⁵⁰⁸

We now turn to the final question... the right procedure in relation to such words, the right use to be made of them if they impress themselves upon us as true words.... Our general answer is that Christianity... must be ready to hear them... It must let them do the work laid upon them in relation to proclamation, instruction and the whole life of the community. If and to the extent that they are true words, they are free communications of the will of its Lord which it must not stiffly refuse but accept. Rather more concretely, it must receive them, as previously stated, as a commentary on Holy Scripture which is the primary and proper source of all knowledge of Christian life, as a corrective of the tradition of the Church, and as an impulse to its reformation.⁵⁰⁹

Finally Barth now develops a theoretical basis for his view of natural revelation which enables it to become a truly coherent alternative for the very first time. We have seen that Barth had insisted that the created order may bear witness to God on the basis of His redemptive self-revelation in Jesus Christ since the very beginning of his career. Yet in spite of this, as we will recall, he offered no explanation of why exactly it contains hidden signs or similitudes of Jesus Christ which could be made to point to and attest Him by His redemptive self-disclosure. And so Barth's view of natural revelation remained

⁵⁰⁷ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 114-115; Hunsinger, *Secular Parables*, 255.

⁵⁰⁸ Johnson, *Natural Revelation*, 150-152.

⁵⁰⁹ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 126-127, 130-135; Johnson, *Natural Revelation*, 150-152.

throughout most of his career an incomplete and hence implausible one. However Barth's Christological reformulation of the doctrine of election in the second volume of his *Church Dogmatics* (1942) laid the basis for him to change all of that. Here as we have seen he now identified the divine-human Jesus Christ as both the subject and object of election. This implied that the Son of God *incarnandus* eternally elects to be in unity with the human Jesus of Nazareth and conversely that the human Jesus of Nazareth is eternally predestined to accept His election to be in covenant with the Son of God. But because Barth takes a supralapsarian interpretation of election he believes that God's work of creation only serves His decision to realise this covenant relationship between Himself and humanity in Jesus Christ. And so in the third volume of his *Church Dogmatics* (1945) Barth elaborates a comprehensive doctrine of creation which explains that the created order is teleologically ordered to this covenant of grace: that it provides all the 'formal' presuppositions or prerequisites of it including a subject of it and the theatre in which it will take place. And so it 'point[s] beyond' itself to the covenant of grace which is its goal.⁵¹⁰ This now explained why there are hidden signs of the reconciliation of the world to God revealed in Jesus Christ scattered throughout the created order. With this rationale in hand Barth's concept of *revelatio naturalis* was now for the first time a truly complete, coherent and viable alternative view of natural revelation.⁵¹¹

If creation was the formal presupposition of the covenant, the latter was the material presupposition of the former... If the proclamation and foundation of the covenant is the beginning of the history which commences after creation, the history of creation already contains, as the history of the being of all creatures, all the elements which will subsequently meet and be unified in this event... in the history of the Son of God.... The main interest now is not how creation promises, proclaims and prophesies the covenant, but how it prefigures and to that extent anticipates it without being identical with it; not

⁵¹⁰ Barth, *CDIII/1*, 94-97, 228-232.

⁵¹¹ Johnson, *Natural Revelation*, 145-150.

how creation prepares the covenant, but how in so doing it is itself already a unique sign of the covenant and a true sacrament.⁵¹²

2.4. *Conclusion*

Many readers of Barth's work today still assume that because of his uncompromising transcendentalism and christocentrism he simply rejected the longstanding Christian tradition of natural revelation altogether. If that was true then it would have been impossible for him hold an analogy of divine and worldly beauty, to believe that natural and cultural beauty and human understandings of beauty may participate in God's own comeliness, as we are claiming in this thesis.

But while such premises are generally true in fact this conclusion is a completely false one. For as we have seen from a thorough examination of his public reflections on the matter Barth's unflinching actualism and christocentrism actually led him to reject not the traditional Christian concept of natural revelation itself but merely one common form of it which treats creation's praise of its Creator as something entirely independent of His redemptive self-revelation in Jesus Christ. Barth recognised that this particular construal of the traditional belief was not only incompatible with his actualistic and christocentric theology but potentially destructive as well and so he refuted it with increasing directness and consistency. But he never once denounced anything beyond it.

And yet even as he did Barth consistently proposed an alternative interpretation of this ancient belief which conceived of natural revelation as completely dependent upon and part of God's gracious self-revelation in Jesus Christ. Barth acknowledged that the world *muros ecclesiae* may echo God's self-revelation in Jesus through Scripture to the Church

⁵¹² Barth, *CDIII/1*, 231-232.

at every stage in the development of his concept of analogy: his *analogia crucis*, *analogia fidei* and analogy of being. He varied only in how coherently he explained this belief and how open he was to it. And so his concept of analogy was always technically an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly realities. But more importantly it was therefore effectively an actualistic reinterpretation of Calvin's notion of the spectacles of Scripture which enable perception of God's glory in the book of nature as well. And so rather than dismissing the longstanding Christian tradition of natural revelation Barth reinterpreted and extended it. And because of this it is entirely possible that Barth accepted an analogy of divine and worldly beauty as well.

Having now established this point in the next chapter we must take a step further and show that in fact it is not merely possible but probable that Barth embraced such an analogy of divine and worldly beauty. For as we are about to see there is a form of his analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly realities implicit in the background to his climactic passage on beauty: his account of God's glory in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3.

Chapter 3: Barth's *Analogia Gloriam* (1940)

3.1. Introduction

Although many Christian theologians have spoken of God's glory throughout history relatively few have attempted to define it.¹ The pages of Scripture overflow with references to the *kabod* or *doxa* of God. From the beginning it accompanies Israel chiefly in the form of a fiery cloud (Ex.24:15-18) which settles upon the tabernacle (Ex.40:34-38) and then temple (1 Kings 8:10-13). Although it eventually departs (Ezek.8-11) it promises to return in 'one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven... authority, glory and... power' (Dan.7:13-14).² During His life the cloud descends upon Jesus of Nazareth and declares Him this 'beloved Son' (Matt.17:1-13).³ And the Bible closes with a glimpse of the day when He indwells the 'New Jerusalem' so completely that it needs neither temple nor sun 'for the glory of God gives it light' (Rev.21:22-27).⁴

From the very beginning many of the Church Fathers therefore recognised glory as one of the attributes of God. Theophilus of Antioch (c.120-190), for instance, conceived that 'in glory He is incomprehensible, in greatness unfathomable, in height inconceivable, in power incomparable, in wisdom unrivalled, in goodness inimitable, [and] in kindness unutterable'.⁵ However, in the centuries which followed, presumably because it was a

¹ S. Nichols, 'The Glory of God Present and Past', in C. Morgan and R. Peterson (eds), *The Glory of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 24.

² T. Longman III, 'The Glory of God in the Old Testament', in C. Morgan and R. Peterson (eds), *The Glory of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 47-79.

³ R. Melick Jr, 'The Glory of God in the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, and the General Epistles', in C. Morgan and R. Peterson (eds), *The Glory of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 81-83, 88-89.

⁴ A. Köstenberger, 'The Glory of God in John's Gospel and Revelation', in C. Morgan and R. Peterson (eds), *The Glory of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 119-125.

⁵ Theophilus, 'Theophilus to Autolycus', in A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ii: *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria*, tr. M. Dods (New York: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885), 1.3; G. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1952), 3-5, 15, 46.

subject of little controversy, doctors of the Church gave mostly *ad hoc* attention to it.⁶ Like many of his contemporaries Athanasius (296-373), for example, found justification in the biblical description of Jesus as ‘the radiance of God’s glory’ (Heb.1:3) for likening the relationship between the Father and Son to that of a source of light and its radiance, especially in order to illustrate their consubstantiality and co-eternality in the face of Arianism.⁷ In order to defend Byzantine Hesychasm against the criticisms of Barlaam the Calabrian, Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) proposed that the light of glory which transfigures the humanity of Jesus at the right hand of the Father in heaven even today (Lk.9:28-36) is neither a mere creaturely symbol of His divinity nor His divine nature itself but the uncreated energies (ενεργειαι) of His divine nature which may, in turn, transfigure or deify our humanity, both body and soul, as well.⁸ Calvin (1509-1564) declared the whole world a ‘theatre’ in which God manifests His glorious perfections (*theatrum gloriae Dei*, Isaiah 6:3).⁹ And like many other early Reformed statements of faith the Scot’s Confession (1560) declared that ‘all things in heaven and... earth, visible and invisible,... have been created,... [are] retained in their being, and ... ruled and guided... to such end as his eternal wisdom... has appointed them, to the manifestation

⁶ For historical overviews of theological reflection on the overlapping but distinct theme of light in divine and creaturely ontology see especially G. O’Collins and M. Meyers (eds), *Light from Light: Scientists and Theologians in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012); J. Corey, *Light from Light: Cosmology and the Theology of the Logos* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016); G. Hunsinger, ‘Uncreated Light: From Irenaeus to Torrance to Aquinas and Barth’, in *Evangelical, Catholic and Reformed* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 38-51.

⁷ Some also extended the metaphor to the Holy Spirit. Athanasius, ‘Against the Arians’, in P. Schaff and H. Wace (eds), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, iv: *Athanasius: Selected Works and Letters*, tr. J. Newman (New York: Christian Literature Publishing, 1892), 3.4; K. Tanner, ‘The Use of Perceived Properties of Light as a Theological Analogy’, in G. O’Collins and M. Meyers (eds), *Light from Light: Scientists and Theologians in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 122-126.

⁸ *Gregory Palamas: The Triads*, ed. J. Meyendorff, tr. N. Gendle (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1983), 71-92 (III.1.9); J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, ii: *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)* (Chicago: UCP, 1974), 260-270.

⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.5.8; I.6.2; I.14.20-22; B. Kristanto, *Sola Dei Gloria: The Glory of God in the Thought of John Calvin* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 89-102.

of his own glory' (Rom.11:36).¹⁰

It seems likely that it was not until Protestant Scholasticism that the attribute of God's glory regularly received comprehensive systematic description probably in virtue of its overarching importance to the various flashpoints of the Reformation.¹¹ The lay theologian Edward Leigh (1602-1671), for instance, begins an entire chapter dedicated to the topic as follows.

From all these aforementioned attributes ariseth the glory or majesty of God, which is the infinite excellency of the divine essence... This is called the face of God... and light inaccessible... which to acknowledge perfectly belongs to God alone, yet the revelation and obscurer vision thereof is granted to us in this life by the ministry of those things which are seen and heard, the clearer in the life to come, where we shall see God face to face.¹²

And yet in spite of this belated interest in the concept it largely fell into neglect once again throughout the modern period until Karl Barth turned to the work of the Protestant Orthodox to help resource his mature doctrine of the attributes of God in the second volume of his *Church Dogmatics* (1940).¹³

¹⁰ J. Knox, *The Scottish Confession of Faith* (Dallas: Presbyterian Heritage Publishers, 1995), chapter 1. See also the Geneva Catechism, q1-7 and the Westminster Confession of Faith, IV.1.

¹¹ For a comprehensive overview of Protestant Orthodox views of God's glory see R. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, iii: *The Divine Essence and Attributes* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 540-551.

¹² E. Leigh, *A Treatise of Divinity: Consisting of Three Books* (London: E. Griffin, 1646), 110-111 cf. 110-125; Muller, 543.

¹³ For theological accounts of glory since Barth see especially Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, i-vii, ed. J. Fessio and J. Riches (T. & T. Clark: Edinburgh, 1982-1983); C. S. Lewis, 'The Weight of Glory', in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Harper, 1980), 25-46; A. M. Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1949); B. Ramm, *Them He Glorified: A Systematic Study of the Doctrine of Glorification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); C. Ryrie, *Transformed by His Glory* (Wheaton: Victor, 1990); C. Morgan, 'Toward a Theology of the Glory of God', in C. Morgan and R. Peterson (eds), *The Glory of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 153-188; J. Fout, *Fully Alive: The Glory of God and the Human Creature in Karl Barth*, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and Theological Exegesis* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2015); C. Southgate, *Theology in a Suffering World: Glory and Longing* (Cambridge: CUP, 2018). For accounts of the related but distinct concept of divine light see C. Pickstock, 'What Shines Between: The Metaxu of Light', in T. Kelly (ed), *Between System and Poetics* (London: Routledge, 2016), 107-124; I. Davidson, 'Divine Light: Some Reflections After Barth', in M. Habets and P. Tolliday (eds), *Trinitarian Theology After Barth* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2012), 48-69; A. Hay, *God's Shining Forth: A Trinitarian Theology of Divine Light* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2017).

In this chapter we must now briefly examine Barth's account of the perfection of God's glory in this volume of his theology. By this stage we have shown that Balthasar's fears are unfounded: Barth had a workable analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly realities and so it is entirely possible that he held an analogy of theological and worldly beauty. With that accomplished we may now at last begin to transition from defence to offense by showing that in fact Barth assumes precisely such an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly realities in his account of God's glory. And since this is in fact the very same passage in which he elaborates his climactic account of God's beauty then, as we shall see in chapter five, it is not merely possible but probable that Barth implied an analogy of theological and worldly beauty in this passage.

In this chapter then we will argue that Barth assumes an *analogia gloriae*, an analogy of divine, ecclesial and worldly glorification, in his account of God's glory in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3. By doing so we will take up and develop a suggestion first made by Jason Fout. In his analysis of Barth's reflections on glory in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3, in preparation for his own constructive account of the topic, Fout briefly and tentatively 'hypothesis[es]' several times over that Barth assumes an analogy of glory in this passage yet never begins the task of substantiating his claim. 'Let us return to the hypothesis articulated above, that (divine) glory begets (a certain analogous) creaturely glory'.¹⁴ In this chapter then we will now seek to comprehensively substantiate this general claim.

But before we turn to this task it will be useful to make three brief qualifications concerning it. Firstly, although along with everything else he says about it Barth also describes God's glory as 'beautiful' and thus eliciting 'joy', in order to clarify his thought

¹⁴ Fout, 43, 45, 51.

on both glory and its beauty we shall reserve our analysis of his reflections on the latter until chapter five. Barth himself describes his discussion of beauty as a necessary ‘parenthesis’ in his account of God’s glory.¹⁵ For the sakes of clarity then it should do little harm to Barth’s thought in the passage if we leave it ‘bracketed’ for the time being. Secondly, our ambition in this chapter cannot be to provide anything like an exhaustive analysis of the meaning and significance of Barth’s view of divine glory in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3. As we shall see in a moment Barth’s description of this characteristic takes the form of an incredibly rich, all-encompassing and often jubilant doxology to his whole doctrine of the perfections of God which is brimming with significance. Here more than anywhere one feels vulnerable to the charge that Barth’s theology dies in the hands of its interpreters. It is as such worthy of a dedicated study all of its own. But since that is not the purpose of our thesis, here we must content ourselves with the more modest aim of comprehensively demonstrating that Barth assumes an analogy of glory in this passage. Finally, the most effective way to accomplish this is to avoid mirroring the logic of Barth’s argument in the passage exactly and to instead organise or systematise his thought to a modest degree. It seems likely that a part of the reason that Barth’s *analogia gloriae* has been overlooked in this passage to date is because it gets somewhat lost in the rich chorus of celebration.

3.2. *Barth’s Description of God’s Glory in Church Dogmatics* §31.3 (1940)

In the second volume of his *Church Dogmatics* (1940), his mature doctrine of God, Barth at last turned from the arduous polemical work of establishing a viable alternative theological epistemology which had largely preoccupied him until that time to the

¹⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 666.

positive task of describing God.¹⁶ He later recalled the relief he found in this new endeavour: he felt as though he could finally ‘breathe... again’.¹⁷

Barth begins the volume by explaining in detail the noetic basis for his account of God. In sum he contends that ‘God is who He is in the act of His revelation’ in Jesus Christ.¹⁸ By this stage he had begun work reformulating his doctrine of election. And so he now believed that the act in which God reveals His being is not the contemporary event of His self-revelation through the Word of God by the Holy Spirit to us but the unique historical event of His self-disclosure in the life of Jesus of Nazareth which may subsequently become contemporaneous with us through the Word and by the Spirit. Precisely because God reveals Himself in this unique historical event then His eternal triune being is a pure and unique act (*actus purus et singularis*) and so it can only be known from the correspondingly absolutely unique event of His self-revelation in the history of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁹ From this act of His self-revelation in Jesus Christ Barth then determines that God is fundamentally ‘the One who loves in freedom’.²⁰ By seeking and creating fellowship with humanity in the person of Jesus Christ God shows that He loves us and this is but a repetition of His own intra-triune fellowship and love.²¹ But He does so in the complete freedom of His self-determination in which He is only free from all others in order to be free for them and which is therefore a freedom to love. And so the divine essence is a living unity-in-distinction of love and freedom.²²

¹⁶ Barth, *CDII/1*, 257.

¹⁷ Busch, 284.

¹⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 262.

¹⁹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 257-272; Price, 15-18. See McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 453-463.

²⁰ Barth, *CDII/1*, 322.

²¹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 272-296; C. Holmes, *Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes in Dialogue with Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel, and Walter Krötke* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 46-48.

²² Barth, *CDII/1*, 297-321; Price, 26-32.

When he considers the topic of the divine attributes themselves Barth accommodates the concerns of both nominalists, who preserve God's simplicity only by regarding the multiplicity of God's perfections as proper not to His eternal nature but merely His condescension to us or our imaginations, and naïve realists, who assert the reality of the multiplicity of God's attributes only at the expense of the simplicity of His eternal nature, by following the insight of Augustine and proposing that, since God's simplicity is not a Platonic-Aristotelian oneness which is opposed to multiplicity but His triune unity which includes diversity, then the multiplicity of God's attributes (His 'glory') are identical to His simple divine essence ('the Lord').²³ Barth summarises this belief through a German play on words.

In this doctrine we have to attain the insight that God - and here the German language offers a possibility of expression which other languages do not have - is not only the Lord (*Herr*), but the Lord of glory (*Herrlichkeit*), and conversely, that all glory is the glory of God the Lord (*die Herrlichkeit Gottes des Herrn*).²⁴

This conception has profound significance for Barth's account of the attributes of God. Firstly, it means that his doctrine of the divine attributes takes the form of a 'repetition' of his account of the simple divine essence: it is a series of 'conceptual enlargements' of the latter.²⁵ Secondly, since the attributes of God differ from those of any creature both in their identity with the divine being and their consequent perfection Barth prefers to distinguish them by describing them as 'perfections' rather than attributes.²⁶ Thirdly, because 'each individual perfection is identical with every other and with the fulness of them all [i.e. the divine essence]' it is proper to say that God not only 'has' but 'is' each

²³ Barth, *CDII/1*, 322-335; Holmes, *Revisiting*, 55-59.

²⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 324. As Barth himself admits the perfection of God's glory thus forms an *inclusio* around his entire doctrine of divine attributes providing both its 'point of departure' and 'conclusion'.

²⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 322-323, 340; J. Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids: 2003), 39.

²⁶ Barth, *CDII/1*, 322-322; Price, 35.

of His perfections.²⁷ Fourthly, since the revealed and eternal divine being is more specifically a unity-in-distinction of love and freedom Barth modestly reinterprets the ‘broad consensus’ of classical accounts of the divine attributes by categorising them as not simply ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ or ‘communicable’ and ‘incommunicable’ attributes but the perfections of the divine loving and the perfections of the divine freedom: they are the specific ways in which His love and freedom are perfect.²⁸ Fifthly, because God’s love precedes His freedom in both His revealed and eternal divine being Barth reverses the traditional order of these categories in classical doctrines of the divine attributes and thereby allows the more personal attributes of God’s love to inform the more metaphysical ones of His freedom.²⁹ Finally, in order to remind us of the unity of God’s being even amidst his account of its multiplicity Barth arranges the perfections into dialectical pairs in which the first attribute of each pair expresses one characteristic of the eternal divine being (e.g. freedom) and the second then also expresses the other (e.g. freedom and love).³⁰

When Barth finally came to the task of describing the perfection of God’s glory at the conclusion of his mature account of the attributes of God in this volume he did not do so empty-handed. He had discussed the notion at considerable length on at least three prior occasions. He already included it amongst the attributes of God in his first cycle of dogmatics at Göttingen (1924-1925) but ultimately ran out of class time with which to describe it in any detail.³¹ The theme later so dominated his closing thoughts on eschatology in this series that he named the final section after it: ‘§38 The Glory of God’

²⁷ Barth, *CDII/1*, 323, 332-333; Holmes, *Revisiting*, 59.

²⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 340-341; Price, 40.

²⁹ Barth, 348-350; Holmes, *Revisiting*, 60-61.

³⁰ Barth, 341-344; Price, 43-44.

³¹ Barth, *GD*, 439.

(1925-1926).³² And perhaps partly in preparation for this account of it he explored the concept in depth in the fourth chapter of his Gifford lectures, 'The Glory of God and the Glory of Man' (1936), just a few months prior to writing *Church Dogmatics* §31.3.³³

Barth concludes his account of God's eternity, His existence 'before, above and after time' which expresses His 'freedom', with an explanation of His glory, because the 'specific nature' of God's eternity, the being in which He endures, is not merely solitary but unified and yet distinct and so, Barth believes, glorious. As the second in this pair of divine perfections then Barth insists that God's glory reflects not only His freedom but also His 'love' and hence has nothing to do with the ruthless cosmic egotism of its caricatures.³⁴

At the outset Barth makes clear that the noetic basis of his description of God's glory is Jesus Christ, the 'concrete form' of divine glory, as He is attested in Scripture.³⁵ Although throughout the passage Barth is assisted mainly by Protestant Orthodox interpretations of the matter in order to perceive this.³⁶ Drawing from this source he defines God's glory in general or 'sum' as the 'right', 'power' and 'act' in which God makes Himself known as God. It incorporates, objectively, God's right, capacity and act to not just keep to Himself but declare or manifest Himself to others. Barth typically describes this as 'glory' in the specific sense (*gloria Dei*). But God's glory also includes, subjectively, the

³² K. Barth, '§38. Die Ehre Gottes', in *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*, iii: *Die Lehre von der Versöhnung / Die Lehre von der Erlösung*, ed. H. Stoevesandt (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2003), 481-493.

³³ Barth, *KGSG*, 35-44. Barth delivered his Gifford lectures in March 1937 and began work on the second volume of *Church Dogmatics* in Summer that same year. Busch, 280, 284.

³⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 640-642; Price, 159.

³⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 641-643; Davidson, 55.

³⁶ The only theologians Barth interacts with in his account of glory (not including his reflections on beauty) are the Protestant Orthodox thinkers Johann Gerhard, Amandus Polanus and Petrus van Mastricht. See Barth, *CDII/1*, 643, 645, 649, 667, 677.

recognition of Himself which this act invariably engenders in others and by means of which God exercises Lordship over them. Barth usually refers to this as ‘glorification’ (*glorificatio*).³⁷

Adopting at once the biblical usage, we can say that God’s glory is His dignity and right not only to maintain, but to prove and declare... Himself... It is further His dignity and right to create recognition for Himself... To sum up, God’s glory is God Himself in the truth and capacity and act in which he makes Himself known as God.³⁸

More specifically or ‘precise[ly]’ Barth describes God’s glory as the right, power and act of God to not withhold but manifest or share His perfect divine being, ‘the sum of all [His] divine perfections’, with others and thereby also His ‘all-sufficiency’, His sufficiency for Himself and hence all others which can fill up anything lacking in their knowledge and life and is therefore ‘the root of true Christian contentment’ and ‘satisfaction’.³⁹ And it is also conversely the ‘recogni[tion]’ and ‘worship’ which this lavish gift of His plenitude inevitably evokes in others in which they ‘echo’ or ‘image’ it.⁴⁰

Finally, drawing upon the biblical terminology of *kabod* and *doxa*, Barth interprets God’s glory as the communication of both His ‘honour’ and ‘light’. According to Barth precisely because the perfect divine being is ‘pre-eminent’ it contrasts everything else around it and so is like a ‘source of light’ amidst the darkness. Moreover when God unveils or exposes it, because of His ‘omnipotence’, it becomes ‘omnipresent’: it

³⁷ Barth, *CDII/1*, 641 cf. 667-668. Compare Barth, *CDI/2*, 206-207. Barth’s understanding parallels the belief of Protestant Orthodoxy that glory encompasses both the ‘objective’ *gloria Dei* and ‘formal’ *glorificatio*. See Muller, 546-550.

³⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 641.

³⁹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 643-645; C. Holmes, ‘The Theological Function of the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes and the Divine Glory, with Special Reference to Karl Barth and His Reading of the Protestant Orthodox’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 61/2 (2008), 215-217.

⁴⁰ Barth, *CDII/1*, 647-648, 673. Cf. Lev.9:23-24; Longman, 54-55.

‘encircle[s]’ or ‘shines round about’ others (Lk.2:9). And so it is like the ‘radiance’ of that light. Finally, inasmuch as it creates echoes or images of itself in others these may be thought of as ‘reflection[s]’ of His light.⁴¹

Assuming this basic definition Barth gives a rich description of the communication or ‘overflow’ of God’s glory from eternity into time and then back again.⁴² Barth insists that God’s glory has its ‘true’ and ‘original’ place in the eternal life of the immanent trinity. He regards the eternal Son of God in relation to the Father as the ‘archetype and prototype’ of God’s glory *ad extra*.⁴³ And because the Son of God is also the perfect ‘image’ of the Father Barth interprets Him as the true and original glorification of God as well.⁴⁴ Barth considers this intra-triune glory the ontological ‘basis’ of God’s glory *ad extra*.⁴⁵

God does not need the creature as the other for whom and by whom to be glorious, because before all creation He is the other in Himself as the Father and the Son and therefore glorious in and for and by Himself.⁴⁶

Drawing upon the biblical account of creation, and continuing a conviction he had held since the *Göttingen Dogmatics* (1924-1925), Barth claims that God freely chose to create the world, through His Son the eternal image of God, in order for it to become a temporal

⁴¹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 641-642, 645-647; Davidson, 54.

⁴² Barth, *CDII/1*, 647-648, 666-667. In this respect Barth’s account of glory parallels that of Protestant Orthodoxy which likewise distinguishes between immanent or ‘essential’ and economic or ‘respective’ glory. See Muller, 546-550.

⁴³ Barth, *CDII/1*, 666-667, 643, 647. Although Barth does not explain here exactly how the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son provides the prototype of glory it is likely that he accepts the general assumption of the Church Fathers based on Heb.1:3 that the Father is the ‘source’ of light or glory and the Son is its ‘radiance’. Although he found the metaphor very ‘inadequate’ to describe the intra-triune relations and was wary of it providing a *vestigis trinitas*. For his discussion of it see Barth, *CDI/1*, 427-429.

⁴⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 667, 673.

⁴⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 647, 667. Barth thereby further develops his concept of the immanent trinity as the ontological basis of His economic acts which he has had since the *Göttingen Dogmatics* (1924-1925). See Barth, *GD*, 110-130; Barth, *CDI/1*, 295-490; Barth, *CD I/2*, 34-35; Barth, *CDII/1*, 48-55.

⁴⁶ Barth, *CDII/1*, 667.

‘image’ of Himself and thus to glorify Him.⁴⁷ As a result of this decision His splendour, satisfaction and jubilation in His own perfect being freely ‘overflows’ the confines of His eternal divine being into the economy of salvation.⁴⁸

It is asserted in the biblical account of creation that man’s destiny is to be the image of God. And this meaning and purpose of all creation must indeed be realised and revealed in man... The whole point of creation is that God should have a reflection in which He reflects Himself and in which the image of God as Creator is revealed, so that through it God is attested, confirmed and proclaimed. For this reflection is the centre and epitome of creation concretely represented in the existence of man. God wills to find again in another the reflection and image which He finds in Himself from eternity to eternity in His Son.⁴⁹

Barth consequently interprets all the acts or works of God *ad extra* - His creation, preservation, reconciliation, redemption and even judgment of the world - as forms of His divine glory.⁵⁰ But naturally he insists that their unrivalled ‘centre’ is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the climactic manifestation or communication of the perfect divine being and omni-sufficiency in the economy of salvation because in Him it no longer just temporarily indwells things - like Sinai, a cloud, the ark, tabernacle or temple - but actually becomes a human person.⁵¹ Barth appears to believe that it was only at the end of His life, by means of His resurrection from the dead, ascension to the right hand of the Father and return in power and glory, that His divine glory was revealed and hence visible. And so

⁴⁷ Barth, *CDII/1*, 673, 648; Davidson, 55-58. Ivor Davidson interprets Barth’s claim that Jesus Christ is the ‘centre and goal of all God’s works [of glory] and therefore the hidden beginning of them all’ as reflecting Barth’s preliminary reformulation of his doctrine of election. But while there are certainly anticipations of Barth’s reformulation of election throughout this volume of *Church Dogmatics* as we have seen, it is unnecessary to suppose that this is one of them since later in this passage Barth himself clarifies that the ‘secret beginning’ he has in mind is not divine election but the biblical account of God’s creation of the world through the Word and image of God and Barth himself had assumed this to be the basis of the world’s destiny to glorify God since the *Göttingen Dogmatics*. See Barth, *GD*, 413-414 cf. 404-414; K. Barth, *Credo: A Presentation of the Chief Problems of Dogmatics with Reference to the Apostles’ Creed*, tr. J. Strathearn McNab (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936), 30-33; Barth, *KGSG*, 35-43.

⁴⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 647-648, 666-667.

⁴⁹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 673.

⁵⁰ Barth, *CDII/1*, 647-648, 667. On the latter see, for instance, Ex.14; Longman, 50-51.

⁵¹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 642-643, 667. This is effectively a reinterpretation of Barth’s longstanding concept of Jesus Christ as the centre or mid-point of divine revelation. See Barth, *GD*, 142-151; Barth, *CDI/2*, 12, 45-121; Barth, *CDII/1*, 53-57.

it ordinarily remained 'hidden' by His humanity throughout His life. However when the Father occasionally 'glorified' or 'transfigur[ed]' Him it momentarily became visible to others through it.⁵² And Barth believes that it is revealed 'through' other appointed 'creaturely powers' - presumably in a similar fashion - as well.⁵³ Barth frequently describes this as an act not only of God's glory but also His 'self-glorification'.⁵⁴

But the... centre... of these works of the divine glory is God's Son Jesus Christ... He is their centre because in Him, in the union of God and man which has taken place in him,... there has taken place that which the glory of all His other works can attest only... in preparation or development.⁵⁵

Barth believes that Jesus Christ is also the 'prototype' of creaturely glorification of God. He was the first to fulfil the purpose of the created order by being the creaturely 'image of God'. His glorification of God was therefore a realisation of protological humanity. Yet it was only at the end of His life, by means of His resurrection from the dead, ascension to the right hand of the Father and triumphal return, that it was revealed and hence visible that He was indeed the Son in whom the Father is well-pleased and thus the perfect image and likeness of God. In this sense His glorification of God was only complete or perfect in the eschaton. It thus ordinarily remained 'hidden' throughout His life. However when the Father occasionally 'glorified' or 'transfigur[ed]' His beloved Son during His earthly sojourn it momentarily became visible to others.⁵⁶

Jesus Christ... is the prototype of all participation by creation in the glory of God. For it is in Himself, and in Himself first, that the divine self-manifestation has its distinctive future yet present form. His $\delta\omicron\zeta\alpha$ is His revelation as the One who is alive from the dead. It is therefore the future of

⁵² Barth, *CDII/1*, 643, 647. Barth does not explicitly specify whether his description of the future-yet-present glory of Jesus is intended to be a description simply of his prototypical creaturely glorification or his divine glory as well. But on textual, theological and biblical grounds it seems best to interpret it as intended to be both. Cf. Matt.19:20; Lk.9:31-32; Melick, 81-83, 88-89.

⁵³ Barth, *CDII/1*, 646-647.

⁵⁴ e.g. Barth, *CDII/1*, 647-648, 668.

⁵⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 667.

⁵⁶ Barth, *CDII/1*, 643, 667-669, 673; Price, 172. This is largely just a reworking of Barth's longstanding concept of Jesus as the Second Adam. See, for instance, Barth, *GD*, 160-161, 194-196; Barth, *CDI/2*, 156-158, 265-277; Barth, *CDII/1*, 53-54.

His own life and the future of his second appearing which brings all time to an end. If it certainly belongs to Him already before His resurrection and ascension, it does so in a hidden way. Yet as is shown by the record of the transfiguration... it can be seen and known before His end and therefore definitely before the end of the world.⁵⁷

Barth insists that God's glory in Jesus Christ, both the Son of God's revelation of His glory through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth and the Son of Man's prototypical creaturely glorification of God is, in sum, not only His grace or 'gift' (χαρις) to creatures but also His 'permission' for them to join in His self-glorification and along with it the 'ability', 'obligation' and 'necessity' to do so. It is therefore the 'basis' of creaturely glorification of God.⁵⁸

Jesus Christ... [is] the basis and explanation of the creature's gratitude and service to the divine glory.⁵⁹

Barth considers the Church the 'provisional form' of creaturely glorification of God.⁶⁰ He believes that in virtue of both their creatureliness and sinful refusal to glorify their Creator humans have no inherent 'ability', 'obligation' or 'necessity' to glorify God.⁶¹ However when the Son of God discloses His all-satisfying effulgence through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth or another appointed creaturely power and the Holy Spirit 'baptise[s]' these impotent humans into the humanity of Jesus Christ who does perfectly glorify God then while they retain all the limitations of their present humanity they acquire in addition the 'permission' and therewith the 'ability', 'obligation' and 'necessity' to glorify God.⁶² Their glorification of God therefore takes the form of

⁵⁷ Barth, *CDII/1*, 673.

⁵⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 670-673.

⁵⁹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 673.

⁶⁰ Barth, *CDII/1*, 675-676. For suggestions about how Barth's account of the Church's glorification of God could be developed or supplemented to be more genuinely analogous to the freedom or 'overflow' of God's own glory see Fout, 35-60.

⁶¹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 668, 671.

⁶² Barth, *CDII/1*, 668-673; Holmes, *Theological Function*, 218.

overwhelming ‘gratitude’ or ‘thanksgiving’ (ευχαριστια) for the gift of God’s glory in Jesus Christ out of which they ‘serve’ (λατρεω) it by becoming the ‘image of God’.⁶³ They achieve or ‘fulfil’ this by ‘following’ God’s glory as it has been revealed in Jesus Christ: choosing or ‘determin[ing]’ not just any arbitrary ‘form of existence, speech or actions’ for themselves but those which God’s glory in Jesus Christ has ‘predetermin[ed]’ for them. They carry out this grateful ‘obedience’ to God’s glory in Jesus Christ, on the basis of their ‘knowledge’ of it, in the totality of their existence. And so their glorification of God ultimately consists of a ‘life-obedience’ in which their whole being becomes the ‘image of God’ and the ‘reflection’ of His glory.⁶⁴ Because the Church glorifies God not through any ability of its own but only by its Spirit-enabled participation in the humanity of Jesus Christ its glorification of God ‘participates’ or ‘shares’ in God’s self-glorification: God glorifies Himself through it.⁶⁵ And precisely by doing so the Father effectively ‘transfigure[s]’ or ‘glorifi[es]’ it as well by giving it the honour or ‘glory’ of sharing in His work of self-glorification.⁶⁶ The Church’s glorification of God is, like Jesus’ own, a fulfillment of the purpose for which its members were created and hence a realisation of their protological humanity.⁶⁷ However it too will only be complete or perfect in the eschaton when, by means of their resurrection from the dead, they will at last be liberated from the current ‘limits’ in their ‘knowledge’ of God’s glory and their ‘freedom’ to obey it and so the image of God will finally ‘embrace’ and hence be ‘revealed’ in their ‘bodily nature’ (Rom.8:18). This means that the Church ‘cannot display’ their glorification of God in their humanity at present. However they ‘believe’ on the basis of Jesus’ own prototypical creaturely glorification of God that they may

⁶³ Barth, *CDII/1*, 669-670, 673.

⁶⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 674-675.

⁶⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 667-669, 672-673.

⁶⁶ Barth, *CDII/1*, 670.

⁶⁷ Barth, *CDII/1*, 648, 673.

glorify God even now and thus strive to conform themselves to it - especially in their specific activities of 'proclamation', 'confession' and 'theology' - all in the 'prayer' that by God's grace they really would. And sometimes God answers their prayers by 'bless[ing]' or 'sanctify[ing]' these endeavours so that their glorification of God temporarily becomes visible to others around them. The Church is the only place in the world where this takes place at present. And it does so not for its own sake but in order that the whole world would one day glorify God so that 'everything' may be done to the glory of God (1 Cor.10:31).⁶⁸

This, then, is how we must describe what the creature can do. It serves God's self-glorification in the same way as an echoing wall can serve only to repeat and broadcast the voice which the echo 'answers'... This is what may be done by the man... who is called and appointed in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit to thanksgiving, who is created anew and as such directed and upheld. He is permitted to serve the divine self-glorification, and in this way and to this extent what he does can have a share in God's own glory to which his action is directed.⁶⁹

We are not here and now excluded from the glory of God. But the form in which we are surrounded by it, and in which we participate in it, is the form of the Church, proclamation, faith, confession, theology, prayer. The temporal form of God's glorification through the creature is the form of this special sphere... It is as we are gathered to the Church, as the Word is proclaimed to us, as we believe and profess our faith, as theology does its work, as all this being and action is a single prayer and yet also in particular presents itself before God as prayer, that we really glorify God and therefore share in His self-glorification... God... is glorious in His community, and for that reason and in that way in all the world.⁷⁰

Barth also acknowledges that the world *extra muros ecclesiae* glorifies God. He insists that the entire created order - in its 'heights' and 'depths', from the 'angels' to the smallest creatures - praises or echoes God's glory. It does so at present both to 'instruct' and 'shame' humanity for its refusal to join in its praise. This too is a fulfilment of the purpose for which it was created. However it too will only be complete or perfect in the future

⁶⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 642, 675-677.

⁶⁹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 670.

⁷⁰ Barth, *CDII/1*, 676-677.

when, at the resurrection of the dead, it is ‘revealed’ for all to see (Rom.8:18). And so it is carried out ‘secretly’ at present. However Barth insists that ‘more and more’ of its glorification of God can be ‘seen’ and ‘known’ ‘in faith’ in the Church even now.⁷¹

It is from this point of view [i.e. the economic overflow of the immanent divine glory] that all His creatures are to be viewed both first and last. God wills them and loves them because, far from having their existence of themselves and their meaning in themselves, they have their being and existence in the movement of the divine self-glorification, in the transition to them of His immanent joyfulness. It is their destiny to offer a true if inadequate response in the temporal sphere to the jubilation with which the Godhead is filled from eternity to eternity. This is the destiny of man... And this is what is expected from all creation because this is the source from which they come. It is in this light that they are to be seen and heard, This is their secret that will one day come out and be revealed... The creature has no voice of its own. It does not point to its own picture. It echoes and reflects the glory of the Lord. It does this in its heights and its depths, its happiness and its misery. The angels do it... But even the smallest creatures do it too. They do it along with us or without us. They do it also against us to shame and instruct us. They would not and could not exist unless first and last and properly they did this and only this. And when man accepts again his destiny in Jesus Christ in the promise and faith of the future revelation of his participation in God’s glory as it is already given Him here and now, he is only like a late-comer slipping shamefacedly into creation’s choir in heaven and earth, which has never ceased its praise, but merely suffered and sighed, as it still does, that in inconceivable folly and ingratitude its living centre man does not hear its voice, its response, its echoing of the divine glory, or rather hears it in a completely perverted way, and refuses to co-operate in the jubilation which surrounds him.⁷²

[W]e shall be both comforted and shamed by the fact that there is no sphere in heaven or on earth which even here and now is not secretly full of the glory of God. It is in the Church that this is known and more and more of this secret reality is seen in faith. But it cannot be seen and known outside the Church. Nowhere else can either the truth or the secret nature of this content be known, or the certainty of its future revelation.⁷³

Finally Barth contends that it is only in the future, ‘post-temporal eternity’, that creaturely glorification of God will be complete or ‘perfect’. Then it will finally be carried out in the ‘totality’ of creaturely existence: both in the bodily nature of each member of creation

⁷¹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 648, 677; Price, 174.

⁷² Barth, *CDII/1*, 648.

⁷³ Barth, *CDII/1*, 677.

and in all members of creation as well. For then humanity will finally join not only ‘creation’s choir’ but also God Himself in His eternal jubilation at His glory. And so God will at last truly be ‘all in all’.⁷⁴

3.3. *Implications*

On the basis of this summary of Barth’s description of God’s glory in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 we must now make the fairly simple observation that it seems that Barth assumes a fairly all-encompassing analogy in this passage. He proposes that not a quality or a being but rather an act - the act of ‘glorifying’ God - is common to five actors (who, as we shall see, are really just three subjects): the eternal Son of God, the incarnate Son of God, the human Jesus Christ, the Church and the world *extra muros ecclesiae*.⁷⁵ It is obvious from Barth’s description of these acts that they are not completely different from each other. They all essentially involve declaring, manifesting or attesting the perfect divine being to others. However it is clear that they are not completely identical to each other either. As we have seen they vary from one to another. In God, for instance, this act takes the form of a self-glorification, whereas amongst creatures it involves the glorification of another. And although in human creatures it comprises both knowledge and obedience to God’s glory this is not the case for the glorification of God by the non-human creation.⁷⁶ Since there is neither an equivocal nor univocal relation between these acts then we can only conclude that Barth assumes there is an analogical relationship between them.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 648-649, 675. Barth’s concept of glorification thus parallels that of Protestant Orthodoxy in distinguishing between a *theologia viatorum* and *theologia beatorum*. See Muller, 546.

⁷⁵ cf. Barth, *CDI/1*, 239.

⁷⁶ cf. Barth, *KGSG*, 42-43.

⁷⁷ This should come as little surprise because, as Richard Muller briefly acknowledges, the Protestant Orthodox themselves assumed an analogy of glory largely as a result of their fundamental distinctions between the ‘essential’ ‘objective’ glory and ‘formal’ glorification of God and the economic or ‘respective’

Like all of his analogies up to this point in his career Barth's analogy here is evidently a type of *analogia attributionis extrinsecae*. As we have seen Barth believes that the act of glorifying God is original and proper to the Son of God in the immanent trinity but is predicated of human and non-human creatures because of their dependence upon Him for their redemption. Moreover it is attributed to them not because of any ability or activity of their own but on the basis of the incarnate Son of God's own prototypical creaturely glorification of God. Like all its predecessors this is also clearly a theological, Christocentric and actualistic form of analogy. As we have seen Barth believes that it is only by a twofold work of God in Jesus Christ - the Son of God's act of revealing His glory through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth and the Holy Spirit's work of uniting people to Jesus Christ's own perfect creaturely glorification of God - that the Church may really and visibly glorify God and thereby participate in the Son of God's own eternal glorification of God. And it is only as it does so, or as Barth suggests as it knows and obeys 'in faith', that the glorification of God by the world *extra muros ecclesiae* becomes perceptible to it as well. Barth appears to believe that precisely because both the Church and the world *extra muros ecclesiae* only visibly glorify God by means of this twofold act of God which has the character of an event that their glorification of God is likewise punctiliar in character: it has no extension beyond this act. As we have seen Barth claims that it is only when God 'hearken[s]' to and 'fulfill[s]' the prayers of the Church by 'bless[ing]' or 'sanctify[ing]' their faithful attempts to serve His glory that they really and

'objective' glory and 'formal' glorification of God. In clarifying the nature of creaturely glorification of God according to the Protestant Orthodox Muller states, 'It is, in other words, the subjective contemplation of the divine glory, not by God, as in its ad intra analogue, but by rational creatures'. Muller, 550. While Barth's account of God's glory by no means just uncritically repeats those of Protestant Orthodoxy as we have seen they are the primary theological resource he uses for his view of the matter and he does at least follow their main distinctions. For more on Barth's relationship to the Protestant Orthodox in this volume of *Church Dogmatics* see Holmes, *Revisiting*, 12-21.

visibly glorify God.⁷⁸ And he insists that the glorification of God by the world *extra muros ecclesiae* is visible to the Church not continuously but merely ‘more and more’.⁷⁹

These five actors who glorify God are, of course, in reality just three subjects since the first three are merely the same divine subject. And so Barth’s analogy in this passage is in fact another form of analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly realities. We might describe it in sum as an ‘analogy of glory’ or ‘*analogia gloriae*’.

Finally, Barth’s *analogia gloriae* seems to be essentially just a reworking of the main elements of his *analogia fidei* albeit now with the focus of the relation upon obedient witness to God rather than simply knowledge of Him since in this account Barth is seeking to explain God’s glory rather than continue establishing an alternative theological epistemology. In a sense this should come as little surprise. Because quite aside from the formal similarities between them which we are about to see Barth himself frequently describes God’s glory as His ‘revelation’.⁸⁰

As we have seen Barth’s *analogia fidei* already conceived that the Son and the Father in the immanent trinity are both object to each other in their own divine being and thus know each other directly and that this is the ontological basis of God’s self-revelation in the economy of salvation. The Son of God who knows Himself perfectly therefore objectifies Himself through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth and the Holy Spirit enables sinfully impotent humans to participate in the protological and eschatological humanity of Jesus and thereby to know God indirectly. As we have seen although it was less central to his

⁷⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 676-677.

⁷⁹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 677.

⁸⁰ e.g. Barth, *CDII/1*, 642, 644, 649, 668; Price, 171, 181.

focus at this stage of his career Barth nevertheless persistently acknowledged that such humans also obey God in accordance with this indirect knowledge of Him so that their whole 'life' and 'being' becomes 'a repetition, an analogy, a parallel to His own being'.⁸¹ And finally, although also secondary to his concern, we have seen that Barth also consistently maintained that at these times the Church may recognise that the world *extra muros ecclesiae* reflects or echoes this revelation as well.

By comparison as we have just seen Barth's *analogia gloriae* claims similarly that the Son and the Father in the immanent trinity not only share their glory with one another but that the Son glorifies the Father and that this is the ontological 'basis' of God's glory in the economy of salvation. The Son of God therefore manifests His resplendent divine being through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth and the Holy Spirit enables sinfully impotent humans to participate in the protological and eschatological creaturely glorification of God by Jesus Christ and thereby to glorify Him by both gratefully 'knowing' and 'obeying' His glory as it is revealed in Jesus Christ so that their whole being becomes the 'image' or 'correspondence' of it. And of course Barth insists that at these times the Church may also temporarily perceive that the world *extra muros ecclesiae* glorifies God as well.

3.4. Conclusion

Despite spilling over the pages of Scripture to a far greater extent than the related but far more popular category of revelation remarkably the perfection of God's glory has largely been neglected by Christian theologians throughout history, although thankfully that is

⁸¹ Indeed he does so in part because he believes that knowledge of God is itself already a form of obedience to God. Barth, *CDI/2*, 267, 276-278 cf. 265-279. See also Barth, *GD*, 171-173, 194-195; Barth, *CDI/2*, 205-206, 369-371; Barth, *CDII/1*, 26.

now being steadily rectified. Karl Barth's rich song of praise on the theme at the conclusion and summary to his doctrine of the perfections of God in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 constitutes a rare exception to this trend. It not only surrounds or encircles his entire account of God's beauty, providing the background or conceptual framework of it, but it is heavy with significance as well. Yet perhaps because of its plenitude this has largely gone unrecognised until now. But in this passage as we have seen Barth claims that the eternal Son of God not only glorifies the Father on high but magnifies Him here below in the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth in such a way that through it not only the Church but, in turn, the whole world comes to participate in His self-glorification. Jason Fout's hunch is therefore correct: Barth assumes an *analogia gloriae* in this passage. As we shall see in chapter five that means that it is not simply possible but probable that Barth assumes an analogy of beauty in this passage as well. But before we do we must establish the historical context of this passage by examining Barth's earlier reflections upon beauty.

Part II: Analogia Pulchritudinis

Chapter 4: Antecedents: Barth's Rudimentary Analogy of Theological, Ecclesial and Worldly Beauty (1919-1940)

4.1. Introduction

Although it is seldom realised beauty has historically been of modest but real importance to the Christian faith. Scripture contains only a few references to the concept yet acknowledges both spiritual and moral beauty and implies that physical beauty may mirror this. The ancient Hebrew psalmists famously prayed, 'One thing I ask... that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty [*no'am*] of the Lord' (Ps.27:4). They described the redeemed people of God, cleansed of iniquity and clothed in glory, as perfect in beauty: 'Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty [*yophee*], God shines forth' (Ps.50:2; Lam.2:15). And the metaphor of creation as the 'image' of God suggests that it too may reflect His perfect beauty (Gen. 1:26; Rom. 1:20).¹ Beauty is essential to creaturely existence influencing decisions as diverse as how we dress, our choice of mate and the way we construct and arrange our homes.² And the experience of being struck by God's beauty through some natural or artistic beauty, like a crimson sunset, rolling countryside or emerald sea, has been indispensable to the spirituality of many Christians from the very beginning.³ Benedict XVI, for instance, recalls

For me an unforgettable experience was the Bach concert that Leonard Bernstein conducted in Munich... I was sitting next to the Lutheran Bishop

¹ This implication found explication in the apocrypha, especially Wisdom 13:1-5: 'For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionally the maker of them is seen'. P. Sherry, 'Beauty and Divinity', in F. Burch Brown (ed), *Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts* (Oxford: OUP, 2014), 45, 51. For an overview of beauty in the Bible see especially J. Davidson, *Toward a Theology of Beauty: A Biblical Perspective* (New York: University of America Press, 2008); C. Caverno, 'Beauty', in J. Orr (ed), *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, i: A-D (Chicago: Howard-Severance, 1915), 420.

² R. Scruton, *Beauty: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 67-81.

³ This experience has traditionally been given theoretical expression in the *via pulchritudinis* or 'way of beauty'. For a historical overview of this concept see especially Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 103-140; A. McGrath, *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 261-290; Pontifical Council for Culture, 'The Via Pulchritudinis, Way of Beauty', Concluding Document of the Plenary Assembly (2006), www.cultura.va/content/cultura/en/pub/documenti/ViaPulchritudinis.html, accessed 4 April 2019.

Hanselmann. When the last note of one of the great Thomas-Kantor-Cantatas triumphantly faded away, we looked at each other spontaneously and right then we said: 'Anyone who has heard this, knows that the faith is true'.⁴

Yet it is true that Protestant Christians on the whole have historically been more reticent than others to devote systematic attention to beauty and that this, in turn, is largely because they have traditionally had more concerns about it.⁵ Whereas philosophy turned from *ad hoc* to systematic investigation of beauty in the eighteenth century⁶ and wider theology followed suit after the renaissance of philosophical interest in the concept from the 1970s⁷, despite the pioneering work of Barth on the subject systematic description of beauty only began to gain popularity amongst Protestants at the end of the twentieth century.⁸ While concerns about beauty, such as its capacity to distract and association with worldly pleasures, have plagued Christian thinkers from Augustine to Aquinas and Bernard of Clairveux and historically impeded all theological investigation of the topic, Protestant Christians have been weighed down by additional concerns borne of their unique historical and theological identity.⁹ They have questioned whether the concept is truly biblical¹⁰, been wary of its historical association with Platonic philosophy¹¹ and feared that it could once again become an idol.¹²

⁴ J. Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, tr. M. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 37.

⁵ O. Bychkov, 'Introduction', in O. Bychkov & J. Fodor (eds), *Theological Aesthetics After von Balthasar* (Milton Keynes: Ashgate, 2008), xv; D. Treier, M. Husbands & R. Lundin, 'Introduction', in D. Treier, M. Husbands & R. Lundin (eds), *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007), 8-9.

⁶ P. Guyer, 'History of Modern Aesthetics', in J. Levinson (ed), *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 25-26.

⁷ Sherry, *Beauty and Divinity*, 44; G. Thiessen, 'General Introduction', in G. Thiessen (ed), *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 1.

⁸ Bychkov, xv-xvi; Treier, Husbands & Lundin, 8-9.

⁹ See, for instance, U. Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, tr. H. Bredin (New Haven: York, 2002), 6-11; Sherry, *Beauty and Divinity*, 46.

¹⁰ J. King, *The Beauty of the Lord: Theology as Aesthetics* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2018), 7.

¹¹ Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 53-55; J. Begbie, 'Created Beauty: The Witness of J.S. Bach', in M. Husbands, D. Treier & R. Lundin (eds), *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007), 26-27.

¹² Bychkov, xv.

In the opening of his influential theological aesthetics as we have seen von Balthasar implies that precisely such a distinctively Protestant concern, namely, the rejection of the *analogia entis*, prevented Barth from going beyond his pioneering reassertion of theological beauty and acknowledging a relationship between this and the mundane beauty of everyday experience. In the last section of our thesis we comprehensively refuted this claim by demonstrating that in fact Barth did not simply dismiss but transformed this longstanding conception by fashioning it into an increasingly coherent alternative analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly realities which he himself lauded as the true analogy of being. There was, then, no peculiarly Protestant impediment to him embracing an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty and hence no reason why in principle he could not.

With that accomplished, in this section we can at last turn our attention to von Balthasar's interpretation of Barth's view of beauty itself. In this chapter we will claim that contra Balthasar even in the formative stages of his career, from 1919-1940, Barth already has three rudiments of his later analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty. He already assumes that worldly forms of beauty may echo God's redemptive self-revelation; he develops a preliminary analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty; and he formulates a theoretical basis for this conception. As we shall see this surprising development has its roots in both Barth's providential encounter with medieval accounts of beauty and his concept of natural revelation.¹³

¹³ Stoltzfus's claim that Barth's concept of beauty is the product instead of his appropriation of nineteenth century secular musical theory is, by contrast, controversial and ultimately unconvincing. See P. Stoltzfus, *Theology as Performance: Music, Aesthetics, and God in Western Thought* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 107-166.

Like virtually all premodern thinkers on the topic we shall find that Barth's early and late reflections on beauty take the form of brief and scattered observations made in the course of deliberations on other themes. Like all secondary accounts of beauty in those thinkers then we too shall have to reconstruct Barth's early view of beauty from these diffuse remarks.¹⁴

4.2. *Early Assumptions about the Beauty of the World (1919-1940)*

Surprisingly the earliest public statement which Barth makes about beauty in his academic career, and thus his most original and enduring conviction about it, is neither a polemic against the beautiful, an admonition about its dangers nor a reaffirmation of theological beauty but rather an acknowledgment of the potential theological significance of cultural and natural forms of beauty and secular theories of beauty. In the immediate aftermath of his break from Protestant Modernism Barth denies that secular forms and theories of beauty have any inherent relationship to God. However he already claims that they could acquire this deeper reference by God's redemptive intervention. Although this might startle some in fact it is simply the logical outworking of Barth's longstanding concept of natural revelation. Many Christians throughout history have assumed that the traditional belief that the creation may bear witness to its Creator extends to and encompasses its beauty as well.¹⁵ In chapter two we saw that Barth himself affirmed a form of this Christian conviction throughout his life. But we must now point out that for him too natural revelation always extended to and included the beauty of the world.

¹⁴ J. Marenbon, 'Medieval and Renaissance Aesthetics', in S. Davies et al. (ed), *A Companion to Aesthetics* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 22-27.

¹⁵ See for example Calvin, *Institutes*, I.5.1-2. Sherry, *Beauty and Divinity*, 51; Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 128; Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 105

In our opening chapter we showed that Barth's Tambach lecture (1919), far from the simple denunciation of the theological significance of culture which many took it for at the time, was actually the first formalisation of Barth's conviction that human endeavour beyond the walls of the Church could, by God's grace, mirror God's own work. Adopting an *Urgestalt* of his *analogia crucis* Barth proposes that by God's intervention the unremarkable history of Jesus of Nazareth could be momentarily interpreted as a parable of time itself: created by God yet destined for reconciliation from its alienation to Him. This, in turn, gives Christians the possibility and responsibility of identifying conservative and progressive social endeavours as local productions of this same cosmic drama and supporting them. But we must now point out that in this same lecture Barth for the first time also draws an important inference from this general concept: he claims that the beauty of some human artefacts can also assume an eternal significance. Barth lists the beauty of Expressionist art as an example of an avant-garde cultural development which is to be recognised and embraced by the Church as a harbinger of cosmic redemption.¹⁶

However strong our aversion may be to the work of modern expressionistic artists, it is more than clear that for these men the chief concern is the essence, the content, the referring of the beautiful [*des Schönen*] to life's unity, in contrast to that *art for its own sake* which prevailed during the last generation, but which, after all, can cite precedent with certainty in neither Raphael nor Dürer. For this tendency as well we must spare more than a shake of the head.¹⁷

The deep dignity which Barth bestows on Expressionist art here is all the more remarkable given that a later personal acquaintance with some of its chief protagonists prompted him

¹⁶ Barth's interpretation of the theological significance of Expressionist art here foreshadows Paul Tillich's more expansive reflections upon it. Though, in contrast to Tillich, Barth understands Expressionist art as an illustration rather than a preparation (i.e. point of contact) for the Kingdom of God. See P. Tillich, *On Art and Architecture*, tr. R. Scharleman (New York: Crossroads, 1987), 177.

¹⁷ Barth, *CPS*, 292; K. Barth, 'Der Christ in der Gesellschaft. Eine Tambacher Rede', in *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie: Gesammelte Vorträge* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1925), 46.

to confess little personal empathy with the movement.¹⁸ At the time he wrote these words the artistic style pioneered varyingly by Kandinsky, Marc, *Die Brücke* and *Der Blaue Reiter* which came to be referred to collectively as Expressionism had dominated German visual art for almost a generation.¹⁹ Triggered by the increasing political instability and eventual collapse of German civilisation in the First World War, Expressionism arose as a protest against the established artistic style of the day, German Romanticism, which persisted, through a simple re-presentation and embellishment of creaturely form, in a bourgeois idolisation of the status quo which had now become completely unintelligible to society.²⁰ It vocalised this protest through an artistic form which, by contrast, stretched, distorted and disintegrated creaturely form, defaced it with unrealistic colour and punctured it with symbol in order to make it iconic to a meaning beyond itself again: typically the artist's own deepest anxieties about society or visions of utopia.²¹ In this endeavour Expressionist artists understood themselves to be reviving the great tradition of symbolic art once championed by Medieval and Renaissance luminaries like Raphael and Dürer but long since forgotten.²² Barth apparently interprets their attempt to reunite formal artistic beauty with meaning as an anticipation of the imminent reconciliation of the world to God.

Yet some may justifiably suspect that Barth's assertion of the eternal significance of certain forms of artistic beauty at this early juncture was a mere youthful exuberance

¹⁸ Busch, 125; S. Webb, *Refiguring Theology: The Rhetoric of Karl Barth* (New York: UNY, 1991), 9; P. Brazier, 'Barth and Expressionism: Some Further Considerations', *Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie*, 21 (2005), 41. This was despite the fact that, as Balthasar and others have noted, Barth's early theology can be interpreted as a form of theological expressionism which, having been birthed in the same culture of crisis as Expressionist art, shares many formal similarities with it. See Balthasar, *TKB*, 67; 8-11 McCormack, *Analogy of Being*, 109-110.

¹⁹ A. Morrell, 'German Art', in H. Brigstocke (ed), *Oxford Companion to Western Art* (Oxford: OUP, 2003); E. Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, tr. P. Falla (Padstow: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 84-88.

²⁰ Kolb, 84-86; Webb, 12; Brazier, 34-37, 40.

²¹ Morrell; Webb, 12; Brazier, 34-37, 40.

²² Brazier, 47.

which was quickly left behind under pressure of the theological concerns *du jour*. But in fact we find just the opposite. In the years which immediately followed, with the publication of his second edition of *Romans* (1922), Barth's thunderous assault upon human religion reached its undisputed crescendo. Yet here we find that Barth does not abandon but extends the conviction which he first voiced at Tambach. It is certainly true that in the second edition of *Romans* (1922) Barth spells out that the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead implies that not even an 'aesthetic' [*ästhetischen*] human possibility - presumably the ability to theorise the beautiful and make beautiful things - could, on its own, achieve anything of eternal significance.²³ Yet when Barth's former professor Adolf von Harnack remonstrated, in a public debate between the two published in *die christliche Welt* (1923), that this enervates the kind of Christian spirituality commended by the Bible we find that Barth takes the opportunity to nuance his previously one-sided refutation.

Harnack protests that Barth's refusal of any relation between 'the good, the true, and the beautiful' in the world and God is inconsistent with the admonition of Philippians 4:8 for Christians to meditate upon God by means of the excellent things of this world. Unsurprisingly, he believes that such a relation can be established simply by the tools of human reason.

'Whatever is true, honourable, just, gracious, if there is any excellence, anything worthy of praise, think on these things' – if this liberating admonition still stands, how can one erect barriers between the experience of God and the good, the true, and the beautiful, instead of relating them with the experience of God by means of historical knowledge and critical reflection?²⁴

In response Barth concedes that there is in fact a relation between the 'good, true and

²³ Barth, *Römerbrief*, 72; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 255-256.

²⁴ K. Barth & A. von Harnack, 'Correspondence', *Continuum*, 7 (1969), 196.

beautiful' in the world and God. However he claims it is one which can be realised by God alone in the event of His self-revelation. Barth suggests that this, rather than the alternative, is the true intention of Philippians 4:8. The broader context of the passage reveals that it is in fact 'God', the One who is 'higher than our understanding', who by enabling the believer's participation in Jesus Christ (i.e. 'keep[ing] our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus'), establishes a relation between the excellent things of this world and Himself through which He can be contemplated.

'The peace of God which is higher than our understanding' (Phil.4:7). The 'barrier' of this 'higher' is a basic and insurmountable one. If he does 'keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus' and thus makes *possible* the admonition of Phil. 4:8 (Whatever is true...), then as the one who *as such* is *higher* than our understanding. There is a relation between him and what we call good, true and beautiful [*gut, wahr und schön*], but this relation is precisely the 'barrier', the divine *crisis*, on the basis of which only one may first speak seriously about the good, the true and the beautiful [*Guten, Wahren und Schönen*].²⁵

In effect Barth's comments, far from jettisoning his former conviction, now extend it. Barth claims that not only the beauty of certain artefacts but of the entire world can, by God's initiative, acquire a theological significance. And yet even this confession still did not exhaust the matter for Barth. For, as we have suggested, the very same concept of natural revelation which led him to concede that the beauty of the world could be a parable of the eternal also implied that this was possible for secular theorising about its beauty as well. So it was virtually inevitable that at some point Barth would also spell out this implication.

As it turns out an address to a student conference at Aarau in 1920 entitled *Biblical Questions, Insights and Vistas* provided just the opportunity. The ambition of Barth's

²⁵ Barth and Harnack, 199 cf. 202; K. Barth, 'An Prof. Dr. Adolf von Harnack, Berlin, 1923 (zwei Briefe)', in *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe: Offene Briefe 1909-1935 (GA V.35)*, ed. D. Koch (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2001), 65-66.

talk here was entirely pastoral: he sought to help Christian students reconcile their knowledge of the Bible with the increasingly sophisticated scientific worldview which confronted them each week in lectures and which seemed to make it redundant. ‘The question we now have to consider is, “What does the Bible offer us toward an understanding of the meaning of the world?”’.²⁶ Barth answers by invoking a concept of natural revelation similar to the one he elaborated in Tambach. Still finalising the form of his *analogia crucis* Barth points out to the students that the Bible conveys knowledge not only of a dead man, Jesus of Nazareth, but precisely therein, when God elects, of the Creator and Redeemer of the entire universe.²⁷ This means that Biblical knowledge, far from being irrelevant, may legitimately adjudicate the theorems of *die Wissenschaften*: either confirming (‘includ[ing]’) or invalidating (‘concluding’) them²⁸. And here for the first time Barth specifies that this is true also of the theories of ‘esthetics’ [*die ästhetische*].²⁹ Though we cannot be sure exactly what he means by this term here it is likely that he uses it in the general sense which it derived from Baumgarten and retained throughout much of the modern era of the science of sense perception and its objects including beauty and art.³⁰

The immediate answer to our question is, of course, that the Bible offers us a knowledge of God: ...the beginning and the end, the origin and the limit, the creative unity and the last problem of all knowledge... It is our part to confirm it in our own lives by labouring to relate ourselves, our daily task, and our hour of history to God the Creator and Redeemer. It is not a meaning apart from other meanings, for in it all others – the meanings of natural science, of history, of esthetics [*die ästhetische*], and of religion – are at once included and concluded; and this meaning in the last analysis will be found to be identical with that of philosophy, so far as philosophy understands itself.³¹

²⁶ K. Barth, ‘Biblical Questions, Insights, and Vistas’, in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, tr. D. Horton (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), 51.

²⁷ Barth, *Biblical Questions*, 60-96 cf. McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 234; Busch, 114-115.

²⁸ Barth, *Biblical Questions*, 51-52.

²⁹ Barth, *Biblical Questions*, 51-52; K. Barth, ‘Biblische Fragen, Einsichten und Ausblicke’, in *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie: Gesammelte Vorträge* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1925), 70.

³⁰ F. Burch Brown, *Religious Aesthetics: A Theological Study of Making and Meaning* (Princeton: PUP, 1989), 21.

³¹ Barth, *Biblical Questions*, 51-52; Barth, *Biblische Fragen*, 70.

Though Barth said little more about aesthetics in the years which immediately followed we are justified in thinking that once again he did not simply abandon this early conviction of its potential theological value. In the second of his Gifford Lectures (1937-1938), delivered many years later, we catch at least a glimpse of its reassertion.³² Here Barth attempts to translate the opening article of the Scottish Confession, the belief that there is ‘ane onelie God, to whom only we must cleave... serve... worship... and... trust’, into a contemporary idiom.³³ Barth claims that God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ evokes this human confession.³⁴ And this confession, in turn, relativises every humanly conceived system of truth, ‘all... human ideologies and mythologies, philosophies and religions’, unmasking them as creaturely rather than supreme authorities.³⁵ In further specifying what such knowledge of God means Barth appears to reinvolve his earlier conclusion that human systems of truth could be either confirmed or invalidated by it. ““We acknowledge ane onelie God” means that the principles and objects of these systems, whatever they may be, are in reality no gods or at best gods so-called. Are they to be annihilated? Perhaps not at all, perhaps not yet’.³⁶ And here once again, crucially, we find that Barth includes ‘aesthetic’ theories [*ästhetischen Axiomen*] amongst the examples.³⁷

4.3. *Development of a Rudimentary Analogy of Theological and Ecclesial Beauty (1926-1940)*

Barth’s stable though fairly understated conviction about the potential value of secular forms and theories of beauty was soon complemented in the early 1930’s by two

³² Barth, *KGSG*, 13-24.

³³ Barth, *KGSG*, 13-16.

³⁴ Barth, *KGSG*, 13-16, 19-22.

³⁵ Barth, *KGSG*, 16-19.

³⁶ Barth, *KGSG*, 18-19.

³⁷ Barth, *KGSG*, 18; K. Barth, *Gotteserkenntnis und Gottesdienst nach reformatorischer Lehre* (Zollikon–Zürich: Verlag der Evangelischen Buchhandlung, 1938), 54-55.

additional beliefs. During these years Barth gradually conceded to the importance of ascribing beauty to God and its logical corollary: the belief that the Church's witness to God shared in His beauty. The form of these beliefs was still a long way even from the relatively modest one which they would achieve in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 (1940). They are sporadic and often cautionary admissions which cry out for integration and theoretical substantiation. Yet the substance of them is already the same. As we shall see they both developed and remained at this stage quite independent of Barth's beliefs about secular beauty.

In our prior discussions we have seen how Barth's humanism fuelled his reformulation of a variety of doctrines throughout his career in order to make them more humane. But one of the most significant of these for our purposes was the Reformed concept of effectual call: the belief that God sovereignly summons those whom He has eternally chosen to know and serve Him, by an unconditioned and gracious act of the Holy Spirit, since they are in slavery to sin and hence cannot do this for themselves. From the outset Barth's rejection of an anthropological basis for knowledge of God implied in principle his dismissal of the claim of natural theology that a human act of rational argumentation could effectively convince rebellious humanity to know and serve God and his acceptance of the Reformed thesis that this was possible by an act of God's sovereign grace alone. But from 1924 Barth's humanism began to drive him beyond the customary Reformed reliance on an equivocal Aristotelian concept of cause to denote this act since it was vulnerable to a fatalistic interpretation, and in search of a more unequivocally non-coercive definition of the concept. This quest ultimately paved the way for his rediscovery of the traditional Christian confession of God's beauty.

By the time that Barth attempted his first systematic theology, the *Göttingen Dogmatics* (1924), he was already impatient with the fatalistic conceptions of the effectual call of the Holy Spirit peddled by some of his Reformed predecessors. In §7.II of the work, having explained how God becomes an object to human perception, Barth defines the conditions in which it is possible for human subjects to know and serve Him, extrapolating these from the event in which the Church believes this actually occurs: the Holy Spirit's miraculous regeneration of fallen humanity.³⁸ But throughout the account he consistently opposes any construal of this efficacious work of the Holy Spirit by analogy with a modern scientific understanding of natural cause.³⁹ In the modern era the common understanding of efficient cause narrowed considerably from what it had been hitherto. Since the time of Aristotle it had meant simply an acting substance but with the rise of the modern scientific worldview it was increasingly interpreted as an inactive and deterministic natural phenomenon exemplified in such ideas as a force or law of nature.⁴⁰ Barth's various objections throughout the account appear to target any confusion between the efficacious operation of the Holy Spirit and this concept. Barth denounces characterisations of the Holy Spirit as an impersonal 'cause'⁴¹ or 'source'⁴² and His act as an abstract law or force like 'fate'⁴³ which simply conditions or 'generates'⁴⁴ various effects in human beings. It is clear that he holds at least some of his Reformed colleagues responsible for promoting such a misunderstanding. In particular, he repeatedly singles out Schleiermacher. Was not his God simply the impersonal generative 'source'⁴⁵ or

³⁸ Barth, *GD*, 176-177.

³⁹ See Barth, *GD*, 177-181.

⁴⁰ M. Hulswit, 'Some Key Moments in the History of the Concept of Causation', in *From Cause to Causation: A Peircean Perspective* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2002), 41-46.

⁴¹ Barth, *GD*, 178-179.

⁴² Barth, *GD*, 178-179.

⁴³ Barth, *GD*, 179-180.

⁴⁴ Barth, *GD*, 179-180.

⁴⁵ Barth, *GD*, 178-179.

whence of an entirely passive state of human being: the ‘feeling of absolute dependence’?⁴⁶

The primary motivation for Barth’s determined resistance to this conflation is obvious enough. Fundamentally it is epistemological: it is necessary in order to prevent his theological basis for knowledge of God from again being mistaken for an anthropological one as happened when he published the first edition of *Romans* (1919). Related to this it is also theological: such a conception would effectively anthropomorphise the operation of divine grace making it at best quantitatively rather than qualitatively distinct from creaturely activities.⁴⁷ And yet it is clear that there is also a humanist motive at work here as well. Barth recognises that such a conception would have catastrophic implications for human agency.

In this relation we cannot be mere objects. We must be just as much self-conscious subjects as God himself is. As our existence in contradiction - we must constantly stress this - is not just something we suffer from but our own *act*, so our encounter with God must be not merely something that comes upon us like fate or a roaring hailstorm.⁴⁸

To libertarians, of course, the concept of effectual call, the Holy Spirit’s determination of what humans choose to know and do, is in itself fatalistic. But as we briefly suggested in our first chapter Barth follows Augustine, Calvin and others in assuming that the freedom essential to unregenerate humanity lies not in deliberation, an ability to choose between equally possible alternatives or courses of action, but spontaneity and autonomy, the power to choose for itself what it knows and does or, put simply, to ‘do what it wants’.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Barth, *GD*, 179-180.

⁴⁷ e.g. Barth, *GD*, 179.

⁴⁸ Barth, *GD*, 179.

⁴⁹ e.g. Barth, *GD*, 77-79, 174. Macken helpfully distinguishes Barth’s view of human freedom as ‘autonomy’ as opposed to ‘autarky’. See J. Macken, *The Autonomy Theme in the Church Dogmatics: Karl Barth and his Critics* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), 1-21; J. Couenhoven, ‘Karl Barth’s Conception(s) of Divine

This would not in principle be compromised by the Holy Spirit's predetermination of its choice. But it would be if such a determination was achieved by means of external compulsion or coercion: a type of force which either undermines or completely negates its ability to choose for itself.⁵⁰ And we can see in this passage that Barth recognises that that is precisely what would happen if the effectual call of the Holy Spirit were to be understood on the model of a law or force of nature. It would in effect become a form of external compulsion or coercion which would force unregenerate humanity to choose to know and obey God thereby undermining not only its own choice and freedom but therewith its very subjectivity.

What Barth needs then is a conception of the Holy Spirit's efficacious determination which not only bears no semblance to a simple force of nature in the modern sense but which, ideally, operates either by positing or a form of conditioning which evokes rather than suppresses the reason, affections and will of unregenerate humanity. In this passage we can see that Barth already begins a tentative sketch of such a definition. In this relation God must be thought of as the person of the Creator Spirit⁵¹ and His act as the divine *fiat*

and Human Freedom(s)', in D. Migliore (ed), *Commanding Grace: Studies in Karl Barth's Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 246-251, 254-255. For the similar views of Augustine and Calvin see J. Couenhoven, *Stricken by Sin, Cured by Christ: Agency, Necessity and Culpability in Augustinian Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 78-85; B. Gerrish, 'The Place of Calvin in Christian Theology', in D. McKim (ed), *Cambridge Companion to John Calvin* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 294-295.

⁵⁰ Although some recent definitions distinguish compulsion as a type of force which negates a person's choice completely (e.g. knocking them unconscious and dragging them off with you) and coercion as a kind of pressure or power which merely undermines the integrity of a person's choice (e.g. threatening them with physical violence if they do not comply with your wishes or heaping social opprobrium on them until they do), since both are ultimately fatalistic and thus equally problematic from Barth's perspective, we will follow most traditional definitions by using the terms more or less synonymously in the general sense stated above. See S. Anderson, 'Coercion', in B. Zalta (ed), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University, Winter 2017), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/coercion>, accessed 2 April 2019 cf. J. Feinberg, 'Coercion', in E. Craig (ed), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1998), <http://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/coercion/v-1>, accessed 2 April 2019.

⁵¹ Barth, *GD*, 178-179.

of creation *ex nihilo*⁵² so that its effect, in turn, is conceived as an ‘activation’⁵³ of unregenerate humanity: its own voluntary choice to trust and obey God.

When Barth’s struggle in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* is placed in the light of a much later passage of his work dealing with the related theme of God’s sovereign providence of the world we can see much more precisely what he was really up to in that earlier account. By *Church Dogmatics III/3* (1950) Barth now recognises that Reformed theologians, like all others, have traditionally made an unqualified use of the equivocal Aristotelian terminology of cause, inherited from scholastic theology, in order to formulate their conceptions of the efficacious divine agency operative in the sovereign governance of the creation and other similar works.⁵⁴ Barth believes that this enabled an account of the sovereign work of God which, although formally correct, was soon interpreted on analogy with the modern concept of natural cause. This resulted in both gross material distortions and ultimately a historic tragedy.⁵⁵ The God proclaimed by Reformed divines came to be thought of as ‘a purely formal concept... a supreme being... with absolute, unconditioned and irresistible power’⁵⁶ and ‘an unconditioned and incontrovertible purpose’⁵⁷, in sum, ‘omnipotence, a supreme cause and no more’.⁵⁸ His work, in turn, was interpreted as ‘the unconditioned and irresistible execution of this purpose over against... the activity of the creature’⁵⁹, ‘the absolute compulsion’⁶⁰ of a ‘despot’.⁶¹ As a result Reformed Christians

⁵² Barth, *GD*, 176, 179.

⁵³ Barth, *GD*, 179-180.

⁵⁴ Barth, *CDIII/3*, 98.

⁵⁵ Barth, *CDIII/3*, 100, 113-117.

⁵⁶ Barth, *CDIII/3*, 113.

⁵⁷ Barth, *CDIII/3*, 113.

⁵⁸ Barth, *CDIII/3*, 130.

⁵⁹ Barth, *CDIII/3*, 113.

⁶⁰ Barth, *CDIII/3*, 106.

⁶¹ Barth, *CDIII/3*, 106.

came to think of their own faith and service of God as simply a ‘blind’⁶² ‘submission to a superior force’⁶³, so that it became ultimately indistinguishable from Stoic resignation or Islamic submission: ‘Is not this what the Stoics... do in face of an all-powerful destiny, or the Moslems in the face of the inscrutable will of Allah?’⁶⁴ Barth consequently now believes that in order to avert perpetuating this calamity the Aristotelian concept of cause must only be used to explain the efficacious work of God if its material content is carefully defined in more unequivocally non-coercive and non-fatalistic terms and he again offers examples of this.⁶⁵ Although Barth only attained this more precise understanding of what he was doing in 1950, realising that he was in fact seeking a non-coercive redefinition not simply of the efficacious work of God but more specifically of the potentially troublesome Aristotelian term cause customarily used to denote it, we can infer that he was in fact already engaged in essentially the same quest from the mid-1920s.

If by 1924 Barth’s humanism had set him on the lookout for a more appropriate way of understanding how God convinces people to know and serve Him, his appointment to the University of Münster in October 1925 now brought him face to face with a potential solution. In Münster Barth confronted Roman Catholicism as never before.⁶⁶ By his own observation since the failure of the infamous Anabaptist Münster Rebellion (1535) the city had become ‘a nest of priests’.⁶⁷ Barth now found himself both outnumbered by the

⁶² Barth, *CDIII/3*, 113.

⁶³ Barth, *CDIII/3*, 113.

⁶⁴ Barth, *CDIII/3*, 113.

⁶⁵ Barth, *CDIII/3*, 101-107. Barth’s attempts to correct the fatalistic implications of the Aristotelian grammar of cause in Reformed doctrines of effectual call anticipate the contemporary efforts of Vanhoozer, Horton and others. Though Barth differs inasmuch as he seeks to redefine rather than replace the conceptuality. See K. Vanhoozer, ‘Effectual Call or Causal Effect? Summons, Sovereignty and Supervenient Grace’, in *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 96-124; M. Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 216-242.

⁶⁶ Busch, 164.

⁶⁷ Busch, 164.

larger Catholic faculty of the university and surrounded by Catholic ‘monks, nuns and clergy’ on daily outings to the *Prinzipalmarkt*.⁶⁸ To his credit he seized the opportunity to make himself thoroughly conversant with the old foe of Protestant Christianity for the first time. During his tenure he engaged his Catholic peers, slipped into the back row at Mass⁶⁹ and even made his own ‘pilgrimage’ to the seat of Catholic power and devotion for the first time.⁷⁰ But above all he made an unprecedented new study of the major sources of Catholic thought: the giants of medieval theology. During these years Barth devoted seminars to Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo?* (Summer 1926)⁷¹, Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica* (Winter 1928-1929)⁷² and, after being ‘overwhelmed’ by the encyclopaedic knowledge of a certain Augustinian German Jesuit at the latter⁷³, two semesters to ‘intensive reading of Augustine’ (Summer 1929).⁷⁴ This study repeatedly brought him, for the first time, face to face with the characteristic joyful medieval confidence in the beauty of all being.

Since it was destined to become such a fertile resource to Barth’s own thinking it is vital that we take a moment to briefly introduce the salient features of this medieval conviction. Medieval thinkers (5th-15th century) certainly never systematised their own reflections about beauty. It was not yet regarded as an independent focus of inquiry but a part of metaphysics.⁷⁵ But the inherent conservatism of the time means that their claims about beauty trade on a common stock of ideas and are therefore capable of reconstruction.⁷⁶

⁶⁸ Busch, 164-165.

⁶⁹ Busch, 168.

⁷⁰ Busch, 186-187.

⁷¹ Busch, 169

⁷² Busch, 182.

⁷³ Busch, 182-183

⁷⁴ Busch, 184.

⁷⁵ Marenbon, 22.

⁷⁶ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 24.

In what follows we shall nevertheless carefully distinguish our ambition as a typology of medieval ‘beauty’ rather than ‘aesthetics’ *per se* since the latter is an aspiration which is far more contentious.⁷⁷

At the very centre of medieval assumptions about beauty was a buoyant belief in the ‘pancalistic’ nature of the universe and an intrinsic analogy of physical and spiritual beauty. All other medieval theories about beauty merely orbited and serviced this one.

In the face of the frequent darkness and calamity of the period the people of the Middle Ages retained a peculiar optimism in the essential goodness and beauty of being.⁷⁸ It was a worldview inherited as much from pagan antiquity as from the Church. The Genesis story taught the medievals of a world which was created ‘good’ and, through Greek Patristic commentary, ‘beautiful’.⁷⁹ The Book of Wisdom portrayed it as one carefully designed according to principles of number, weight, and measure.⁸⁰ And this blended imperceptibly with the kind of world long described by both the Pythagoreans and Neo-Platonists.⁸¹ But, like the latter, the people of the Middle Ages were convinced that the corporeal world was not only beautiful but also deeply symbolic.⁸² Sensuous everyday beauties participated in and declared the essential beauty and goodness of all being and

⁷⁷ While Umberto Eco, Wladislaw Tartarkiewicz and others claim that we can reconstruct a medieval ‘aesthetics’ this has been contested by some because by a modern definition ‘aesthetics’ is reflection upon judgements of beauty in the arts and medievals both lacked the modern concept of art and seldom related beauty to it. Such a venture is, however, more plausible on contemporary definitions of the term which understand it as reflection not simply on beauty in art but also nature. See Marenbon, 22-32.

⁷⁸ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 17-19.

⁷⁹ The Septuagint translates the Hebrew טוֹב (‘good’) by the Greek term καλόν whose semantic range includes ‘beautiful’. This interpretation was taken up by Greek Patristic commentators who used it to fuse the Biblical and Greek philosophical (especially Neo-Platonic and Pythagorean) worldviews. Their interpretive insight was then mediated to the Middle Ages predominantly by the thought of Augustine. See J. Haldane, ‘Medieval Aesthetics’, in B. Gaut and D. McIver-Lopes (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2013), 26.

⁸⁰ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 17-19.

⁸¹ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 17-19.

⁸² Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 15, 56-58.

even of their Cosmic Architect Himself. Thus, as Umberto Eco summarises, ‘for medievals the aesthetic moment was characteristically theophanic’.⁸³

Medieval thinkers like Augustine of Hippo, Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas principally discuss beauty in order to give theoretical expression to this popular sensibility and above all to justify it against the recurring threat of a Manichaeistic cosmology which portrayed reality, by contrast, as torn by an eternal conflict between good and evil.⁸⁴ They achieved this above all by means of the ontological concept of form and a Neo-Platonic concept of *methexis* (i.e. ‘participation’).⁸⁵

Augustine accomplishes this by the use of a Neo-Platonic concept of form. He critically appropriates the basic structure of Plotinus’ hierarchical ontology of emanation (*exitus*) in which reality proceeds from a unitary source, the One (το εν), through successively lower ontological levels, the intellect (νοϋς) and then the world-soul (λογος), with those furthest from their source participating in it to a lesser degree.⁸⁶ He then, moreover, translates the Platonic Idea (ειδος), the eternal archetypes from which reality descends, with the equivocal Latin term *forma*, which means not only ‘essence’ but also

⁸³ U. Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, tr. H. Bredin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 14.

⁸⁴ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 19; C. Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Augustine* (Oxford: OUP, 1992), 39-40.

⁸⁵ e.g. Harrison, 36-39.

⁸⁶ Harrison, 12-16, 39-42. Augustine modifies this secular ontology in order to make it serve as a Christian doctrine of creation principally by asserting that the creation is a free act of rather than a necessary emanation from God; by conceiving that matter is not eternal but is created *ex nihilo*; and by subsequently insisting that matter is not divine but that the Creator and creature have two different natures. He justifies retaining the superiority of the soul to the body in this Christian ontology by interpreting the former as the unique part of the creation which is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28).

‘appearance’ and ‘beauty’.⁸⁷ As a result being becomes synonymous with beauty.⁸⁸ Augustine consequently understands God as the eternal, immutable and intelligible Ideal form of both Being and Beauty.⁸⁹ The laws and principles by which the universe is designed and governed which are accessible to human reason therefore have both an eternal, immutable and incorporeal nature and beauty which is the most exact representation of His own.⁹⁰ And the material world, by contrast, has a temporal, mutable and corporeal form and beauty which is a more distant imitation of God’s beauty.⁹¹ The soul consequently relies upon the Ideal form of Beauty which is both within and above its reason in order to make everyday judgments of sensible beauty.⁹² But in order to truly know beauty it must turn inwards, away from preoccupation with sensuous beauties to the beauty of their intelligible principles and laws, and then upwards, from contemplation of these intelligible beauties to the *visio* of the eternal Form of Beauty itself (*reditus*).⁹³ As a Christian philosopher Augustine maintains that this is only possible for a soul which has been liberated from captivity to sensuous beauties by the gift of faith in Jesus Christ who not only inspires it to delight in and love the eternal archetype of sensible beauties again by His incarnate revelation of it but also pioneers its return to this eternal source.⁹⁴

⁸⁷ Harrison, 38-39; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, ii. *Studies in Theological Styles: Clerical Styles*, ed. J. Riches, tr. A. Louth, F. McDonagh and B. McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1984), 115. Hereafter, *GL2*.

⁸⁸ Harrison, 39-40.

⁸⁹ Harrison, 41.

⁹⁰ Augustine, ‘Letter to Nebridius’, in P. Schaff (ed), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, i: *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustin, with a Sketch of His Life and Work*, tr. J. Cunningham (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1887), 3.4; Harrison, 12-16, 39-42.

⁹¹ Harrison, 12-16, 39-42; W. Tartarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, ii: *Medieval Aesthetics*, tr. R. Montgomery (Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1970), 53-54.

⁹² Augustine, *Confessions*, tr. M. Boulding (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2012), VII.17.23; Harrison, 7-8, 15, 21-22; M. Beardsley, *Aesthetics From Classical Greece to the Present: A Short History* (London: University of Alabama Press, 1966), 96.

⁹³ Augustine adopts this view of ascent (*epistrophe*) as a twofold movement from Plotinus. Harrison, 15-16; Tartarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, 53-54

⁹⁴ Augustine, *On Order*, tr. S. Borruso (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2007), II.27; Harrison, 43-44, 51. Augustine thus, through Plotinus, adopts a Christian form of Plato’s famous emanation and return of the soul to Beauty. See Plato, ‘Symposium’, in *Plato: The Complete Works*, ed. J. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), §210-211 and Plotinus, *Plotinus*, i. *Ennead I: Porphory on Plotinus*, tr. A. Armstrong

Aquinas, by contrast, makes beauty a transcendental property of being, coextensive with it in reality but distinguishable from it conceptually (*ratione*), through the use of a distinctive sense of ‘form’.⁹⁵ In Aquinas’ innovative existential ontology the fullness of that which is (*ens*) is a substance, thing or being. Being is complete not simply when form is applied to matter so as to organise it but when this essence acquires the additional perfection of existence.⁹⁶ Thus, when Aquinas follows the innovation of his mentor Albertus Magnus by reconceptualising the traditional constituents of beauty - proportion and light - as conditions of ‘form’, in his case he means that they are conditions of substance rather than simply substantial form.⁹⁷ Aquinas believes that since a thing or substance is governed by a nature - an inner law of composition - it not only possesses all of the elements which are appropriate to that nature but it does so in the arrangement which it prescribes as well and so it may be said to have a twofold proportion: it is both

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), §6.1-4. See Anselm’s similar Neo-Platonic understanding of the supreme beauty of God and the participated beauty of creation in Anselm, ‘Proslogion’, in G. Evans and B. Davies (eds), *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, (Oxford: OUP, 1998), 97.

⁹⁵ The claim that Aquinas believes beauty to be a transcendental property of being has been controversial. In *ST*, I.q5.a4 he states that beauty is identical to being (‘form’) but conceptually distinguishable from the good. Since Thomas considers the good a transcendental attribute of being, Umberto Eco, Jacques Maritain and others have interpreted this as implying that beauty is convertible not only with goodness but also being and that beauty is therefore a transcendental of being. However Jan Aertsen and others have resisted this interpretation because Thomas never explicitly says that beauty is convertible with being. Sevier is probably right in concluding that the argument is ultimately semantic since even if in the passage, as Aertsen claims, Aquinas does not technically make beauty a transcendental of being, he still makes it a property which is coextensive with being since he claims that it is convertible with the good which is, in turn, a transcendental of being. See T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ii: *Existence and Nature of God* (Ia2.1- 11), ed T. McDermott (London: Blackfriars in conjunction with Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1976), q5.a4; C. Sevier, *Aquinas on Beauty* (London: Lexington Books, 2015), 123-127; J. Haldane, ‘Aquinas, T. (1225-1274)’, in S. Davies (ed), *A Companion to Aesthetics* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 146-147.

⁹⁶ T. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, ii: *Creation*, tr. J. Anderson (Notre Dame: UNDP, 1975), 54.3 & 6; Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 66-71; Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 74-75. By making existence the final perfection rather than accidental to being Aquinas overcomes the idealising proclivity of the essentialist ontologies of his predecessors. J. Aertsen, ‘Aquinas, St. Thomas (1224/5-74)’, J. Kim and E. Sosa (eds), *Blackwell Companion to Philosophy: A Companion to Metaphysics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 23-24.

⁹⁷ See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ii: *Existence and Nature of God*, q5.a4 cf. T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vii: *Father, Son and Holy Ghost* (1a. 33-43), ed. T. O’Brien (London: Blackfriars in conjunction with Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1976), q39.a8. Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 74-75; Haldane, *Aquinas*, 146. The latter interpretation was promulgated by Jacques Maritain and others but corrected by Umberto Eco. Aquinas frequently uses the terms ‘form’ and ‘substance’ as synonyms in virtue of the fact that in an Aristotelian ontology neither subsists without the other. Things are actualised only in forms and, conversely, forms only subsist in the matter of things or substances.

proportionate to itself and its parts are proportionate to each other.⁹⁸ Moreover to the degree that its nature is realised in itself without impediment it will communicate what it is to others so that when it is recognised by them it may be said to possess clarity.⁹⁹ While beauty therefore has the same reference as substance it nevertheless has a different sense since we call a substance in itself a 'being', but a substance which we contemplate 'beauty', which we know 'truth', and which we desire or value 'goodness'.¹⁰⁰ Beauty is therefore a transcendental of being. Since Aquinas identifies God as Being itself he therefore also recognises Him as the Supreme Beauty.¹⁰¹ He consequently assumes that all beings participate in His beauty.¹⁰²

In order to theorise the pancaustic nature of the cosmos medieval thinkers relied upon a well-established stock of beliefs about the objective and subjective conditions in which a thing is beautiful.¹⁰³ From the classical world through Augustine they inherited the belief that an object is beautiful to the extent that it exhibits both colour and symmetry (χρῶμα καὶ συμμετρία).¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Thomas designates the former *integritas*. Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 99; Haldane, *Aquinas*, 146.

⁹⁹ Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 102, 118-120; Haldane, *Aquinas*, 146.

¹⁰⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, xi: *Man* (1a7.5-83), ed. T. O'Brien (London: Blackfriars in conjunction with Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1976), q27.a1; Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 34-37; Haldane, *Aquinas*, 146.

¹⁰¹ Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 26-29; Tartakiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, 246.

¹⁰² Sevier rightly points out that, although he never explicates it, Aquinas must assume an analogy of beauty because, quite aside from the fact that it is implied by his analogy of being, in *Summa Theologiae* I.q39.a8 he argues that the Church Fathers were justified in appropriating beauty (*species*) to the eternal Son of God by elaborating the three popularly accepted properties of creaturely beauty and then showing that each of these may be predicated in some manner of Him. It was, however, the later Neo-Thomist scholars Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson who first explicitly developed his insights into an analogy of beauty. See Sevier, 104-105; J. Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 30-38, 173 and E. Gilson, 'The Forgotten Transcendental: Pulchrum', in *Elements of Christian Philosophy* (New York: Greenwood, 1960), 159-63.

¹⁰³ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 19, 26.

¹⁰⁴ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, tr. J. King (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), 4.13; Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 72.

Medievals understood symmetry, congruence or proportion univocally as a unity within diversity: a similarity and hence relationship between otherwise different things.¹⁰⁵ In the classical world the concept was used especially by the Pythagoreans in order to denote the purely numerical or quantitative agreement which they believed prevailed between all things in the universe - for instance, between the number, measure and weight of things - as a result of its design by the principle of number. However its meaning was quickly extended to encompass qualitative harmony as well as, for example, between actions and their ends.¹⁰⁶ Since the Book of Wisdom seemed to confirm this general worldview by its claim that the universe was designed according to number, weight and measure the concept was mediated into medieval thought above all by Boethius' *De Institutiones Musica* which depicted both macrocosm and microcosm as conjointly governed by the same mathematical law of musical harmony.¹⁰⁷ Since medievals believed that proportion was a property of beauty which was, in turn, a transcendental attribute of being, they understood it to be both dynamic in character and capable of infinite realisations.¹⁰⁸ Medieval minds consequently never tired of pointing out new varieties like the symmetry of the different parts of the body with each other and with the body as a whole¹⁰⁹; the pleasing musical harmony created by notes of differing pitches¹¹⁰; the proportion between an object and human perception¹¹¹; the *musica mundana* or musical harmony believed to be produced by the orbit of the seven planets around the earth¹¹²; and the congruity between the natural and the supernatural world.¹¹³

¹⁰⁵ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 29; Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 71.

¹⁰⁶ Tartarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, 49-50; Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 72.

¹⁰⁷ Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 76-77.

¹⁰⁸ Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 95-97; Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 32, 41.

¹⁰⁹ Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 74.

¹¹⁰ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 31.

¹¹¹ Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 74-77.

¹¹² Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 32.

¹¹³ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 56.

Colour, light or clarity, on the other hand, was a qualitative aesthetic which was understood equivocally by medieval thinkers.¹¹⁴ In contrast to proportion, the belief that light or colour, which was already recognised to be an effect of light, is beautiful entered medieval thought not from ancient philosophy but from the popular taste of the time which held this to be a self-evident truth.¹¹⁵ This cultural sensibility was illustrated, for instance, in the famous medieval predilection for clothing, adornments and weaponry composed of single or contrasting primary colours; Gothic architecture in which the open fretwork of cathedrals was designed to overwhelm those who worshipped within with the impression of erupting light and hence divinity; and above all in the innovative medieval marriage of light and colour in stained glass windows.¹¹⁶ In order to formalise this popular sentiment medieval thinkers retrieved the long and varied tradition of classical reflection upon *lumen* above all in Neo-Platonic philosophy and in doing so they inherited the diverse meanings which it had acquired therein.¹¹⁷

All medieval thinkers shared some form of this understanding of the objective conditions of beauty. Augustine, for instance, claimed that, 'All beauty is a harmony of parts with a certain pleasing colour'.¹¹⁸ Anselm pictured God's beauty in such terms when he complained, 'Still You hide away, Lord, from my soul in Your light and blessedness... For it looks all about, and does not see Your beauty. It listens, and does not hear Your harmony'.¹¹⁹ And Aquinas synthesised these ideas in his classic formulation of the conditions of beauty. 'Three things are necessary for beauty: first, integrity or

¹¹⁴ Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 104-105.

¹¹⁵ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 43-44.

¹¹⁶ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 44-46.

¹¹⁷ Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 104-105.

¹¹⁸ Augustine, *Letter to Nebridius*, 3.4; Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 72.

¹¹⁹ Anselm, *Proslogion*, 97.

perfection.... also due proportion or consonance; and again, clarity, for we call things beautiful when they are brightly coloured'.¹²⁰

But medievals typically recognised that an experience of beauty required the fulfilment of a subjective condition as well. Since at least the time of Plato it had been widely realised that humans contribute to their own aesthetic experience. It was recognised, for instance, that the angle from which a sculpture was viewed influenced the judgement of its proportion and colour.¹²¹ By the Middle Ages it was commonly assumed that for an object to be judged beautiful it must not only exude form and splendour but there must be a *visio* of this which arouses pleasure in the subject as well.¹²² For medievals the *visio* essential to judgments of beauty was not simply a pre-critical act of intellect: its repose in a sensible intuition of the particulars of the object.¹²³ Rather it was a complete act of cognition in which the intellect abstracted from intuition a cognitive image of the particulars of the object and then, through synthesis and reflection, formed these into a concept or universal.¹²⁴ At least some medievals believed that the feeling of pleasure or *delectatio* which was evoked by such *visio* was disinterested in nature since they

¹²⁰ T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vi: *The Trinity* (1a. 27-32), ed. C. Velecky (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), q39.a8.

¹²¹ Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 74-75; Eco, *Art and Beauty*, 65.

¹²² Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 49-63; Tartarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, 51-52. Although there were some, like Albertus Magnus, who believed that objects were beautiful irrespective of whether their beauty was seen.

¹²³ As it is, for instance, in modern aesthetics.

¹²⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ii: *Existence and Nature of God*, q5.a4; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, xi: *Man* (1a7.5-83), q78-79; Sevier, 20-26; Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 60-63. Aquinas refers to cognition as '*visio*' ('seeing') because he regards sight as the most important of the senses and thus as representative of cognition in general. See T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, x: *Cosmogony* (1a. 65-74), ed. W. Wallace (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), q67.a1. Medieval conceptions of beauty are often described as 'aesthetic intellectualism' in virtue of the pronounced role they assign to the intellect in contemplation of the beautiful.

understood it to be produced by pure cognition of an object alone irrespective of one's affections or desires.¹²⁵

We could summarise these medieval beliefs about beauty, then, by saying that Christian thinkers of the period shared a common conviction that God's perfect beauty was the font of an ontology and analogy of beauty and that this beauty consisted in His character of form and splendour which pleased when contemplated.

There is little doubt that Barth repeatedly encountered this general belief during his renewed interrogation of the sources of the Catholic faith at Münster. The works which would come to fruition as a direct result of that engagement, *The Holy Spirit and The Christian Life* (1929) and *Church Dogmatics I/1* (1932), are for the first time littered with references to Augustine's famous description of God as the 'Ancient Beauty',¹²⁶ the '*delectatio*' which He arouses¹²⁷ and so on.

However it is the particular form which this general conviction acquires in the works of Anselm of Canterbury which was to make it finally irresistible to Barth. And so we must take a moment to explain this.

In Anselm's work the medieval belief in the beauty of God is uniquely integrated into his famous theological method of *fides quaerens intellectum*. For Anselm theology is essentially a rational exposition of the meaning of the creeds of the Catholic Church. It

¹²⁵ Both Eco and Haldane argue persuasively that this was the case, for instance, with both Thomas Aquinas and Johannes Scotus Erigena. Haldane, *Medieval Aesthetics*, 29-30; Haldane, *Aquinas*, 147; Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 17-18, 56-58.

¹²⁶ Barth, *HSCL*, 4-5.

¹²⁷ Barth, *CDI/1*, 334-336.

accepts the veracity of the Catholic faith as it is set forth in both Scripture and the creeds. However it seeks a more complete understanding and demonstration of its rationality and truth, though one which does not contradict it but expresses its true intention or meaning.¹²⁸ Anselm believes that this endeavour is necessitated in part by the nature of faith itself: those who accept the Catholic faith on the basis of the authoritative teaching of the Church have a moral duty to understand what they believe and why they believe it as best they can.¹²⁹ Moreover he believes that it is ultimately only possible on the basis of God's grace. It requires both the tutelage and direction of the authorities of faith which God graciously provides the Church and His illumination of their true meaning by the Holy Spirit.¹³⁰

In *Cur Deus homo?* at least one of the primary purposes of this theological *explicatio* or 'proof' is to please and delight his fellow brethren in the faith at the secular schools of Normandy who had frequently asked him to explain why the incarnation was necessary.

I have often been asked... to set down a written record of the reasoned explanation with which I am in the habit of answering people who put enquiries to me about a certain question of our Faith. For they say that these explanations please them, and they think them satisfactory. They make this request... in order that they may take delight in the understanding and contemplation of the things which they believe and may be, as far as they are

¹²⁸ M. McCord Adams, 'Anselm on Faith and Reason', in B. Davies and B. Leftow (eds), *Cambridge Companion to Anselm* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 46-47. For Anselm such a 'theological proof' is typically achieved by temporally suspending the validity of an article of faith and then justifying it with respect to the beliefs of his intended audience. Because this audience is typically composed of both his monastic brethren and the adherents of other Abrahamic faiths, in practice these beliefs tend to be other articles of faith and so his theological method typically assumes a coherentist form. See Adams, 48-49.

¹²⁹ '[I]t seems to me negligence if, after we have been confirmed in the faith, we do not make an effort to understand what we believe'. Anselm, 'Why God Became Man', in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. B. Davies and G. Evans (Oxford: OUP, 1998), I.1. Adams, 46. Anselm also assumes that theology has an anthropological necessity since, following Augustine, he believes that human nature is teleologically ordered to the *visio Dei*. Adams, 33-34.

¹³⁰ 'I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe; but I believe in order that I may understand. Moreover, I believe this: "that unless I believe I will not understand"'. Anselm, *Proslogion*, I; Adams, 38-42.

able, 'ready always to give satisfaction to all who ask the reason for the hope that is in you' [1 Pet.3:15].¹³¹

Like other medievals Anselm assumes that the true meaning or *ratio veritatis* of the articles of faith taught by the creeds, the eternal Son of God, possesses not only *utilitas* but also supreme beauty.

[T]he subject-matter..., in conformity with the fact that it is about someone beautiful, 'with beauty excelling the sons of men' [Ps.44]... is itself correspondingly beautiful in its logic, beyond the reasoning of men.¹³²

While he never spells it out precisely, this of course implies that Anselm believes his own work as a theologian entails not only the potentially arid intellectual or logical labour of grasping and giving expression to the inner truth of the articles of the creed but also the inherently beautiful and pleasurable task of contemplating and giving form to their inner beauty.

Anselm consequently expects that the theological proofs which he constructs will possess both truth and beauty which mirror that of the ontic *ratio* of the creed.¹³³ Indeed his desire is that they would function like beautiful frescos composed upon solid foundations by providing a portrait of their subject-matter which is not only well-grounded but also appealing and pleasing to all who contemplate them.¹³⁴

[T]his subject... in its solution... is intelligible to all and appealing because of

¹³¹ Anselm, *Why God Became Man*, I.1. cf. II.15, 19. According to Southern, Anselm wrote the treatise in order to satisfy inquiries about the coherence of the incarnation which came to him from two sources. Firstly, from Christians engaged in study at the secular cathedral schools of Northern France who had sought counsel from him while he was Abbott of the nearby Abbey of Bec (especially his pupil, Boso, who ultimately joined the community and later helped Anselm write the treatise). Secondly, from Jewish Rabbis who moved from Mainz to London and subsequently confronted Anselm's friend, Gilbert Crispin, with the same questions after Anselm had been appointed the Archbishop of Canterbury. See R. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), 197-205.

¹³² Anselm, *Why God Became Man*, I.1.

¹³³ Anselm, *Why God Became Man*, I.1; F. Burch Brown, 'The Beauty of Hell: Anselm on God's Eternal Design', *Journal of Religion*, 73 (1993), 335.

¹³⁴ Anselm, *Why God Became Man*, I.3, 4; II.8.

its utility and the beauty of its logic.¹³⁵

[T]he subject-matter... is... beautiful in its logic, beyond the reasoning of men. On this account, I am afraid that, just as I am invariably annoyed by bad painters when I see the Lord himself depicted as of ugly appearance, the same fault will be found with me, if I presume to plough through such beautiful subject-matter with an unpolished and contemptible style of writing.¹³⁶

We can be certain that Barth encountered this distinctive form of the medieval concept of God's beauty in the course of his research at Münster and his early years at Bonn. By now it is common knowledge that Barth developed an increasing interest in Anselm's work towards the end of the 1920's, although the precise reason for this remains the subject of considerable debate.¹³⁷ He initiated seminars on *Cur Deus homo?* in both Summer 1926 and 1930 before launching a full-scale investigation of Anselm's theological methodology shortly after which culminated in the publication of *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum* (1931). It is this work which documents his encounter with Anselm's distinctive rendition of the medieval concept of beauty.¹³⁸

In this monograph Barth interprets Anselm's *fides quaerens intellectum* as a form of theological objectivism remarkably similar to his own. According to Barth's interpretation Anselm envisages that it is the ontic *ratio* of the creed in which God reveals

¹³⁵ Anselm, *Why God Became Man*, I.1.

¹³⁶ Anselm, *Why God Became Man*, I.1.

¹³⁷ The main interpretations remain as follows. Balthasar, following Barth's own suggestion, claims that Barth discovered in Anselm a theological rather than philosophical grounding for theological claims which enabled his gradual 'second conversion' 'from dialectic to analogy'. Jüngel and Torrance, by contrast, suggest that Barth learns the priority of ontic over noetic rationality. McCormack has satisfactorily demonstrated that neither of these were innovations but both were in fact already long-established elements of Barth's theological method. However his judgment that 'what is "new" in the Anselm book is at most a *relatively* more faithful unfolding of the dogmatic method which Barth had been employing since 1924' continues to be considered unsatisfactory by many since it does not square with Barth's own assessment of Anselm's importance to his work. See Balthasar, *TKB*, 93 ff.; T. F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to his Early Theology* (London: SCM, 1962), 182-183; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 412-449.

¹³⁸ Busch, 169, 205.

Himself which necessitates *intelligere* and hence theology.¹³⁹ The *intellectus fidei* is consequently by nature simply an *a posteriori* understanding and explication of the *ratio fidei*.¹⁴⁰ It can achieve its goal of attaining a *vera ratio* only upon condition of the twofold initiative of God. Objectively, God must make the outer text of the creed or *ratio fidei* perspicuous to its inner meaning, the *ratio veritatis* of God Himself. Subjectively, He must then grasp the noetic *ratio* of the theologian and bring it into conformity with this.¹⁴¹

Barth recognises that for Anselm one of the primary aims of such *intelligere* is to please and delight the Church by demonstrating the inner rationality of its faith.

[An apologetic proof] is not the only result of *intelligere* that... Anselm... has before him. As *intelligere* is achieved, it issues – in joy. The dominating factor in Anselm's mind is that even the Church Fathers wrote about it in order to give the faithful joy in believing by a demonstration of the *ratio* of their faith... Is it mere coincidence that in a work like *Cur Deus homo*, which on its own admission is so set on proving, its chief end should be given as, first, this *delectari* and, secondly, the polemical obligation of 1 Peter 3:15?.¹⁴²

He recognises that Anselm ascribes the *ratio veritatis* supreme beauty.

This reason, which the *intelligere* seeks and finds, possesses in itself not only *utilitas*... but also *pulchritudo*. It is *speciosa super intellectus hominum*.¹⁴³

Moreover he is alert to the fact that this implies that Anselm believes his work as a theologian involves not simply the polemical exercise of discerning and giving expression to the truth of his subject-matter but also the inherently aesthetic one of delighting in and giving form to its beauty.

[I]t might well be a first test of our understanding of Anselm to ask ourselves whether we are capable of appreciating that the despair with which, as he says

¹³⁹ K. Barth, *FQI*, 17. McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 430.

¹⁴⁰ Barth, *FQI*, 27-28, 40. McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 429

¹⁴¹ Barth, *FQI*, 41, 47. McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 429-430.

¹⁴² Barth, *FQI*, 15.

¹⁴³ Barth, *FQI*, 15.

in... *Proslogion*, he sought that *unum argumentum*, could not be taken less seriously, because in addition to the fighting spirit obviously indispensable to one engaged in theological work, he still had some freedom left to admit other spirits, one of them clearly being the aesthetics of theological knowledge [*die Ästhetik der theologischen Erkenntnis*].¹⁴⁴

Perhaps most crucially for our purposes Barth recognises Anselm's characteristic belief that theological constructions should possess both a truth and beauty which is a copy of the *ratio veritatis* so that they function as credible and pleasing portraits of it.

Anselm... is also interested... in the *pulchritudo* of the completed knowledge [*der vollendeten Erkenntnis*].¹⁴⁵

It is evident here that a strong foundation [*wehrhaftem Begründen*] is combined with a genial inclination to please [*heiterem Gefallenwollen*], and this fact may well remind us that early Scholasticism was contemporary with the heyday of the Romanesque style of cathedral art [*romanischer Dombaukunst*].¹⁴⁶

Incorporated into a form of theological objectivism like his own the medieval concept of God's beauty now offered three potential benefits which would have made it decisively persuasive to Barth.

In the first place it could be utilised to construct a non-coercive concept of effectual call. We have seen that Barth believed that the Reformed use of the equivocal Aristotelian term 'cause' to denote the Holy Spirit's efficacious summons of unregenerate humanity to know and serve Him bought formal precision at the grave cost of enabling the operation of sovereign divine grace to be interpreted, on the model of a natural cause, as a form of compulsion or coercion. Despite this Barth remained convinced of its utility and reticent

¹⁴⁴ Barth, *FQI*, 16; K. Barth, *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe: Fides quaerens intellectum 1931 (GA II.13)*, ed. E. Jüngel & I. Dalferth (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981), 14.

¹⁴⁵ Barth, *FQI*, 59; Barth, *Gesamtausgabe: Fides*, 59.

¹⁴⁶ Barth, *FQI*, 15-16; Barth, *Gesamtausgabe: Fides*, 13.

to abandon it. But if the *causare* of the divine *καλεῖν* were to be defined more specifically as that of His supreme *καλον* then this would provide a twofold remedy. It would prevent it from being interpreted as a coercive act since it could no longer be mistaken for a natural cause like a law or force of nature. Moreover it would conceptualise it as a non-coercive operation. For medievals, as we have demonstrated, the teleology of beauty was to please when seen. To specify that the *causare* of the Holy Spirit's efficacious call is none other than the *causare* of God's own beauty would mean, then, that it summons unregenerate humanity to know and serve Him by evoking and activating its reason, desire and will rather than suppressing and pacifying them as compulsion and coercion would do.¹⁴⁷

In the second place the concept would ground a form of theological method which Barth would later profess to find deeply autobiographical. Just a year before his death Barth was interviewed about his life's work for the documentary *Ja und Nein, Karl Barth zum Gedaechtnis* (1967). When pressed about the numerous infamous theological controversies which dogged his career he was eager to set the record straight. In the process he unwittingly characterises his own approach to theology in terms remarkably reminiscent of his earlier description of Anselm's understanding of the theological task in *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*. Barth claims that if his theological work is interpreted as simply polemical in nature it will be grossly misunderstood. In fact, he says, throughout his life he has always taken 'delight' in the 'matter' which he has contemplated and represented. He 'enjoyed being a theologian'. And this, as much as anything else, is the reason why he wrote.

Actually by nature I'm not spoiling for a fight... [U]ntil 1933 I worked and

¹⁴⁷ Aquinas, who is widely regarded as having a fairly canonical definition of coercion, makes clear why this would be a non-coercive concept of effectual call: 'it is impossible for a thing to be absolutely coerced... and voluntary'. However some may argue that even if it is not technically coercive it remains fairly manipulative. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, xi: *Man* (1a7.5-83), q82.a1; Anderson, *Coercion*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/coercion>, accessed 2 April 2019.

lived quite cheerfully at my writing desk, in my lectures and among my students. And I do not think people who heard me back then considered me as a disputant. [But] someone who forcefully says 'yes' must also say 'no' with the same vigour. And [so] this is something I did all the time... But 'delight' - you used the word 'delight' - I always took delight in the matter that I represented, whether I argued for it with a 'yes' or... with a 'no'... I enjoyed being a theologian from the very beginning and even until today.¹⁴⁸

Finally, the medieval concept of God's beauty offered Barth a final crowning vindication of his dogmatic approach over against natural theology. By the time that Barth was reading Anselm at the end of the 1920's calls for a renewal of natural theology had reached a fever pitch in Germany.¹⁴⁹ In Europe the Great War (1914-1918) triggered a crisis of confidence in established forms of thought and beliefs, above all in the goodness of humanity and the inevitability of the progress of human civilization. By the following decade a host of radical ideologies had seized power in its nation states – Leninism-Marxism in the Soviet Union, Fascism in Italy and eventually National Socialism in Germany – and now vied to fill the void. With the post-war Weimar Republic seemingly powerless to resolve the worsening German financial crisis the appeal of such extremist ideologies was felt perhaps most acutely in that country.¹⁵⁰ Leaders of the Christian Church in Germany – including the pioneers of the dialectical theology movement itself like Gogarten, Bultmann and Brunner – consequently became increasingly strident in their calls for the Church to make its faith relevant to the new context, typically insisting that the solution lay in a renewed natural theology.¹⁵¹

Pressure for this reform reached a new climax in 1929 when Brunner published a pointed

¹⁴⁸ K. Barth, *Ja und Nein, Karl Barth zum Gedächtnis*, directed by H. Knor (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1967), <http://barth.ptsem.edu/multimedia>, accessed 4 April 2019.

¹⁴⁹ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 419.

¹⁵⁰ McGrath, *Emil Brunner*, 62-65.

¹⁵¹ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 419-420.

summary of his deliberations about the matter in the journal of the dialectical theology movement, *Zwischen den Zwischen*, ominously entitled *The Other Task of Theology*.¹⁵² In it he remained firmly committed to the conviction which he had long shared with his fellow contributors that the ‘first task’ of theology is dogmatics: the Church’s reflection upon and systematic exposition of its object, the self-authenticating Word of God which is attested in Scripture.¹⁵³ However he accused those who, like Barth, assumed that this was the sum of its responsibility of betraying their subject-matter by de-existentialising it: expositing the Gospel without bothering to relate it to the actual existence of contemporary human beings so that it was ultimately ‘good news’ to no one.¹⁵⁴ The solution, Brunner proposed, was for theology to supplement its dogmatic activity with the ‘other task’ of ‘eristics’.¹⁵⁵ In short, theology must turn its attention aside to a second object, namely secular ideologies or philosophies of existence, and ground its dogmas in this.¹⁵⁶ It was to achieve this, Brunner suggested, by systematically debunking them so as to show that the self-understanding which humanity seeks cannot be uttered by itself but only by its Creator.¹⁵⁷

Barth had already begun to mount a defence of his theological objectivism against this charge by the time that he engaged Anselm in earnest.¹⁵⁸ However it seems likely that in this context Anselm’s concept of the beauty of God would have struck Barth as offering

¹⁵² E. Brunner, ‘Die andere Aufgabe der Theologie’, in *Ein offenes Wort: Vorträge und Aufsätze 1917-1962* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981), 1:171-193.

¹⁵³ McGrath, *Emil Brunner*, 66.

¹⁵⁴ McGrath, *Emil Brunner*, 70-71; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 419.

¹⁵⁵ Brunner, dissatisfied with either ‘apologetics’ or ‘polemics’, took the name from the Greek εριζειν (‘to debate’). McGrath, *Emil Brunner*, 66.

¹⁵⁶ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 417-418.

¹⁵⁷ Brunner thus assumes the existence of a negative point of contact (*Anknüpfungspunkt*) for the Word of God in humanity. Brunner, *Die andere Aufgabe*, 177, 179. C. Collins Winn, ‘Emil Brunner (1889-1966)’, in I. Markham (ed), *Blackwell Companion to the Theologians* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 38-39; McGrath, *Emil Brunner*, 68-69.

¹⁵⁸ See for instance K. Barth, ‘Die Theologie und der heutige Mensch’, *Zwischen den Zeiten*, 8 (1930), 375-395. McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 416-19.

a tantalising final vindication of his approach to theology. If it was accepted that the ontic *ratio* of dogmatics possessed not only supreme truth but also beauty then its ideas and theorems could justly claim to be more beautiful and pleasing to contemporary humanity than those of any rival science or ideology. A theology which was not panicked by the proliferation of aggressive new ideologies into attempting to make itself culturally relevant but which serenely carried on with its own task of faithfully explaining the Word of God would then, paradoxically, find that it possessed unparalleled relevance and appeal to the existential concerns of modern men and women.

In the period which immediately follows Barth's engagement with medieval theology, 1934-1938, we then find the first traces of his appropriation of the medieval conception of God's beauty in this distinctively Anselmian form.

Although Barth would ultimately find great value in the medieval concept of God's beauty itself, as we are about to show, there is no doubt that he rejected the Neo-Platonic metaphysical framework - the *methexis* - which it typically assumed in the medieval accounts of it. That will hardly come as a surprise since we demonstrated this at great length in our opening chapter. However it is important to briefly restate this point here so as to avoid any ambiguity. The first formal evaluation of medieval theology which Barth offers after his studious re-appraisal of it is to be found in a lecture which he delivered in Dortmund on February 1929 entitled *Fate and Idea*. In it Barth responds to Aquinas' *analogia entis* with both appreciation and criticism. Barth agrees with Thomas that God gives Himself to be known by humans by establishing continuity between Himself and objective and subjective creation.¹⁵⁹ However he finds Thomas' distinctive concept of

¹⁵⁹ Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 33-35.

this continuity flawed. By conceptualising the *similitudo Dei* as one which is inherent to the universe and human reason simply as a product of their creation, the *Doctor Angelicus* grounds an anthropological capacity for knowledge of God which Barth finds objectionable on three grounds: it jars with a serious reckoning of the noetic effects of sin, it undermines the gratuity of grace and, most seriously, it surrenders the discontinuity between Creator and creature by making the Creator subject to the mastery of His own creations.¹⁶⁰

By the time that Barth delivered his lectures on the *Holy Spirit and the Christian Life* to a pastoral conference in Elberfeld just eight months later his evaluation of this form of continuity had become terminal. Here, like before, Barth believes that Augustine's conception of the continuity between God and the human soul which exists simply on the basis of creation, which he contends underlies Augustine's presumption that humans may know God simply by means of a divinely-assisted *anamnesis*, is bought at the expense of their discontinuity.¹⁶¹ However he now realises that this very fact does not simply make the concept problematic but incoherent. It means that it cannot serve as an analogy of being since it does not retain both a similarity and dissimilarity between the two parties.¹⁶² Barth now recognises that in fact his own *analogia fidei* can alone claim to be a coherent analogy of being because, by conceptualising the continuity between Creator and creatures as one which must be established ever anew by God's reconciling grace, it also retains the discontinuity between them as Lord and lorded-over.¹⁶³

Barth's assessment of this medieval concept of analogy means that if he were to ultimately

¹⁶⁰ Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 38-42.

¹⁶¹ Barth, *HSCL*, 4-5.

¹⁶² Barth, *HSCL*, 4-5.

¹⁶³ Barth, *HSCL*, 5-6.

embrace the medieval concept of God's beauty in this period, as we are about to show he did, then there could be no question of retaining it in the framework of the *analogia entis*. To Barth's mind that construal of the relationship between God and the creation was not only flawed and incoherent but superseded by his own. Instead the idea would have to be integrated into his own *analogia fidei*.

Barth began integrating the medieval concept of beauty into his *analogia fidei* just a few years later in an address to the Protestant Theology Faculty in Paris entitled *Theology* (1934). Although ostensibly a reflection on the nature of theology the lecture quite obviously serves as a triumphant riposte to the escalating claims by Brunner and the dialectical theologians that only a dogmatics enriched by a natural theology could vouchsafe the relevance of the discipline to an increasingly pluralistic twentieth century European society. Barth now effectively replies that on the contrary it is his own self-grounded dogmatics which can alone provide what Brunner and others desire and for the first time he adopts Anselm's concept of the superior beauty of theological discourse in order to substantiate this claim.

Barth believes that it is the distinctive nature of theology's justification which causes it to seek to make itself relevant to other *Wissenschaften*.¹⁶⁴ Since theology is the science of the Word of God it is an endeavour which is justified only by the existence of that object. However, unlike other sciences, this object is not simply given and available to public inspection but is believed in by faith. Unsurprisingly this creates a desire in theology to 'exhibit' its justification somehow, like other sciences do, which effectively means to

¹⁶⁴ K. Barth, 'Theology', in *God in Action*, tr. E. Homrighausen (Manhasset Round Table, 1963), 40-41.

demonstrate its relevance to contemporary culture.¹⁶⁵ It is crucial to point out that Barth considers this an entirely legitimate aspiration since in the lecture he sets himself the task of considering, ‘How shall this axiom be exhibited?’.¹⁶⁶ However he claims that it is an ambition which can only truly be fulfilled by his own dogmatics.¹⁶⁷ Barth insists that theology cannot succeed in making itself culturally relevant ‘directly’ or ‘positively’ as Brunner’s theology attempts, by demonstrating itself to be the fulfilment of the quest for a philosophy of human existence, since this very attempt enfeebles it in innumerable ways.¹⁶⁸ It makes it appear varyingly anxious, arrogant, monstrous or boresome, so that it is finally appealing to no one.¹⁶⁹ ‘Has there been one reputable philosopher who has paid the least attention to the work which... theologians have attempted in this direction?’.¹⁷⁰ Instead, Barth claims, theology can only relate itself to modern men and women ‘indirectly’ or ‘negatively’.¹⁷¹ Like his own dogmatics it can do this only by eschewing any direct attempt to relate itself to the concerns of contemporary society and simply carrying on with its own task of expositing the Word of God, confident in its own legitimacy.¹⁷² And here Barth employs Anselm’s concept of the beauty of theological discourse to explain how this gives it relevance to contemporary culture. According to Barth it does so because the object of theology is not just any truth but the *ratio veritatis* itself. This means that dogmatic treatises will not only possess a more desirable content than any comparable scientific publication since they give an account of ‘the truth after

¹⁶⁵ Barth, *Theology*, 40-41. Barth uses the expression ‘exhibit’ to distinguish the desire for cultural relevance which he is discussing from a desire for external justification. The former, as we shall see, is acceptable to Barth. The latter is not. The term makes clear that theology remains justified by the Word of God alone and merely seeks an *ad hoc* demonstration of this.

¹⁶⁶ Barth, *Theology*, 41.

¹⁶⁷ Barth, *Theology*, 41-43.

¹⁶⁸ Barth, *Theology*, 41-42.

¹⁶⁹ Barth, *Theology*, 41-42.

¹⁷⁰ Barth, *Theology*, 42.

¹⁷¹ Barth, *Theology*, 41, 43.

¹⁷² Barth, *Theology*, 41, 43.

which all science quests'.¹⁷³ But they will also have a more well-proportioned and therefore beautiful and appealing form since their subject-matter will, to a degree which far surpasses its rivals, be made orderly, intelligible and perspicuous to human comprehension and yet remain a profound mystery which is both inexhaustible and incomprehensible.¹⁷⁴ Inspired by Anselm's own metaphor, Barth likens this pleasing form to a masterpiece not of cathedral painting but cathedral architecture which is both orderly and yet confounding.¹⁷⁵ In sum, Barth claims, a theology which simply exposit its object will be the most true and beautiful science and thus 'the one that moves the head and heart' of contemporary society 'most fully'.¹⁷⁶

Of all disciplines theology is the fairest [*die schönste*], the one that moves the head and heart most fully. It is closest to human reality and gives us the clearest view of the truth after which all science quests. It best illustrates the time-honoured and profound word: 'Fakultaet'. It is a landscape, like the landscape of Umbria or Tuscany, in which distant [*fernsten*] perspectives are always clear [*hellen*]. Theology is a masterpiece [*Kunstwerk*], as well-planned [*überlegt*] and yet as bizarre [*bizarr*] as the cathedrals of Cologne and Milan.¹⁷⁷

Anselm's concept of the beauty of theological discourse thus effectively enables Barth to respond to Brunner's cries for a natural theology by putting a new spin on an old biblical proverb: 'a theology which seeks to gain cultural relevance will lose it; but which loses it for the sake of Christ and the gospel will find it'.¹⁷⁸ He does not yet make any connection between the beauty of theological discourse and the beauty of God, although as we shall see it was only a matter of time before he would. However he has already begun to appropriate the tradition of medieval thought concerning the properties or conditions of

¹⁷³ Barth, *Theology*, 39.

¹⁷⁴ Barth, *Theology*, 39.

¹⁷⁵ Barth, *Theology*, 39.

¹⁷⁶ Barth, *Theology*, 39.

¹⁷⁷ Barth, *Theology*, 39; K. Barth, *Gesammelte Vorträge*, iii: *Theologische Fragen und Antworten* (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1957), 175.

¹⁷⁸ Barth, *Theology*, 42-43 cf. Matthew 16:25.

beauty. Barth demonstrates here that, like the medievals, he believes a thing is beautiful to the extent that, objectively, it has proportion or unity-in-distinction and, subjectively, this ‘moves the head and heart’ or gives pleasure when cognised. It is important to point out, however, that Barth thus continues the aesthetic intellectualism of the Middle Ages in a distinctly modern key. We saw in our opening chapter that Barth continues to presume the fundamental tenets of Kant’s epistemology throughout his lifetime. We can only conclude then that in contrast to the medievals Barth believes that *visio* – human cognition of beauty – is not simply receptive but also productive of its knowledge of beauty. For Barth one only perceives the form of beauty through the form of his or her own pre-understandings.¹⁷⁹

By *Church Dogmatics I/2* (1938), just four years later, Barth had made an appropriation of the medieval concept of beauty which was at once more extensive and intensive than hitherto. Here in the midst of reflections on the norm of dogmatics Barth for the first time acknowledges that the object of theology, the *ratio veritatis*, has beauty and that theological discourse must therefore have corresponding formal beauty.¹⁸⁰ However the tone of his confession has now completely changed. Far from the triumphant declaration which he trumpeted forth in Paris Barth now merely concedes the fact. It seems likely that the intervening years had brought him the sobering realisation that the innumerable benefits of confessing the beauty of God were offset by formidable new pitfalls which it opened up for theology. The beauty of theology’s object could just as easily become a distraction from its task of critiquing and amending Church proclamation in light of the Word of God as a pleasing tonic for the potential tedium of it. It could trigger a wholesale

¹⁷⁹ See, for example, Barth, *CDI/2*, 727-735. J. Hare, ‘Karl Barth, American Evangelicals and Kant’, in B. McCormack and C. Anderson (eds), *Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 86; McCormack, *Critically-Realistic*, 465-466.

¹⁸⁰ Barth, *CDI/2*, 841-842.

return to a quietistic form of Christian faith, a purely aesthetic and mystical contemplation of the Word of God, which was part of the destructive legacy of Schleiermacher which Barth had fought so long to overcome.¹⁸¹ Likewise requisite attention to the formal arrangement of theological proofs could easily devolve into a distraction with the problems of aesthetics in general. Such concerns now stalked virtually everything positive Barth had to say about beauty like a shadow. Far from betraying a puritanical aversion to the beautiful, in context they simply evidence the advent of a more balanced appraisal of the concept.

The Church attitude precludes further the possibility of a dogmatics which thinks and speaks aesthetically [*ästhetisch*]. It is true, of course, that the object with which it has to do has its characteristic and quite distinctive beauty [*Schönheit*] which it would be unpardonable, because ungrateful, to overlook or to fail to find pleasing. But the moment dogmatics even temporarily surrenders to and loses itself in the contemplation of this beauty [*Schönheit*] as such, instead of letting itself be held by the object, this beauty becomes the beauty of an idol. No doubt certain formal requirements of completeness, symmetry and balance [*formale Bedürfnisse der Vollständigkeit, der Symmetrie, des Gleichgewichtes*] can and must be satisfied, because they are requirements of the object itself. But other requirements of this kind have their origin and justification only in the contemplating subject and its arbitrary fancy. There are interesting but otiose problems... a logical, historical, linguistic, even a juristic aesthetics [*Ästhetik*], in contact with which dogmatics at once loses touch with its own object, and therefore becomes estranged from its proper task, if it does not allow this object to fix its limits and call it to order... When it is orderly in this respect, and only then, it will be continually struck by the beauty of its object [*Schönheit ihres Gegenstandes*], and moved, willy-nilly, to genuine and grateful contemplation.¹⁸²

Meanwhile Barth's embrace of Anselm's belief that theological proofs of the *ratio veritatis* must exhibit both its truth and beauty, which as we have seen was so vital to him

¹⁸¹ Barth had long protested Schleiermacher's essentially passive concept of Christian faith which presumed it to be a matter of mere feeling as distinct from (though ordered to) thought and action. He frequently described it as 'aesthetic'. Along with it he also opposed Schleiermacher's consequent 'aesthetic' concepts of preaching and dogmatics as mere expressions of *Gefühl* as opposed to proclamation of the true and good Word of God. See K. Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, tr. G. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982), 214, 210; Barth, *GD*, 187-189, 273.

¹⁸² Barth, *CDI/2*, 841-842; K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik Band I,2* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1980), 941-942. Hereafter, *KDI/2*. Compare Barth's similar concerns in *CDI/2*, 808, 773-774.

in finally exculpating his dogmatics from the charges of irrelevance which had increasingly beset it, was pregnant with logical implications which now demanded acknowledgment in order for it to be taken seriously.

For Barth dogmatics is, like the three forms of the Word of God, essentially a human testimony to the Word of God. It assumes the task which is proper to Church proclamation of hearing and teaching the Word of God spoken in Holy Scripture, executing it through the critical task of testing the Church's teaching against its norm, the Word of God, and the material task of correcting it in light of this object.¹⁸³ By this means it testifies to the Word of God as both the norm and object of Church proclamation.¹⁸⁴ Like Church proclamation its ultimate aim is to be 'pure doctrine': a human testimony to the Word of God which is so obedient to it, so thoroughly purged of all foreign determinations and conditioned by it alone, that it may, by God's grace, serve as God's Word itself.¹⁸⁵ However dogmatics differs from the three forms of the Word of God in that it is a second-order witness to the Word of God which both derives from and prepares for Church proclamation. The witness of dogmatics to the Word of God is not commissioned by the Word of God *per se* like the forms of the Word of God but is necessitated by the commission which is given to Church proclamation to be the Word of God.¹⁸⁶ Its purpose is to provide instruction in the Word of God not to the Church but rather to its preachers by furnishing them with a summons, example and guide to their own hearing and teaching of the Word of God.¹⁸⁷ In sum, then, Barth understands dogmatics to be a distinctive or

¹⁸³ Barth, *CDI/2*, 813, 853, 778.

¹⁸⁴ Barth, *CDI/2*, 814, 851.

¹⁸⁵ Barth, *CDI/2*, 766-770.

¹⁸⁶ Barth, *CDI/2*, 766-770.

¹⁸⁷ Barth relates the two on the model of 'reflection' and 'action', 'learning' and 'teaching'. Barth, *CDI/2*, 769-770, 813, 853.

unique ‘witness’ to the Word of God which is ‘co-ordinate’ with the threefold human form of the Word of God: the humanity of Jesus Christ, the prophetic-apostolic Word and Church proclamation.¹⁸⁸

The function of dogmatics is this. Within the teaching Church, and therefore within the sphere of the human word of Church proclamation, which is in itself always threatened and in need of a higher qualification and attestation, it has to be a demonstration and proof, a sign and witness of the presence and validity of the Word of God, in whose service alone the human word can receive its qualification and attestation, if it is to receive it at all. Dogmatics cannot desire to be anything but a witness to this transcendent point of view, just as preaching itself and Holy Scripture, and even, on its human side, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, can only be a witness to it. The dogmatician, too, has the Word of God only in virtue of the freedom and sovereignty of the Word itself, and therefore in the hiddenness of his faith and obedience which are the gift of the Word. In dogmatics, too, the Word of God can become visible only as the divine is reflected in human being and action. Dogmatics, too, can only be what it ought to be through God's sovereign action. But, by God's sovereign grace, dogmatics can be this definite sign co-ordinate with Church proclamation; and its created human character will be the exemplary determination of its form as human thinking and speaking of God which is entirely determined by the revelation attested in Holy Scripture.¹⁸⁹

But precisely because Barth regarded dogmatics as a form of obedient human witness to the Word of God like the threefold form of the Word of God, his triumphant riposte to Brunner that theological discourse has appeal to modern men and women because it shares in the unrivalled formal beauty of the Word of God could only be credible and therefore effective if he was prepared to concede that this was also true of the three forms of the Word of God as well.

So for the first time in *Church Dogmatics I/2* that is precisely what he began to do. He now admits that the Bible, like all books, has innate ‘aesthetical’ power, the cumulative force of its various literary and rhetorical devices, which should be acknowledged by

¹⁸⁸ Barth, *CDI/2*, 814, 851.

¹⁸⁹ Barth, *CDI/2*, 814.

theology. While Barth is careful to point out that this is not in itself identical with the effectual power of God's self-revealing Word he maintains that it may be used by God for precisely this purpose. '[T]he power [*Macht*] of the Word of God... is not to be understood as the power of the... aesthetical [*ästhetischen*]... which is no doubt naturally proper to... the biblical subject as a whole, in its humanity... Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament there is a magic of biblical thought and language [*einen Zauber des biblischen Denkens und der biblischen Sprache*]... to which we must not on any account remain insensible'.¹⁹⁰ In addition to this Barth now for the first time also concedes that Church proclamation has beauty. 'The truth which the Church has to preach [*Die Wahrheit, die die Kirche zu predigen hat*] will not be the truth of God if it does not have also its own characteristic beauty [*Schönheit*]'.¹⁹¹ Although Barth does not explain what makes Church proclamation beautiful we could infer this from what he has already said about the nature of the beauty of theological discourse. Barth would then presume that the beauty of Church proclamation lies in the way that it at once brings great clarity and yet even greater mystery to the meaning of the Word of God for the Church congregation.

In the same volume of *Church Dogmatics* Barth also finally embraces Anselm's understanding of the beautiful and joyful nature of theological work. In §22.2 he concludes his prolegomenon to *Church Dogmatics* by complementing his exhaustive account of the Word of God with a thorough description of the task of dogmatics. Barth exhorts that dogmatics be conceived and practised as the 'centr[al]' task of theology.¹⁹² The discipline of theology, he suggests, has a unified and distinct form which both derives from the unified and distinct task of biblical interpretation (*explicatio, meditatio* and

¹⁹⁰ Barth, *CDI/2*, 674-675; Barth, *KDI/2*, 756.

¹⁹¹ Barth, *CDI/2*, 808; Barth, *KDI/2*, 903.

¹⁹² Barth, *CDI/2*, 766.

applicatio) which is the responsibility of the Church under the authority of the Word of God, and mirrors the form of the Trinity.¹⁹³ It comprises three distinct tasks and sub-disciplines: biblical theology appraises the foundation, dogmatics the content and practical theology the form of the Church's proclamation.¹⁹⁴ But each of these enterprises presupposes and includes the others and together they accomplish the single task of ensuring the Church's proclamation is pure doctrine.¹⁹⁵ According to Barth, like *meditatio* in biblical interpretation and the Son in the Trinity, dogmatics is the central or middle task of theology.¹⁹⁶ It draws upon the conclusions which biblical theology has reached regarding the *sensus scripturae* in order to determine the meaning of the Word of God for today which must be proclaimed by the Church and this, in turn, provides the raw material for practical theology's determination of the *usus scripturae*.¹⁹⁷ Barth claims that when dogmatics assumes this central or transitional position both its thought and descriptions acquire a form of 'freedom and necessity' which surpasses that of other academic disciplines.¹⁹⁸ It receives its own manifold problems - various doctrines - to investigate which must each be related to and reconceived in light of the Word of God.¹⁹⁹ Each of these doctrines has numerous details to consider which must be unified and integrated by the Word of God.²⁰⁰ And it is confronted by seemingly endless possibilities for structuring, ordering and sequencing its doctrines from amongst which it must choose the one which best approximates the formal character of the Word of God itself.²⁰¹

¹⁹³ Barth, *CDI/2*, 766-767 cf. 722-740.

¹⁹⁴ Barth, *CDI/2*, 766-767.

¹⁹⁵ Barth, *CDI/2*, 766-767.

¹⁹⁶ Barth, *CDI/2*, 766-767.

¹⁹⁷ Barth, *CDI/2*, 766-767.

¹⁹⁸ Barth, *CDI/2*, 771-772.

¹⁹⁹ Barth, *CDI/2*, 771-772.

²⁰⁰ Barth, *CDI/2*, 771-772.

²⁰¹ Barth, *CDI/2*, 771-772.

For Barth the primary significance of the matchless freedom and limitation of dogmatic thought is that it allows dogmatics to confidently claim that it is a science.²⁰² Barth assumes that these characteristics in fact typify scientific thought. Although dogmatics has been relentlessly harassed by questions from the other *Wissenschaften* about the legitimacy of its inclusion amongst them since the eighteenth century he claims that it may consequently turn the tables and ask whether they could ever hope to be as scientific as it is.²⁰³ Yet Barth finds further significance in the unparalleled freedom and necessity of dogmatic thought and speech as well. For Barth it means that dogmatic thought is elegantly proportioned. It thus provides him with a credible theoretical basis upon which he can finally appropriate Anselm's insight, which he had long felt illustrated his own experience, that dogmatic work is not only laborious and tedious but beautiful and pleasurable. '[D]ogmatics, and therefore... theology generally,... receives both... freedom and strictness in its work... When it does so, we can again understand what the medieval theologians meant when they did not only sigh at the toil but also rejoiced in the beauty (*pulchritudo*) of their work'.²⁰⁴ Although Barth does not explicitly state it here, since he claims that dogmatic thought actually has a superior form of freedom and necessity to other sciences, his comment implies more specifically that dogmatic method or labour will be more beautiful and pleasurable than any other science.²⁰⁵ Moreover since he believes that when dogmatic work recovers its scientific form the other theological disciplines, biblical and practical theology, will follow suit his comment implies that they too will acquire formal beauty. 'When it does so, there arises a genuine... [scientific] self-consciousness of exegetical and practical theology too'.²⁰⁶

²⁰² Barth, *CDI/2*, 771-772.

²⁰³ Barth, *CDI/2*, 771-772.

²⁰⁴ Barth, *CDI/2*, 772.

²⁰⁵ Barth, *CDI/2*, 771-772.

²⁰⁶ Barth, *CDI/2*, 771-772

By 1938 then, having been driven by his deep-seated humanism beyond inherited Reformed ways of describing effectual call and then found a conceptuality which offered not only a corrective but a manifold ennoblement of his whole approach to theology, Barth had enriched his *analogia fidei* with a medieval and specifically Anselmian concept of beauty. Having established this we must now finally take a brief moment to summarise his beliefs about the matter, show that they amount to a rudimentary analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty, and offer a preliminary reconstruction of it. We can then postpone further analysis of the *denkform* until after we have its mature form in the next chapter.

By this stage in his career as we have seen Barth now believed that not only the *ratio veritatis*, the Word of God itself, has beauty but that several forms of Christian witness to it have formal beauty as well. According to Barth Scripture has inherent ‘aesthetical’ power, largely a product of its rhetorical and literary devices, which although not identical to it can mediate the effectual call of the Word of God. Since Church proclamation is a proclamation of the Word of God it too must have beauty. And, although a second-order witness, theological discourse has a beautiful unified and distinct form of explaining and yet obscuring the Word of God as well. Although not a form of Christian witness it is important to keep in mind that Barth also believes that the freedom and necessity of dogmatic work or method is both beautiful and pleasing.

We can already see that the point of similarity or contact between God and Christians here is not an attribute of being *per se*. Barth now as always presumes an infinite qualitative distinction between divine and human being. Rather the common term is the beautiful form of an act which these two different beings carry out, namely, the beautiful form of proclamation of the Word of God. Since Barth has not yet explained what the beautiful

form or *proportio* of either the Word of God or Christian speech about it actually is in much detail, it is naturally a little more difficult to determine that there is an analogical relationship between them at this stage. However we can already do so in a preliminary sense. And then with his mature descriptions of them at hand in the next chapter we will be able to do so more conclusively.

In his brief descriptions of it so far we will have noticed that Barth reveals on several occasions that he believes the formal beauty of Christian speech about God is not just an arbitrary characteristic but one which is demanded of it by and hence acquired from the character of the Word of God itself.

The truth which the Church has to preach will not be the truth of God if it does not have also its own characteristic beauty.²⁰⁷

It is true, of course, that the object with which it has to do has its characteristic and quite distinctive beauty... No doubt certain formal requirements of completeness, symmetry and balance can and must be satisfied, because they are requirements of the object itself.²⁰⁸

But that means it cannot be completely different from the beauty of the Word of God. Yet we will recall that according to Barth's *analogia fidei* Christians cannot know the Word of God directly but only through the twofold mediation of the speech of a commissioned creaturely witness to it and an act of their own fallen reasoning. And so the beautiful form of Christian witness cannot be directly identical to the beauty of the Word of God either. Since there is therefore neither an equivocal nor a univocal relation between them we can only conclude that Barth assumes that there is an analogical relationship between the beauty of the Word of God and the elegant form of Christian speech about it. In other words, Barth has developed an analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty.

²⁰⁷ Barth, *CDI/2*, 808.

²⁰⁸ Barth *CDI/2*, 841-842.

Yet despite this achievement at this stage the conception remains rudimentary. As we have seen at this point his remarks about beauty are diffuse and frequently concessive in tone. But more seriously they still lack a theoretical basis. Although Barth claims that the Word of God has formal beauty and Christian witness has a corresponding beautiful form he has yet to give an explanation of what precisely the *proportio* - the unified and distinct form - of each is which could substantiate this claim. He has given no account at all of the former and only the briefest description of some forms of the latter, namely, that it consists in the unity-in-distinction of its explanation and obscuring of the Word of God. Yet as we shall soon see during these very same years Barth had been developing an understanding of the form of God and Christian witness which would ultimately fill this lacuna.

Now that we have established that Barth has a rudimentary analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty it will finally be useful to offer a tentative reconstruction of it by reading his early beliefs about beauty in light of their framework, namely, the *analogia fidei*. Barth now recognises that the eternal Word of God is not only the supreme truth, the *ratio veritatis*, but that it has supreme beauty as well. The beautiful form and content of human speech about God in Scripture, Church proclamation and theology has no inherent relation to this since it is the speech of creatures who are not only distinct from but at enmity with their Creator. The supremely eloquent Word of God can thus only be revealed by creating a similarity between it and Himself and thereby revealing Himself through it. Since this is an act of an eternal divine subject in human history it is a pure and unique event without precedents by which it could be anticipated or consequences by which it could be recollected.

Since humans are not only distinct from but in rebellion against God they have no innate capacity to hear the elegant Word of God which is spoken to them through the beautiful form and content of the speech of these creaturely witnesses. They only receive this by a corresponding act of the Holy Spirit which lifts their fallen knowing into the redeemed humanity of Jesus Christ which knows it perfectly so that He becomes the primary Subject of it. Humans consequently only know the beautiful *ratio veritatis* through the form of their own darkened reason. Since the contemplation of the elegant Word of God which they subsequently acquire is an anticipation of their eschatological humanity in time it too is a pure event without precedents or consequences.

4.4. *Formulating a Theoretical Basis: Corresponding Divine and Ecclesial Form (1937-1940)*

Barth took significant new strides in his understanding of both the form of God and of Christian witness in the late 1930's. During this period for the first time he formulates a belief that a unified and distinct triune form of unity and distinction or simplicity and multiplicity is essential to God and he gives final precision to his conviction that obedient Christian witness must take a corresponding unified and distinct form of speaking definitely and yet modestly about God. This development took place parallel to and quite independently of the formation of his rudimentary analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty. However in our next chapter we shall see that it would ultimately provide a theoretical basis for it.

As he delivered his inaugural lectures on dogmatics at the University of Göttingen (1924-1925) Barth already assumed that the Trinity has a unified and distinct form of unity and

distinction and simplicity and multiplicity. As an orthodox theologian who accepts the creedal formulations of the Trinity Barth believes that God is both a unified or simple divine essence and yet distinct or multiple in the three persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. ‘Yes indeed, one cannot avoid working out and establishing this thought - ...three subjects of revelation, three persons, *prosopa* or *hypostases* of the one divine substance, *ousia*, or *essentia*’.²⁰⁹ In the lectures Barth presumes that both the divine attributes and the incarnation have essentially the same form as well. In order to formulate an understanding of the divine attributes which accommodates nominalist and semi-nominalist concerns for the preservation of the simplicity of God Barth conceptualises them as a multiplicity of distinct characteristics which are dialectically identical with the one simple divine essence.²¹⁰ In addition Barth interprets the Chalcedonian definition of the person of Jesus Christ as ‘two natures, without confusion or change, division or separation’ to mean that He is a unity-in-distinction of divine and human natures and thus, by implication, of unity (the eternal Son of God) and distinction (the human Jesus of Nazareth).²¹¹ But although Barth presumes that each of these doctrines take a unified and distinct form of unity and distinction and simplicity and multiplicity at this stage he does not yet recognise any connection between them.

By the time of *Church Dogmatics* §29 (1940), however, that had begun to change. Here for the first time he recognises that the unified and distinct form of the divine perfections is in fact an analogy of the form of the Trinity. As he did in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* Barth conceives that the divine perfections take a unified and distinct form of multiplicity and simplicity. The multiplicity of divine perfections is identical with the one simple

²⁰⁹ Barth, *GD*, 99-100.

²¹⁰ Barth, *GD*, 380-383 cf. 378-384.

²¹¹ Barth, *GD*, 138-141, 153-154 cf. 131-167.

divine essence. '[E]ach individual perfection is identical with every other and with the fullness of them all'²¹², and consequently, 'God's *simplicitas* and *multiplicitas*... are not mutually exclusive but inclusive'.²¹³ However in the account Barth now for the first time recognises that this form of the divine perfections is an 'exact parallel' to the form of the Trinity: in both cases God takes a unified and distinct form of multiplicity and simplicity.²¹⁴ '[I]n this matter we have an exact parallel to the... doctrine of the Holy Trinity... [T]he one God in His three modes of being corresponds to the Lord of glory. As it is of decisive importance to recognise the three modes of being... as modes of being of... God Himself, so it is equally important to understand that God in Himself is not divested of His... perfections... but that they constitute His own eternal glory. Again, as it is of decisive importance not to dissolve the unity... but to understand the three modes of being strictly as the modes of being of the one God..., so it is of equal importance to interpret God's... perfections... as the glory of the Lord'.²¹⁵ In fact Barth now believes that the form of the Trinity is actually the ontological basis of the form of the divine attributes. It is only because God in His inner life as a Trinity exists as a unity-in-distinction of simplicity and multiplicity that it is possible for His manifold divine perfections to be identical and hence consistent with His simple divine essence. 'Since God is Father, Son and Holy Ghost, i.e., loves in freedom, every perfection exists essentially in Him'.²¹⁶

Barth's understanding of the form of God underwent a final development in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 (1940). Since we plan to examine this passage in detail in the next

²¹² Barth, *CDII/1*, 331-333, cf. 322-333.

²¹³ Barth, *CDII/1*, 332-333, 348.

²¹⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 324-327.

²¹⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 324-327.

²¹⁶ Barth, *CDII/1*, 323.

chapter here it will suffice to merely summarise the most relevant points. In this passage Barth again presumes that a Chalcedonian Christology prescribes an understanding of the person of Jesus Christ as a unity-in-distinction of divine and human natures.²¹⁷ Barth gives an actualistic interpretation of this Christology in his theology so that he now understands Jesus Christ more specifically as a unity-in-distinction of two events, the humiliation of the Son of God to become Jesus of Nazareth and the exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth to become the Son of God.²¹⁸ However here, just as he implied in Göttingen, Barth claims that the unity-in-distinction of the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ implies that in the incarnation, the central work of God, God has a unified and distinct form of unity, since He remains completely the eternal Son of God, and distinction, since He is also the fallen human Jesus of Nazareth.²¹⁹ But Barth now makes a significant advance on his previous understanding by identifying for the first time that this unified and distinct form of unity and distinction is in fact a ‘reflection’ of the form of the Trinity.²²⁰

And this, His supreme work towards what is outside Him, is the reflection and image of His inner, eternal, divine being. In this reflection and image we see Him as He is in Himself. He is One, and yet not imprisoned or bound to be merely one. He is identical with Himself, and yet free to be another as well; simple and yet manifold.²²¹

With the dawning of this recognition Barth’s synthesis of his beliefs about the form of the divine being *ad intra* and *ad extra* was now complete. As a result he could now claim for the first time with confidence that a unified and distinct form of unity and distinction and simplicity and multiplicity is in fact essential to the divine being.

Barth complemented this comprehensive concept of the form of God by further clarifying

²¹⁷ Barth, *CDII/1*, 664.

²¹⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 662-664.

²¹⁹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 662-663.

²²⁰ Barth, *CDII/1*, 663-664.

²²¹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 663-664.

his understanding of the form of faithful Christian speech about God in the latter half of the 1930's. Earlier in the chapter we showed that when Barth declared for the first time that theological discourse has beauty in his Paris lecture, *Theology* (1934), he suggested that this lies in the unified and distinct way it explains and yet obscures its subject-matter. However we must now set this explanation in the context of Barth's reflections upon the form of the knowledge of God throughout the first half of his career in order both to clarify what precisely Barth meant by it and to show that this was in fact still a rudimentary description of the formal character of Christian speech about God which was yet to receive final precision.

Barth had in fact already begun turning his thoughts to the question of the appropriate form of Christian speech about God many years earlier in the opening lectures of his doctrine of God at Göttingen (1924-1925). His objective in these lectures is to lay a thorough noetic basis for his description of God which will follow. He confronts the issue in §16 when, after reconciling his claim that God is knowable in His Word by His Holy Spirit with the historic Christian confession that He is incomprehensible, he considers their ramifications for his attempt to define God's nature.²²²

God's 'knowability', according to Barth, is the belief that we may fashion concepts of, define and think of God whereas His 'incomprehensibility' or 'inconceivability' refers to the conviction that He nevertheless cannot be completely conceived, defined and known by us.²²³ Barth begins by determining the relation between the two. He rejects the interpretation of mysticism, both negative theology and Protestant Liberalism, which

²²² Barth, *GD*, 351-361.

²²³ Barth, *GD*, 351-352.

affirms the latter but denies the former because of it. Barth finds this inconsistent with divine revelation. If God does in fact objectify Himself in time and space in His Word then we are permitted to form concepts of Him.²²⁴ He concurs instead with the appraisal of the older Protestant dogmaticians who hold that both tenets are true: God is incomprehensible and yet He has made Himself knowable in His revelation.²²⁵ However, Barth reverses this formulation of the relation between the two in order to give them a theological grounding and to prevent them from being interpreted as mere abstract corollaries of a sceptical philosophical epistemology as they were throughout the history of Protestant Modernism.²²⁶ It is more precise to say, he claims, that God makes Himself knowable in His revelation and therefore He is inconceivable.²²⁷

Having established this understanding of the relation between God's conceivability and inconceivability Barth then contemplates what it implies for Christian talk about God. This question, he believes, is of fundamental relevance to anyone who bears the responsibility of speaking about God in the Church: not only Christian theologians like himself who must define the nature of God but also ministers who must proclaim Him. If God is conceivable in His self-revelation and therefore inconceivable how exactly are teachers and preachers to faithfully speak about Him? Should they dare to describe Him, retain a reverent silence about Him or alternate between the two?²²⁸

The question of a concept of God's nature in its indissoluble connection with God's inconceivability is not merely a question for the theological teacher or student. Christian preaching works constantly with a concept of God's nature... As concerns the proclaimed or presupposed nature of God, this preaching must keep silence as well as speak; it must conceal as well as define; it must negate as well as affirm; it must draw back as well as venture forward...

²²⁴ Barth, *GD*, 352-354.

²²⁵ Barth, *GD*, 355-356.

²²⁶ Barth, *GD*, 356-358.

²²⁷ Barth, *GD*, 356-358.

²²⁸ Barth, *GD*, 358-359.

Already as regards the relation between conceivability and inconceivability Christian preachers need certain principal insights.²²⁹

Barth's answer is that God's conceivability, the fact that He has made it possible for us to know Him in His Word by His Spirit, not only 'permits' but 'commands' us to speak 'definitely' about Him.²³⁰ It would then be an act of faithless disobedience to insist upon remaining silent about God or using merely non-conceptual modes of representing Him simply because of the poverty of the concepts which are available to us. Faith in and obedience to God's revelation means instead 'courage[ously]' attempting to define God even in the face of the manifest impossibility of this task.²³¹

We look first at conceivability. As theologians we must again become accustomed to the thought that we are not merely permitted but commanded to talk about God, and to do so definitely... In faith we should speak about God... Because of our lack of faith all this is *only* figurative or conceptual. In faith we should also denote and describe the mystery of God's nature, the negations that belong indispensably to the concept. Because of our lack of faith these, too, are *only* abstractions... For theologians faith means seeing in the "only" that would forbid us concepts a temptation of the devil, who wants to suppress God's Word. Hence they should not evade the appropriate defining, describing, and thinking. Let it be understood, they must do these things in faith in revelation, or, shall we say here, in obedience to revelation, with the courage (*Mut*) of the humility (*Demut*) which ventures to do what we cannot do... to construct and propound a concept of God.²³²

God's inconceivability on the other hand, Barth claims, cannot be inferred from the limitations of our cognitive ability but only from God's self-revelation.²³³ The very fact that God reveals Himself to us in His Word by His Spirit implies that we have no adequate concepts of Him. But this means that the inconceivability of God is not an abstract inconceivability but the inconceivability of His conceivability. Faith and obedience to God's inconceivability then does not entail expressing it 'directly' by holding our tongues

²²⁹ Barth, *GD*, 358-359.

²³⁰ Barth, *GD*, 359-360

²³¹ Barth, *GD*, 359-360.

²³² Barth, *GD*, 359-360.

²³³ Barth, *GD*, 360-361.

about God but ‘indirectly’ by being ‘modest’ in all our definite assertions about Him. We must venture all of our claims about God in the humble recognition that what we say is merely a human testimony which has no capacity to describe Him and no veracity unless God graciously uses it to describe Himself.²³⁴

Revelation and revelation alone can produce truly fruitful and illuminating negations and veilings in Christian speech. The true force and significance of the inconceivability of God in Christian preaching will be achieved not directly but indirectly, in the quiet knowledge that accompanies all concepts, both negative and positive too; in the knowledge that God himself will speak; in restraint and modesty for all the definiteness that is given; in sober refusal to attempt any direct impartation, persuasion, influencing, or surprising; in an awareness that all Christian speech has the character of witness.²³⁵

In the Göttingen lectures then Barth believes in sum that the unity-in-distinction of God’s conceivability and inconceivability commands Christian teachers and preachers to carry out their own peculiar corresponding form of unveiling and veiling God: to speak at once ‘definitely’ and yet ‘modest[ly]’ about Him. Because they remain sinners whose minds and hearts are in bondage to rebellion against God they have no inherent capacity to faithfully and obediently carry out this command but can at best approximate it in their speech. They can do so truly only in the liberty which is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When we set Barth’s description of the beautiful unified and distinct form of theological discourse in his Paris lecture (1934) against the background of this longstanding understanding of the form of faithful Christian speech about God we can now see that it is in fact an aesthetic interpretation of it. In the lecture Barth suggests that the unparalleled beauty of theological texts lies in the way that they explain and yet obscure their subject-matter, make it ‘clear’ and yet ‘distant’, ‘orderly’ and yet ‘bizarre’, more

²³⁴ Barth, *GD*, 360-361.

²³⁵ Barth, *GD*, 360-361.

than any comparable scientific literature. It is clear that he is simply invoking his longstanding belief that obedient Christian speech both unveils and veils God by describing Him in a definite and yet modest way. He now identifies this formal character of Christian talk about God as its formal beauty.

Barth retained this understanding of the form of Christian speech about God in the years which followed adumbrating it, for instance, in the introduction to his doctrine of God in his Gifford Lectures (1937-1938) where he presented it as a *via media* between two alternative concepts of the form of Christian speech: both scepticism and speculation.²³⁶ But what is much more significant for our purposes is that he ultimately reasserts the view in the first volume of his doctrine of God in his *Church Dogmatics* (1940), the very same volume in which, as we shall see in the next chapter, he would elaborate his climactic reflections upon beauty. Here Barth gives the concept some final precision.

As was the case in his lectures at both Göttingen and Aberdeen Barth is drawn into reflection upon the issue at the conclusion of the formal introduction to his doctrine of God when, in the course of providing a concrete description of ‘The Way of the Knowledge of God’, he considers what the hiddenness and veracity of God imply for his forthcoming attempt to define the nature of God.²³⁷

Just as before Barth believes that the unity-in-distinction of God’s hiddenness and veracity requires Christians to respond in faith and obedience by speaking ‘confidently’ and yet ‘humbl[y]’ about God. According to Barth the *terminus a quo* of our knowledge

²³⁶ Barth, *KGSG*, 25-30.

²³⁷ See Barth, *CDII/1*, §27.

of God is the hiddenness of God. Faith in God's self-revelation leads us to recognise in the first place that we have no ability to know or speak about God in ourselves.²³⁸ However the meaning or significance of the hiddenness of God is the veracity of God. It implies that conversely we really are able and therefore permitted and commanded to know and speak about God by His gracious self-revelation.²³⁹ In faith and obedience to the veracity of God then we must know and speak 'confidently' about God.²⁴⁰ The *terminus ad quem* of our knowledge of God on the other hand according to Barth is the veracity of God. We at last know and speak truly about God only when He takes up our concepts and speech and makes it refer to Himself.²⁴¹ However the mode of the veracity of God is the hiddenness of God. We know and describe God truly through concepts and speech which have no capacity to describe Him in themselves. Faith and obedience to the hiddenness of God consequently requires us to know and speak about God not only confidently but also 'humbl[y]'.²⁴²

However in this account Barth now clarifies that the unity-in-distinction of the hiddenness and veracity of God which he has been referring to is simply the unity-in-distinction of the veiling and unveiling of the Word of God.²⁴³ It now becomes clear then that Barth believes that in fact the unified and distinct form of the veiling and unveiling of the Word of God commands Christians to carry out a corresponding unified and distinct form of veiling and unveiling: to speak definitely and yet modestly about God. This becomes especially clear when Barth later summarises this form of Christian knowledge of God in

²³⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 181-191.

²³⁹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 191-201.

²⁴⁰ Barth, *CDII/1*, 202-204.

²⁴¹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 204-212.

²⁴² Barth, *CDII/1*, 213-214.

²⁴³ Barth, *CDII/1*, 215.

order to deduce the appropriate arrangement of the divine perfections from it.

God is for us fully revealed and fully concealed in His self-disclosure... Both demands are laid upon us by God Himself in His revelation: the obedience of knowledge and the humility of ignorance... The unity and distinction of the complete trust and complete humility in which the Christian knowledge of God is attained (in view of the complete disclosure and the complete concealment of the one God in His revelation).²⁴⁴

4.5. *Conclusion*

There is good reason why von Balthasar's thesis that Barth recovers belief in the beauty of God but does not relate this to worldly forms of beauty has attained the status of the classic interpretation of the matter. The astonishing breadth and erudition of both *Herrlichkeit* and *The Theology of Karl Barth* along with his personal friendship with his colleague in Basel mean that he justly continues to be regarded as both an authority on theological aesthetics and an insightful interpreter of Barth's theology. However there are already significant grounds for beginning to doubt the credibility of his interpretation of Barth's view of beauty. Balthasar draws this conclusion entirely from an analysis of Barth's reflections upon beauty in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 to the complete neglect of any consideration of his earlier deliberations on the theme. This leaves his interpretation with only the most slender evidential basis. But more seriously it abstracts Barth's concept of beauty in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 from the thematic history which is its proper context and thereby risks confounding his interpretation of it. It implies that Barth enters his deliberations on the theme in 1940 completely empty handed on the matter.

Although his formative reflections on beauty are admittedly scattered had Balthasar examined Barth's early corpus he would have likely found that in fact nothing could be further from the truth. By the time that Barth sat down to write *Church Dogmatics* §31.3

²⁴⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 341-344.

in 1940 he already had to hand three rudiments of an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty. Borne of an enduring humanism tutored by the insights of great medieval minds like Anselm and hastened by his dispute with Brunner he had developed both a rudimentary analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty and a potential theoretical basis for it in the concept of God's unified and distinct form of unity and distinction which demands Christians to speak about God with a corresponding form of confidence and humility. These complemented his longstanding belief that the most beautiful creations of both God and humanity could by God's grace be elevated to the dignity of sharing in His self-revelation. In our next chapter we must now show how Barth integrated these insights and developed them into an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty for the first time in his account of glory in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3.

*Chapter 5: Climax: Barth's Comprehensive Analogy of Theological,
Ecclesial and Worldly Beauty in Church Dogmatics §31.3 (1940)*

5.1. *Introduction*

The connection between the glory (*kabod, hod*) and beauty (*tip'eret*) of God is as at least as old as the Jewish Scriptures themselves which presume a considerable semantic overlap between the terms. The latter is occasionally used to describe the former and at times virtually becomes a synonym for it.¹ Yet because of their longstanding neglect of both themes Christian theologians often assumed but seldom expounded the relationship between the two prior to the twentieth century. It was therefore a significant milestone when in the midst of his description of the attribute of God's glory in his mature doctrine of God (1940) Barth initiated a lengthy 'parenthesis' on its beauty. In his famous theological aesthetics von Balthasar suggests it was Barth's longstanding interest in secular form or, in other words, things which ultimately moved him to draw out this connection.² However as we have seen it was actually his timely discovery of scholastic allusions to beauty almost ten years earlier which really laid the foundation for this development. Sensing its potential to both enrich and vindicate his theology Barth made a provisional appropriation of the concept during this early period of his career and by doing so developed three elements of an analogy of beauty: a rudimentary analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty, a theoretical basis for it and a belief that worldly beauty could bear witness to God. His mature doctrine of God now merely provided a perfect opportunity for him to thoroughly consolidate this development.

¹ See, for instance, Ps.96:3-8; Ps.78:61 cf. 1 Sam.4:21-22. Longman, 49-50.

² Balthasar, *GLI*, 52.

In this chapter we must now at last return to this excursus in Barth's description of God's glory and take it out of parentheses for the first time. For here he shares his most extensive reflections upon beauty. In it we shall argue that, despite first appearances and contrary to the interpretation which has been popularised by von Balthasar, Barth does not merely affirm God's beauty in this passage but develops these three rudiments into an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty for the first time. To be more precise we shall claim that although Barth does not explicitly assert an *analogia pulchritudinis* in this passage he clearly assumes one.

In what follows we will establish this new interpretation of Barth's climactic account of beauty above all by reading it in its proper context for the first time: both its historical context of his earlier reflections on the theme and its immediate literary context of his *analogia gloriae*. We shall find that this approach ultimately proves decisive for our interpretation of it. But before we begin it is important to briefly clarify once again that our aim in this chapter is not to provide an exhaustive analysis of Barth's view of beauty in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 and its significance. Thankfully others have already devoted themselves to that task. Instead it is merely the more modest ambition of demonstrating that Barth assumes an analogy of beauty even in his climactic account of the concept and at the height of his career.³

5.2. *Barth's Description of Beauty in Church Dogmatics* §31.3 (1940)

We must begin with an overview of the main points of Barth's description of beauty in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3. Barth is led to the concept by his desire to fill a remaining

³ For a great recent example of the former which explains the significance of Barth's view of beauty in *CD* §31.3 especially for constructing a theology of joy and communion see B. Helmich, 'Karl Barth and the Beauty of God', ThD thesis, Duke Divinity School, Duke University, 2017.

lacuna in his description of God's glory. We will recall from chapter three that by this point he had proposed on the basis of the witness of both Scripture and tradition that God's glory is a manifestation of His perfect divine being and all-sufficiency which not only contrasts with all other beings like a source of light amidst darkness but which through its omnipotence encircles them like the radiance of that light, fills up their inability to recognise and praise Him and thereby empowers their glorification of Him like a multitude of shimmering reflections of it. But this now raised the question of the 'form' [*die Form*] of God's glory or in other words of both the 'shape' [*die Gestalt*] in which and the 'method' [*das Wie*] by which it arouses this creaturely glorification of God.⁴

Barth briefly considers and rules out three common answers to this question which ultimately form an *inclusio* around his own proposed solution to it.⁵ He first dismisses a merely 'negative' answer to the question which refuses to speculate about how God's glory evokes our glorification but just accepts it as a 'brute fact' and thereby assumes it is completely 'formless'. It is unlikely that here, as von Balthasar suggests, Barth is specifically referring to Bultmann's programme of demythologisation which assumed that the truth of Christianity is ultimately formless since Bultmann only published his essay on that topic in 1941. So Barth may just be thinking of previous Reformed accounts of effectual call which typically refrained from specifying the means by which it is carried

⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 649-650; K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik: Band II,1* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1980), 732-733. Hereafter, *KDII/1*. Throughout this passage Barth therefore uses the term 'form' in a modified medieval sense to mean both proportion / shape and method / manner. He does not use it in the more specifically Thomist sense of formed substance or thing as Balthasar occasionally assumes. This misinterpretation appears to be at the root of several other minor misunderstandings of Barth's view of beauty throughout von Balthasar's account of it. Balthasar, *GL1*, 52.

⁵ See Barth, *CDII/1*, 649-650, 666 cf. 650-666. Price and others fail to recognise this point. See Price, 175, 179-180.

out any more precisely than the person of the Holy Spirit. In any case Barth finds this assumption inadequate since he believes that throughout Scripture the term ‘glory’ obviously refers to something more than just a formless object.⁶

Next Barth rules out a ‘positive’ answer to the question which presumes that God’s glory convinces creatures to echo it simply by its supreme ‘power’ or ‘omnipotence’ and hence by ‘ruling, mastering and subduing with... utterly superior force’. In light of our last chapter we can easily recognise this as just a reiteration of his longstanding refusal to follow historical Reformed accounts of effectual call in explaining the notion by an unqualified use of the Aristotelian term ‘cause’ since it unwittingly portrayed God as an all-conquering force of nature like fate and the Christian life as mere passive resignation to it. Barth now insists that throughout the Bible the term glory means something more than power as well since, for example, the other noun in the doxology of the Lord’s prayer, ‘kingdom’ (Matt.6:13), is not synonymous with it either.⁷

Finally, at the end of his own proposed solution to the matter, Barth also rejects the possibility of ‘answer[ing] the question’ by claiming that God’s glory causes people to recognise and worship Him by its self-evident ubiquity or in other words by a ‘natural knowledge of God’. Once again in the context of our last chapter it is clear that this is just a further rejection of the calls of his colleagues in the dialectical theology movement, especially Brunner, for him to supplement his Christian dogmatics with the ‘other task’ of natural theology in order to make it relevant to the existential concerns of modern society. Barth now responds to their pleas by insisting that his own explanation of the

⁶ Barth, *CDII/1*, 649-650.

⁷ Barth, *CDII/1*, 649-650.

form of God's glory guarantees its relevance to contemporary humanity without distorting the being of God like natural theology does and by suggesting that the arid intellectualism of *theologia naturalis* raises serious questions about whether the god it knows by natural powers is really the living God whose glory causes irrepressible joy.⁸

Barth then proposes that the form of God's glory, the shape and manner by which it awakens creaturely glorification, is instead its unique and supreme beauty.⁹ '[W]hen we say that God... is beautiful [*schön*]... we are speaking only of the form and manner of His glory [*der Form und Gestalt seiner Herrlichkeit*]'.¹⁰ He acknowledges that by making this claim he is retrieving a belief from 'pre-Reformation' and specifically 'medieval' theology.¹¹ And he concedes that there are 'dangers' in doing so. For according to Barth the belief has been historically neglected by Christian theology not only because of its connection with Neo-Platonic philosophy but its association with sensual or worldly pleasure which has raised the fear that if ascribed to God it may reduce Him to a mere idolatrous projection of 'the ideal of all [sinful] human striving'.¹²

However Barth clarifies that he is not suggesting that beauty is the chief characteristic of God. In fact he has consistently denied this status to any concept by arranging God's attributes in dialectical pairs.¹³ Nor is he claiming that beauty is even one of the many perfections of God. Barth feels it would be unjustified to bestow such a status upon it as

⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 666.

⁹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 650-651.

¹⁰ Barth, *CDII/1*, 654-655; Barth, *KDII/1*, 738.

¹¹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 651, 654.

¹² Barth, *CDII/1*, 651.

¹³ Barth, *CDII/1*, 652.

others have since there are comparatively few references to it in the Bible.¹⁴ Instead Barth points out he is merely proposing that it is the form of one of these perfections, namely, the glory of God.¹⁵ To emphasise this modest ‘auxiliary’ role he prefers to say that God is ‘also’ beautiful.¹⁶ And so there is no danger of his doctrine of God succumbing to ‘aestheticism’ as Protestant Christians especially have historically feared.¹⁷

But Barth believes that it is absolutely ‘essential’ for Christian theology to overcome such fears and acknowledge that the form of God’s glory is beautiful. He concedes that beauty gets little direct or ‘autonomous’ mention in the Bible beyond a few fleeting allusions in the Psalms. However he contends that the meaning of both the Hebrew and Greek terms for glory include the idea of beauty. And moreover wherever the concept of God’s glory appears throughout Scripture it is invariably portrayed as something which is not merely neutral but which arouses desire, pleasure and joy in those who behold it. Indeed it strikes terror in some only because they realise they cannot have it. And in this way Scripture implies that God’s glory is supremely beautiful. Barth therefore asks, in summary, if we do not acknowledge the beauty of God’s glory ‘what then becomes of the evangelical element in the evangel?’¹⁸

¹⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 652. Sherry’s claim that for Barth beauty is a ‘perfection’ of God is a glaring oversight. See Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 19.

¹⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 653.

¹⁶ Barth, *CDII/1*, 653-655; W. Barnett, ‘Actualism and Beauty: Karl Barth’s Insistence on the Auch in His Account of Divine Beauty’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 66 (2013), 299-313.

¹⁷ Barth, *CDII/1*, 652.

¹⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 653-655; J. Capper, ‘Joy in the Church Dogmatics? A Neglected Theme’, in C. Mostert and G. Thompson (eds), *Karl Barth: A Future for Postmodern Theology?* (Hindmarsh: Australian Theological Forum, 2000), 98-121; J. Moltmann, *Theology and Joy* (London: SCM, 1973), 58-60. Von Balthasar, by contrast, claims that Barth finds the idea of beauty necessary because the Bible presumes that divine glory is intuitable rather than just pleasurable. This misinterpretation is the fruit of his mistaken assumption that Barth uses the term ‘form’ in the Thomist sense of things rather than in the more general sense of shape and method. Balthasar, *GL1*, 52.

Barth recognises that his identification of the form of God's glory as beauty now implies that it 'convinces' and 'persuades' people to glorify Him not simply by sheer power or force but by 'giv[ing] pleasure, creat[ing] desire and reward[ing] with enjoyment'. In other words he consciously uses the concept of beauty to now go beyond and correct the historical Reformed concepts of effectual call which he had long criticised for the first time.¹⁹ However this proposition also reflects another innovation, namely, Barth's appropriation of a second of the medieval conditions of beauty. We have seen that throughout this passage, following Scripture, Barth regularly describes God's glory as light. His identification of the form of God's glory as beauty therefore implies that like the medievals he now believes that it supervenes not only upon *proportio* or form but *claritas*, *lumen* or splendour as well.

Having proposed that the form of God's glory is beautiful Barth then dedicates the remainder of his excursus to substantiating this claim by identifying the proportion or symmetry of God's glory which makes it pleasurable and hence beautiful. 'If, then, we must pursue our enquiry, what is actually the beautiful element in God which makes Him an object of joy as the One He is, and therefore in His glory...?'.²⁰

He begins by clarifying the approach he will use to identify the conditions of the beauty

¹⁹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 650-651, 653. For an attempt to reconcile the role of the beauty of God's glory and the Holy Spirit in Barth's understanding of effectual calling to glorification of Him in this passage see J. Kim, *The Spirit of God and the Christian Life: Reconstructing Karl Barth's Pneumatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 189-237 cf. Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 17-18. As Price notes, Barth's identification of beauty as the form of God's glory also means that his concept of revelation is not simply cognitive as has often been claimed but affective as well. See Price, 179-180 cf. G. Wingren, *Theology in Conflict: Nygren, Barth, Bultmann*, tr. E. Wahlstrom (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), 110, 125; R. Williams, 'Barth on the Triune God', in S. Sykes (ed), *Karl Barth: Studies of his Theological Method* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 172-175; A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: CUP, 1986), 179-184; A. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation with Special Reference to Volume One of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 117-119.

²⁰ Barth, *CDII/1*, 656.

of God's glory. He rules out starting from a philosophical idea of beauty and using this as a criterion to determine what is beautiful about God's glory. This would not only be inconsistent with the approach he has taken throughout his doctrine of God but it would contradict his claim that God is supremely and uniquely beautiful and is thus 'the basis and standard of everything that is beautiful' and would instead make His beauty subordinate to and knowable from worldly beauty. Barth therefore plans instead to learn from God Himself through His own revealed divine being what is beautiful about Him. Yet here, as we shall see in more detail later in the chapter, he briefly admits that this may subsequently confirm some philosophical concepts of beauty.²¹ While he does not describe it in these terms Barth's approach to substantiating his claim that the form of God's glory is beautiful therefore takes the form of an Anselmian proof in which, in coherentist fashion, belief in one article of faith is temporarily suspended while it is proved by means of others.²²

Barth finally admits that in order to discover what is beautiful about God's revealed divine being he would really need to review all the previous sections of his theology.²³ And this admission leads him to briefly reaffirm his belief, which he first acquired from Anselm in *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* (1931), that in both its 'content and method' theology is extraordinarily beautiful.²⁴

At this point we may refer to the fact that if its task is correctly seen and grasped, theology [*die Theologie*] as a whole, in its parts and in their interconnexion [*als ganze, in ihren Teilen und in deren Zusammenhang*], in its content [*Inhalt*] and method [*Methode*], is, apart from anything else, a peculiarly beautiful science [*eine eigentümlich schöne Wissenschaft*]. Indeed, we can confidently say that it is the most beautiful of all sciences. To find the sciences distasteful is the mark of the Philistine. It is an extreme form of

²¹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 656.

²² Price, 177.

²³ Barth, *CDII/1*, 656.

²⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 656-657.

Philistinism to find, or to be able to find, theology distasteful. The theologian who has no joy in his work is not a theologian at all... The beauty of theology is an insight to which there is occasional allusion in Anselm of Canterbury.²⁵

We will return to Barth's claim that the 'content' of theology is beautiful later in the chapter. However his contention that 'theology as a whole, in its parts and in their interconnexion, in its... method is... beautiful' appears to be a fairly straightforward reaffirmation of his belief from *Church Dogmatics I/2* (1938) that when it is practised correctly the discipline of theology is a unified and distinct endeavour of biblical, systematic and practical theology which involves a balance of both freedom and necessity which is more pleasurable and beautiful than any other science.²⁶ Barth now admits that in spite of its importance it is difficult to develop this concept any further since it is so dependent upon theologians' own impressions of what is enjoyable about their work. And he briefly reiterates his warning from *Church Dogmatics I/2* (1938) that it does not license theology to become distracted from its proper task of critiquing and correcting the church's proclamation of the Word of God into a discussion of the aesthetics of theology in itself.²⁷

Having explained how he will substantiate that the form of God's glory is beautiful Barth finally provides three examples of its beauty. If his description of these at times seems both dense and oblique it is because they are essentially pithy digests of previous doctrines which sometimes stretched across hundreds of pages of his dogmatics.

In the first place Barth claims that the divine perfections have a perfect unified and distinct form of unity and distinction or simplicity and multiplicity which is beautiful. He

²⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 656-657; Barth, *KDII/1*, 740.

²⁶ Barth, *CDII/1*, 656-657 cf. Barth, *CDI/2*, 766-767, 771-772.

²⁷ Barth, *CDII/1*, 657 cf. Barth, *CDI/2*, 841-842.

summarises much of the opening chapters of his doctrine of God in order to substantiate this claim. Barth reminds us that there he proposed that since the attributes of God are characteristics of the Creator rather than the creature they are perfect. Moreover, in order to accommodate both nominalist concerns for God's simplicity and realist commitments to His multiplicity, he conceived that the multiplicity of divine perfections are the perfect divine being itself. Barth recalls that throughout his account of this perfect divine being he repeatedly found it necessary to conceive that it takes the form of a 'unity of identity and non-identity, simplicity and multiplicity', and 'unity and distinction' which he, and he believes others too, found deeply moving, pleasing or 'delight[ful]'. For instance, the noetic basis of his account of the perfect divine being was the event of the unity-in-distinction of its concealment and self-disclosure in Jesus Christ. From this Barth determined that the perfect divine being is most basically a unity-in-distinction of freedom and love. In the interests of a more comprehensive definition Barth then confessed that God is moreover a unity-in-distinction of this simple perfect divine being ('the Lord') and the multiplicity of His perfections (His 'glory'). Furthermore, in order to describe this multiplicity in such a way as to preserve the simple perfect divine being, Barth proposed that it takes the form of a unity-in-distinction of perfections of the divine freedom and perfections of the divine love. Finally, this in turn meant that each perfection of love and freedom took the form of being at once non-identical or distinguishable and yet also identical with each other and the one divine essence. Barth suggests that if we found this form of the perfect divine being in its various manifestations as moving and delightful as he did then it must not only be perfect but beautiful as well.²⁸

Barth contends that if the perfect divine being has a perfectly beautiful form of unity and

²⁸ Barth, *CDII/1*, 657-659 cf. Barth, *CDII/1*, 272-350.

distinction, simplicity and multiplicity or identity and non-identity then the Trinity must as well since Christians believe after all that the Trinity is the perfect divine being. Barth finds confirmation of this belief in the form of simplicity and multiplicity, unity and distinction or identity and non-identity which his doctrine of the Trinity, like all orthodox ones, has as one divine essence which is yet three modes of being. For Barth this means that the Trinity is the real 'secret' of God's beauty and the formal beauty of the perfect divine being is just a 'reflect[ion]' of it.²⁹

Finally Barth claims that if the Trinity and the perfect divine being have perfect formal beauty then the incarnation must have a supremely beautiful form of unity and distinction which corresponds to it since the Son of God is the perfect image of this perfect divine being throughout eternity and His assumption of perceptible human form is the climactic revelation of it in time.³⁰ Barth recalls much of his rudimentary Christology from *Church Dogmatics I/2* (1938), §13 and 15 in order to substantiate this claim. He reminds us that there he affirmed the basic tenets of the Chalcedonian confession that the person of Jesus Christ is a unity-in-distinction of divine and human natures.³¹ But he nevertheless actualised and contemporised this into his distinctive concept that the incarnation is a unity-in-distinction of two events.³² It is the Son of God's humiliation to become the fallen human Jesus of Nazareth which veils Him. And on this basis it is also the fallen human Jesus of Nazareth's exaltation to be the Son of God which unveils Him. For Barth

²⁹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 659-661 cf. Barth, *GD*, 99-100; Barth, *CDII/1*, 323-327.

³⁰ Barth, *CDII/1*, 661-662.

³¹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 664.

³² Barth, *CDII/1*, 662-664 cf. Barth, *CDI/2*, 15-25. Hunsinger, *Karl Barth's Christology*, 127-142. Bruce McCormack rightly points out that Barth's reformulation of the doctrine of election in *Church Dogmatics II/2* would provide a basis for him to make a far more radical revision of the Chalcedonian formula in his later Christology in which the substantialist ontology assumed by the definition (in terms like nature and person) is replaced by a thoroughly actualistic one. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Historicized Christology*, 201-234.

this unity-in-distinction of the humiliation of the Son of God and the exaltation of the Son of Man is both a *completed* event, a past once-for-all act, and a completed *event*, an act which is realised contemporaneously again and again in the event of revelation.³³ Barth then draws two implications from this rudimentary Christology which are similar to those he acknowledged in that account. He believes that it implies that God's unity or freedom surpasses all creaturely freedom since God can be Himself not only in His own divine nature but also in a human nature or mode of being which is completely different from His own.³⁴ In addition it implies that God's distinction or love surpasses creaturely forms of love because Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Son of God takes into unity with Himself, is not simply ontologically but also morally alienated from God.³⁵ Barth claims that this supreme form of unity and distinction or freedom and love is just a 'reflection' or analogy of the perfect formal beauty of the perfect divine being *ad intra*.³⁶ He concludes by clarifying that because the beauty of Jesus Christ consists in the supreme form of unity and distinction of His divine and human natures it is not self-evident.³⁷ In this respect Barth's concept of the beauty of Jesus Christ diverges from Lutheran conceptions. Barth had long recognised and rejected the tendency of Lutheran theology to attribute the person of Jesus Christ an unfallen human nature with inherent and self-evident excellence and beauty.³⁸ By contrast, Barth follows the prophet Isaiah in conceiving that Jesus Christ has a fallen human nature with 'no form nor comeliness'.³⁹ His beauty is therefore only discernible when the Son of God unveils Himself through this fallen humanity so that the beautiful unified and distinct form of His divine and human natures may be perceived.⁴⁰

³³ Barth, *CDII/1*, 662-664 cf. Barth, *CDI/2*, 165-171.

³⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 662. Cf. Barth, *CDI/2*, 30-32, 37-39.

³⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 663. Cf. Barth, *CDI/2*, 39-44, 151-155.

³⁶ Barth, *CDII/1*, 663-664.

³⁷ Barth, *CDII/1*, 665-666.

³⁸ e.g. Barth, *GD*, 166; Barth, *CDI/2*, 153.

³⁹ Barth, *CDII/1*, 665. Barth is quoting Isaiah 53:2-3.

⁴⁰ Barth, *CDII/1*, 665-666.

Barth's anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology may appear to undermine this notion since, as we have seen, it implies an epistemological dialectic between the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ which means that we only ever observe one of them at a time and hence His distinction but never His unity. But in fact Barth has made clear in previous passages that while we perceive only one of the natures of Jesus Christ at any time we infer the other and the unity between the two from it in faith.⁴¹

By elaborating these examples of the beauty of God's glory Barth now effectively identifies the scholastic idea of beauty which he had appropriated following his time in Catholic Münster with the unified and distinct form of unity and distinction or simplicity and multiplicity which by 1940, as we saw in our last chapter, he had come to realise was common to his doctrine of God. This development now meant that for the first time Barth's claim that God is beautiful was truly coherent.

5.3. *Logical Implications*

Now that we have apprehended the main points of Barth's description of the beauty of God's glory in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 we can see that he does not obviously or directly articulate an analogy of beauty in this passage. Von Balthasar is right in concluding that Barth's primary aim here is simply to establish the beauty of God's glory. However when we read Barth's description of beauty in its immediate literary context of his account of God's glory, which as we have seen contains an *analogia gloriae*, it nevertheless implies an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty.

As we saw just above in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 Barth describes beauty as the form, the

⁴¹ e.g. Barth, *CDI/2*, 23-25; Barth, *CDI/1*, 174-181.

shape and method, of God's glory. '[W]hen we say that God... is beautiful... we are speaking only of the form and manner of His glory'.⁴² More specifically he suggests it is the beautiful unified and distinct form of unity and distinction or simplicity and multiplicity of the glory of both the eternal and incarnate Son of God.

But we will recall from chapter three that in this same passage Barth assumes an *analogia gloriae*. In other words he believes there is an analogy between the glory of the eternal and incarnate Son of God and the glorification of God by the human Jesus Christ, the Church and the world *extra muros ecclesiae*. They are all similar acts of proclaiming or attesting the perfect divine being and all-sufficiency to others.

More concretely Barth believes that the glory shared by the Father and Son through the Spirit and the Son of God's glorification of the Father throughout eternity provides the ontological basis for God's glory in history. The Son of God therefore repeatedly manifests His glory, His perfect divine being and *omni-sufficientia*, through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. And when He does the Holy Spirit simultaneously unites humans, who have no inherent ability to glorify Him, with the prototypical creaturely glorification of God by Jesus Christ and thereby momentarily enables them to offer a creaturely echo of His eternal glory. And Barth contends that during these times the Church temporarily acquires ears to hear and eyes to see that the world around it glorifies God as well.

But if that is the case then Barth's description of beauty here implies that not only does the glory of the eternal and incarnate Son of God have a beautiful unified and distinct form of unity and distinction or simplicity and multiplicity but that the Church's

⁴² Barth, *CDII/1*, 654-655.

glorification of God has a similarly beautiful form. And it further suggests that when the Church glorifies God it may momentarily recognise similar forms of beauty in the world outside its walls which reflect and attest His glory as well. In sum then Barth's concept of beauty in the context of his account of God's glory implies an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty.⁴³

5.4. *Textual Corroboration*

Now even if that is granted it is true that it proves relatively little, because Barth's theology is famously saturated with unrealised implications. But we must now go a step further and show that in fact several brief allusions Barth makes throughout this passage suggest that this is what he himself actually assumes.

We must begin by pointing out that Barth never prohibits creaturely analogues of the beautiful unified and distinct form of God's glory *per se* in this passage. Instead he simply rules out two specific versions of them. In the first place he warns Christian artists not to attempt direct representations of the beautiful unity-in-distinction of the divine and humans natures of Jesus Christ. This was just a reiteration of his longstanding conviction that because of the miraculous nature of the incarnation this was ultimately a futile

⁴³ Barth's claim that God's glory has a beautiful form of unity and distinction combined with his assumption of an analogy between the glory of the eternal and incarnate Son of God and the glorification of God by Jesus, the Church and the world *extra muros ecclesiae* would certainly by itself imply that not only the glorification of God by the Church but the world as well has a similarly beautiful form. And Barth definitely had the conceptual resources to substantiate this latter notion. He could have proposed that the beauty of the world's glorification of God supervenes upon the unified and distinct form of its veiling and unveiling of God. However as we shall see, like so many other profound implications of his theology, Barth never developed this implication. Instead here he simply maintained his longstanding conviction that natural revelation (i.e. the glorification of God by the world) meant that even the beauty of the world *extra muros ecclesiae* could echo and attest God's glory.

undertaking which could only lead to a reductive and heretical view of Jesus: either a docetic or ebionite one.⁴⁴

No human art should try to represent – in their unity – the suffering God and triumphant man, the beauty of God which is the beauty of Jesus Christ. If at this point we have one urgent request to all Christian artists, however well-intentioned, gifted or even possessed of genius, it is that they should give up this unholy undertaking – for the sake of God’s beauty. This picture, the one true picture, both in object and representation, cannot be copied, for the express reason that it speaks for itself, even in its beauty.⁴⁵

In the second place unsurprisingly Barth also briefly rules out any inherent and self-evident creaturely analogues of the beautiful form of God’s glory.

We must be very clear what we are doing. There can be no question of distinguishing between the content and the form of the divine being and therefore of seeking the beauty of God abstractly in the form of His being for us and in Himself. The beauty of God is not to be found in the unity of identity and non-identity, or movement and peace, as such.⁴⁶

In fact Barth seems to expect that there will be creaturely analogues of the beautiful form of God’s glory. On several occasions he briefly describes the perfectly beautiful unified and distinct form of God’s glory as the ‘basis’ and ‘source’ of all beauty. And he admits that there may be other imperfect instances of it.

God... is the basis and standard [*der Grund und das Kriterium*] of everything that is beautiful.⁴⁷

Because He is... this way, He is not only the source of all truth and all goodness, but also the source [*die Quelle*] of all beauty.⁴⁸

[T]he question cannot be whether there might not be other examples of this unity and distinction... That, of course, may be so. The question is:... Where is it... perfect...? ...Only the form of the divine being has divine beauty.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ See, for example, Barth, *GD*, 428-429; Barth, *CDIV*/3.2, 865-868. This nuance is lost on De Gruchy. See De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 119-120.

⁴⁵ Barth, *CDII*/1, 666.

⁴⁶ Barth, *CDII*/1, 658 cf. 656.

⁴⁷ Barth, *CDII*/1, 656; Barth, *KDII*/1, 740.

⁴⁸ Barth, *CDII*/1, 664; Barth, *KDII*/1, 749.

⁴⁹ Barth, *CDII*/1, 659.

But more importantly Barth seems to admit that at least one form of the Church's glorification of God has beauty which reflects the beautiful form of God's glory. Earlier in this chapter we saw that after acknowledging that he would need to survey the whole of his theology in order to discover what is beautiful about the revealed divine being Barth briefly admits that the 'content [*Inhalt*]' of theology has beauty which surpasses all other sciences. Von Balthasar and those following him have typically taken this as a reference to the beauty of the 'object [*Gegenstand*]' of theology or, in other words, divine revelation.⁵⁰ That interpretation is certainly possible linguistically. But there are both historical and textual reasons for thinking that Barth means the written content of theology here instead.

As we saw in our last chapter since the early 1930s Barth had been convinced that theological proofs have beauty which mirrors that of their object. Faced with increasing charges of the existential irrelevance of his dogmatics Barth discovered in Anselm a belief that not only does the *ratio veritatis* have supreme beauty but that theological proofs should be similarly beautiful and pleasing portraits of it. He quickly appropriated this idea by claiming that because of the veiling and unveiling of its object theological discourse will inevitably both veil and unveil its subject matter by speaking about it more definitely and yet modestly than any other *Wissenschaft* and thereby be more beautiful than any comparable scientific literature.⁵¹

And there is good reason to conclude that Barth is alluding to this concept here. It fits perfectly with the flow of his argument in this passage. Barth had just explained that he

⁵⁰ Balthasar, *GL1*, 55; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit: Eine Theologische Ästhetik. Band 1: Schau Der Gestalt* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1961), 51; Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 27-28.

⁵¹ Barth, *FQI*, 15-16, 59; Barth, *Theology*, 39; Barth, *CDI/2*, 841-842.

was going to discover God's beauty from His self-revelation and then acknowledged that in order to do so he would need to revisit all his previous doctrines. By invoking his longstanding belief that theological discourse is beautiful he was now just stating the hitherto unacknowledged assumption behind this methodology, namely, that the content of theology has formal beauty which bears witness to the beautiful form of divine revelation.

Now that we have established that Barth is most likely affirming that the content of theology has beauty which reflects the beautiful form of God's glory here we must simply recall from our previous two chapters that he had long believed that theology is in fact a second order form of the Church's witness or, as he portrays it in this passage, one means of the Church's glorification of God.⁵² In sum then Barth seems to briefly acknowledge in this passage that at least one form of the Church's glorification of God, namely the content of theology, has beauty which reflects the perfectly beautiful triune form of God's glory.

Finally we must add that there is little doubt that Barth also briefly reaffirms his longstanding belief that philosophical understandings of beauty may echo or attest God's self-revelation in this passage. We mentioned earlier that after eschewing the possibility of identifying the form of God's beauty by starting from a philosophical concept of beauty and proposing to discover it from God's self-revelation instead Barth concedes that the latter may nevertheless temporarily enable us to identify similar forms of beauty amongst the former and that when it does these temporarily acquire a capacity to bear witness to the beauty of the revealed divine being.

⁵² Barth, *CDI/2*, 814, 851; Barth, *CDII/1*, 676.

We have to ask about God Himself, about the content and substance of His revelation, and therefore also of His revealed divine being. This as such is beautiful. We have to learn from it what beauty is. Our creaturely conceptions of the beautiful, formed from what has been created [*unsere kreatürlichen und an der Kreatur gebildeten Begriffe des Schönen*], may rediscover or fail to rediscover [*wiederfinden oder auch nicht wiederfinden*] themselves in the revealed divine being. If they do rediscover themselves in it, it will be with an absolutely unique application, to the extent that now, subsequently as it were, they have also to describe His being.⁵³

In light of chapter two we should immediately recognise this as just a reaffirmation of Barth's longstanding belief that natural revelation implies that even secular understandings of beauty may be elevated to the dignity of bearing witness to God. And it means of course that in this passage Barth briefly acknowledges not only that some forms of the Church's glorification of God have beauty which mirrors the beautiful form of God's glory but that at least some types of worldly beauty can reflect or attest it too.

5.5. *Significance*

Having demonstrated that when it is read in both its historical and literary context we can see that Barth assumes an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty in his climactic account of the concept we must now finally summarise this *denkform*, show that it is in fact a form of analogy, and explain its basic character.

As we have seen Barth believes that throughout eternity God's glory has a perfectly beautiful unified and distinct form of unity and distinction or simplicity and multiplicity: both as one divine essence which is simultaneously three distinct persons; and therefore also as one perfect divine being which is yet a multiplicity of perfections; and as a Son of God who, as the perfect image of this perfect divine being, has perfect beauty which

⁵³ Barth, *CDII/1*, 656; Barth, *KDII/1*, 740 cf. Barth, *Biblical Questions*, 51-52; Barth, *KGSG*, 18-19.

reflects it. Because of this although the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth has no self-evident beauty whenever the Son of God manifests His glory through it His divine and human natures assume a supremely beautiful unified and distinct form of unity and distinction or freedom and love which mirrors this eternal beauty. Although humans are in themselves hardened sinners with no capacity to glorify God with the enabling of the Holy Spirit this awakens in them such a desire for God that they are moved to joyfully know and attest Him in a similarly elegant unified and distinct form of definite and yet modest speech about Him. And when they do they can temporarily recognise understandings of beauty in the world around them which are similar to and hence reflect His eternal beauty as well.

It should be fairly obvious that Barth assumes an analogy between the eternal and incarnate Son of God, the Church and the world *extra muros ecclesiae* here. Once again the point of similarity or contact between the first three of these actors is not an attribute of being *per se* but the beautiful form of an act which they all carry out, namely, the act of attesting or glorifying God. Now that Barth has more fully explained the proportion or symmetry upon which the beauty of both God and the Church supervenes we can demonstrate that there is an analogical relationship between them more conclusively. Barth clearly believes that the beauty of these acts is not completely the same. For instance, he claims that the beauty of the glory of the incarnate Son of God lies in the unified and distinct form of unity and distinction or freedom and love of His divine and human natures but he assumes that the beauty of theological discourse lies especially in the unified and distinct way in which it speaks definitely and yet modestly about God. Yet Barth seems to believe that the beauty of these acts is not completely different either. For as we have seen he stakes his whole ability to prove God's beauty upon an assumption

that the beauty of theological discourse can bear witness to the beautiful form of God's glory. Since there is neither a univocal nor equivocal relation between them then we can only conclude that Barth assumes there is an analogical relationship between the beautiful form of the glory of the eternal and incarnate Son of God and the beauty of the Church's discourse about Him. And as we have seen Barth insists that worldly understandings of beauty may bear witness to or reflect this beauty as well. Since these four actors are in fact just three subjects then in sum Barth now for the first time assumes an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty. We can describe it as an *analogia pulchritudinis*.

It is clear that Barth's *analogia pulchritudinis* is once again a form of *analogia attributionis extrinsecae*. As we have seen just above Barth believes that beauty is original and hence proper to God's glory. It finds its 'basis' in the unified and distinct form of simplicity and multiplicity of the immanent trinity and is predicated of the Church because of its members' dependence upon Him for their redemption. Moreover it is attributed to them not because of any ability or activity of their own but on the basis of the Holy Spirit who unites them with Jesus Christ's own perfect creaturely glorification of God and thereby enables them to elegantly glorify Him. Finally Barth's *analogia pulchritudinis* is also clearly another theological, Christocentric and actualistic form of analogy. As we have seen Barth believes that it is only by means of a twofold work of God in Jesus Christ - the Son of God's manifestation of His glory and hence supreme beauty through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth and the Holy Spirit's uniting of people with Jesus Christ's own perfect creaturely glorification of God - that the Church is able to glorify Him in a similarly elegant way and to identify human understandings of beauty in the world *extra muros ecclesiae* which reflect it too. And Barth appears to believe that

the witness of such creaturely beauty to the beautiful form of God's glory has the character of an event without precedents or consequences. For instance he makes clear that human understandings of beauty do not attest the beauty of God's glory continuously but only 'may' do so. Ordinarily they simply refer to creaturely beauty. But when the Son of God manifests the beautiful form of His glory through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth they may momentarily acquire this as their extraordinary referent.

Our creaturely conceptions of the beautiful, formed from what has been created, may rediscover or fail to rediscover themselves in the revealed divine being. If they do rediscover themselves in it, it will be with an absolutely unique application, to the extent that now, subsequently as it were, they have also to describe His being.⁵⁴

5.6. Conclusion

Von Balthasar's claim that Barth recovered belief in the beauty of God but refrained from acknowledging a relationship between this and the mundane beauty of our everyday experience remains the overwhelming consensus in theological aesthetics today. It implies that for a satisfactory and fruitful account of the matter we will have to turn to his own distinctively Roman Catholic treatment of it instead. But von Balthasar's interpretation is based entirely upon Barth's climactic account of beauty in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3. And while it is certainly true that Barth does not directly elaborate an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty in this passage when we read it in its proper literary and historical context it is clear that he assumes one. In it Barth brings together three longstanding rudiments of this *denkform* - his provisional analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty, his theoretical basis for it and his belief that even the beauty of the *world extra muros ecclesiae* could bear witness to God - and thereby develops an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty for the first time. He

⁵⁴ Barth, *CDII/1*, 656 cf. Barth, *Biblical Questions*, 51-52; Barth, *KGSG*, 18-19.

does so because each tenet of this conception added something of modest but real importance to his theology: it untangled it from fatalistic Reformed concepts of effectual call, vindicated it of charges of existential irrelevance and preserved a vital implication of his longstanding belief in natural revelation. And because of that, as we are about to see, it would remain of abiding importance to him throughout the years to come.

Chapter 6: Final Confirmation: Barth's Continuing Analogy of Theological, Ecclesial and Worldly Beauty (1940-1968)

6.1. Introduction

By now we have covered considerable ground in our argument. After carrying around *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 in his briefcase for months 'like a cat carrying a kitten', as we have seen von Balthasar concludes that his Protestant companion in Basel gets the ball rolling on a theological aesthetics by retrieving the ancient Christian belief in the beauty of God but does not venture to acknowledge a relation between it and worldly forms of beauty in likelihood because he lacks the conceptual resources to do so.¹ If we want to take this step we will then have to embrace his own distinctive way of thinking about the matter. But we have shown that in fact Barth already had three rudiments of an analogy of beauty in the early stages of his career: an analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty; a conceptual basis for it; and a belief that even natural and artistic beauty could bear witness to God. Drawing these together in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 he then assumes an analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty for the first time. Yet some may suspect that at the very least Balthasar's general instinct remains sound since such ideas were likely just a passing fancy which were quickly left behind in favour of more serious matters in his theology.

But in this chapter we must now finally rule out even this possibility. For it is certainly true that Barth only mentions beauty in passing in the later stages of his career. He seems to assume his concept of the beauty of divine revelation, for instance, in order to interpret the command of God in Jesus Christ as one which is unconditional and yet 'true, good

¹ For Barth's famous observation of von Balthasar see Busch, 302.

and beautiful' and the pride of sinful humanity conversely as 'the beauty of... Luciferian man'.² And it is true also that he makes no further significant developments to his *analogia pulchritudinis*. Yet in this period we shall argue that on several occasions he nevertheless briefly reaffirms the major tenets of his analogy of beauty: both his analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty and his belief that worldly beauty could by God's grace acquire theological significance. By doing so he not only confirms our foregoing interpretation of his view of the matter but the modest yet real and abiding importance of the conception to his thought as well. Since his late reflections on beauty like his early ones take the form of scattered observations we will once again have to reconstruct his view from them.

6.2. *Reaffirmation of the Analogy of Theological and Ecclesial Beauty (1940-1968)*

On at least three occasions in his later career Barth briefly reconfirms his analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty. The first of these occurs in the third part-volume of his *Doctrine of Reconciliation* (1959) when, in the course of listing the specific forms of the prophetic work which the Church as the earthly body of Jesus Christ sent out by the Holy Spirit must share in, Barth turns his attention to describing the ministry of theology. He accomplishes this by providing a pithy summary of the most significant distinguishing features of the concept of theology which he has both advocated and assumed throughout his career. And the final of these is its supreme beauty and joy.

It is to be noted further that when it is conceived and executed correctly and resolutely [*richtig und also entschlossen*], yet also freely and modestly [*frei und bescheiden*], theology is a singularly beautiful and joyful science [*eine selten schöne Sache, fröhliche Wissenschaft*], (cf. *C.D.*, II, 1, p. 656 f.), so that it is only willingly and cheerfully or not at all that we can be theologians.³

² See Barth, *CDII/2*, 649-653; Barth, *CDIV/2*, 403-404.

³ Barth, *CDIV/3.2*, 881; K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik: Band IV,3* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1980), 1010. Hereafter, *KDIV/3*.

On the face of it Barth's comment here seems to be a simple reaffirmation of the beauty of theological work. However when we recall his earlier view of the beauty of both theological method and content it seems likely that there is a little more to it than that. Barth's claim that a theology which is conducted 'correctly and... freely' will be beautiful appears to be a reassertion of his former belief that when the discipline of theology is conceived as the unified and distinct endeavour of biblical theology, dogmatics and practical theology, it acquires a form of 'freedom' and 'necessity' which is more beautiful and enjoyable than any other scientific pursuit.⁴ But his allusion to the 'resolute... and modest' character of theology which gives it beauty seems to be a reaffirmation of his earlier conviction that because of the unveiling and yet veiling of the Word of God theological discourse should have the form of both explaining and yet obscuring its subject matter by speaking more 'definitely' and yet 'humbly' about it than any other science and so be more beautiful than them.⁵ In other words it seems that Barth is more specifically reinvoking both his earlier concepts of the beauty of the method and content of theology here. The fact that he does so at the end of his summary of the most important features of his approach to theology shows that he regards them as indispensable if not central elements of it. And although he does not explicitly relate the latter to God's beauty once again here just a few years later he would.

When the curtain finally fell on his forty year teaching career in the winter of 1962 Barth chose for his final 'swansong' at the University of Basel a series of lectures which summarised the distinctive features of the approach to theology which he had pioneered throughout it in order to preserve his legacy and provide future generations with an

⁴ See Barth, *CDI/2*, 771-772.

⁵ See Barth, *Theology*, 39 cf. Barth, *GD*, 359-361; Barth, *CDII/1*, 202-214, 341-344.

enduring ‘alternative to... *mixophilosophicotheologia*’.⁶ They would ultimately be repeated on a lecture tour of the United States a few months later before finally being published as *Evangelical Theology* (1962).⁷ Barth briefly acknowledges his analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty twice in the course of these lectures, although now once again primarily in order to warn of its ability to distract theologians from their work. In the first of these Barth now appears to once again follow Anselm in assuming that since the *ratio veritatis* has beauty theological content or proofs will, like pleasing portraits of it, have corresponding beauty. Although he does so chiefly in order to warn that due to this character of the Word of God theologians can easily be tempted into a purely disinterested contemplation rather than committed service of it.

Of course, as Anselm of Canterbury knew, since there is a beauty of God [*Schönheit Gottes*] there is also a *pulchritudo* of theology [*pulchritudo der Theologie*] which cannot be ignored. But theological observation of God cannot be a genial and detached survey... an easy-going... contemplation of an object. For in the last analysis the attitude of the more or less enraptured subject towards this object might remain indifferent or sceptical, if not spiteful.⁸

In the second instance Barth’s purpose is likewise primarily to caution theology against falling into an aestheticism in which it is pursued as an end in itself. And here for the first time since *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 Barth not only acknowledges the beauty of the object of theology but describes it as irresistible. He reaffirms his belief that it sovereignly calls forth theological content or proofs which exhibit its formal beauty. And he also restates his conviction that theological labour has a beautiful and enjoyable form although he now illustrates this with reference not primarily to dogmatics but to Church

⁶ K. Barth, ‘Foreword’, in *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, tr. G. Foley (London: Collins, 1963). Hereafter, *ET*. Busch, 455.

⁷ Busch, 458.

⁸ Barth, *ET*, 73; K. Barth, *Einführung in die evangelische Theologie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1977), 62.

history and biblical theology. The beautiful form of the former, he claims, lies in its pleasurable mix of attention to the highs and lows of the history of Christianity, and of the latter in the harmonious balance of analysis and imagination which it requires of the biblical scholar.⁹

[T]he first thing to be said about the character of theological work as service is that it cannot be pursued for its own sake, in the manner of 'art for art's sake'. Whoever is seriously engaged in theological work knows that such a temptation lurks in many corners. Theology [*Theologie*], especially in its form as dogmatics, is a uniquely fascinating science, since its beauty [*Schönheit*] irresistibly elicits [*unwiderstehlich rufende*] the display of intellectual architectonics [*gedanklicher Architektonik*]. As inquiry into both the bright and the dim [*der hellen und dunklen*], or dusky, figures and events of Church history, theology is at every point highly exciting, even from a purely secular point of view. And as exegesis, it is equally exciting because of the way in which it calls in equal measure for both minute attention and bold imagination.¹⁰

6.3. *Confirmation of the Witness of Secular Beauty (1940-1968)*

In the final decades of his career Barth continued to believe not only that the Word of God declares itself elegantly and winsomely to the Church and enables it to share in that likeness. He also maintained the quiet conviction which he had from the very beginning that even the beauty of the world *extra muros ecclesiae* and human understandings of beauty could be summoned and empowered to bear witness to His revelation. As we shall see this belief once again appears to be just an outworking of his view of natural revelation.

In his famous account of the little lights of creation (1959) Barth acknowledges once again that the theories of philosophical aesthetics can echo God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. Here we will recall that Barth describes Jesus Christ as the one true light of life:

⁹ Barth, *ET*, 173.

¹⁰ Barth, *ET*, 173; Barth, *evangelische Theologie*, 145.

the supreme truth of all that is.¹¹ Scripture testifies that the life of Jesus is one in which God humbly enters into unity with humanity and so humanity is exalted to fellowship with God. Because it is the history of redemption which determines all other histories by living it He reconciles the world to God.¹² Moreover as He does so He reveals this good news to the world as well.¹³ Since this revelation is the ‘total and complete’ truth about God and humanity it has absolute validity, authority and unity.¹⁴ However it can only be known when He unveils Himself through the pages of Scripture and enables us to perceive this by the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

Barth contends that belief in Jesus Christ as the one true light of life presupposes that there are also little lights or general truths of creation.¹⁶ Like Jesus the creation attests itself, its order and regularities, simply by existing and in humans it also comprehends itself.¹⁷ These self-evident truths or lights of creation have in themselves only relative validity, authority and unity.¹⁸ And they possess no intrinsic relation to the one true light of life Jesus Christ.¹⁹ However, Barth contends that the epiphany of the one true light Jesus Christ through the Word and by the Spirit can either ‘challenge’ or ‘integrate’ them.²⁰ In the event of the latter they are commissioned and empowered to shine in His service and so become ‘reflect[ions]’ or ‘expressions’ of His light.²¹ And as they do they temporarily acquire absolute validity, authority and unity.²² We will recall that this entire

¹¹ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 38-135.

¹² Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 39-45.

¹³ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 46-135.

¹⁴ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 99-103.

¹⁵ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 45, 99.

¹⁶ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 135-165.

¹⁷ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 139-151.

¹⁸ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 154-165.

¹⁹ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 139-151.

²⁰ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 152-153.

²¹ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 152-153.

²² Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 154-165.

concept is just Barth's mature account of natural revelation. But for our purposes in this chapter what is crucial to note about it is that here Barth once again specifies that 'aesthetic' [*ästhetischer*] truths are one form of the little lights of creation which may be commissioned and empowered to serve and attest the one true light of life Jesus Christ.²³

During this period Barth also reaffirms his belief that the beauty of creation may bear witness to God. In the opening volume of his mature doctrine of creation (1945) Barth develops his theology of the goodness of the creation.²⁴ He acknowledges that the objective created order which we observe directly at present has a dialectical character. It exhibits both a 'bright' side, an order, intelligibility and flourishing which we typically describe as its 'intrinsic goodness'; and also a 'shadow' side in which it succumbs to chaos, meaninglessness and death.²⁵ It thereby provides a basis for conflicting human interpretations of the character of the world. It justifies both optimistic affirmations of its goodness ('Yes') and pessimistic denials of it ('No') thereby entrenching a human 'dialectic of Yes and No'.²⁶ And because of this, Barth believes, human reason can by itself attain at most a partial and tentative belief in the goodness of the creation.²⁷ But Barth claims that God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ manifests the Creator's own primordial and unequivocal 'Yes' to His entire creation. For the 'content' of this revelation is the good news that the Creator has established a covenant of grace with humanity in Jesus Christ. But this 'implies' that He has created and designed the entire universe to perfectly serve this purpose as the *theatrum gloriae Dei*.²⁸ And so it enables

²³ Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 163; Barth, *KDIV/3*, 186.

²⁴ Barth, *CDIII/1*, 121-123, 366-414.

²⁵ Barth, *CDIII/1*, 366-375.

²⁶ Barth, *CDIII/1*, 366-375.

²⁷ Barth, *CDIII/1*, 366-375.

²⁸ Barth, *CDIII/1*, 369-370, 378-386.

humanity to recognise by faith that the whole world is good and to know this with absolute certainty.²⁹ Barth claims that God's unequivocal 'Yes' or declaration of the goodness of the entire creation in Jesus Christ therefore 'confirms' the reality of the intrinsic goodness or 'bright side' of the creation, gives it a 'foundation' and makes it a 'witness', 'reflection' or 'echo' of itself.³⁰ We will recognise this as yet another variation of Barth's longstanding concept of natural revelation. However here at one point, probably as a result of following Patristic commentaries in interpreting the goodness of creation as synonymous with its beauty, Barth specifies that the intrinsic 'beauty' [*Schönheit*] of creation may also be confirmed by and hence made a witness to God's declaration of the goodness of the creation.³¹

6.4. Conclusion

Barth never retracted or forgot the fundamental tenets of his analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty. Having developed them early on through his belief in natural revelation and encounter with medieval theology and fashioned them together into a modest analogy of beauty for the first time in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 they remained

²⁹ Barth, *CDIII/1*, 369-370.

³⁰ Barth, *CDIII/1*, 370-372. In fact Barth believes that because in Jesus Christ God has assumed both the shadow side of creation and the bright side He confirms the reality of both of these characteristics of the objective created order and the validity of both of the corresponding human judgments about its character, making both sides of this objective and subjective antithesis a witness to His 'Yes'. But only the latter is relevant for our purposes here.

³¹ Barth, *CDIII/1*, 371; K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik: Band III,1* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1980), 424. Barth explicitly appropriates this interpretation in a sermon just a few years later on 1 Timothy 4:4 where he uses it to briefly affirm the medieval belief in pancalism: 'Good! The true meaning of the Greek word used in this context is "beautiful"'. See K. Barth, 'God's Good Creation', in *Deliverance to the Captives*, tr. M. Wieser (London: SCM, 1961), 95. As we mentioned in chapter four the Septuagint itself laid the basis for this Patristic interpretation by translating the Hebrew טוֹב ('good') with the Greek καλόν whose semantic range transcends the merely 'good' and includes the 'beautiful'. It seems likely that Barth acquired this interpretation from Augustine's commentaries on Genesis which he relied upon heavily in the production of his doctrine of creation between 1942 and 1951. See Barth, *CDIII/1*, 29, 44, 70, 100, 324; Busch, 315-315, 374 cf. Augustine, 'On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees', in *On Genesis*, tr. T. Hill (New York: New York City Press, 2002), 8, 13 (p. 47); Augustine, 'Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis', in *On Genesis*, tr. T. Hill (New York: New York City Press, 2002), 5, 25 (p. 128).

of limited but real importance to him throughout the rest of his life. There is therefore no basis to Balthasar's claim that he neglects to relate God's beauty to worldly forms of beauty.

Yet we can only speculate on why Barth did not develop his humble *denkform* further. It seems obvious that in this modest form it fulfilled his primary purposes for it. It helped exonerate his theology from charges of inhumane transcendentalism and cultural irrelevance and conceptualise theological work in a way which resonated deeply with his own irrepressibly joyful experience of it. And it seems likely that despite its importance it remained secondary to his more fundamental lifelong ambition of crafting a viable alternative to the tradition of Protestant Modernist dogmatics. But it is possible that Barth felt he lacked the expertise in aesthetics to develop the conception any further as well. In a letter to his friend Kurt Lüthi during his twilight years Barth confided that a similar lack of proficiency in 'the arts' was partly responsible for his refusal to attempt the final volume of his dogmatics in which he felt obliged to treat the theme³². And if that were the case then Barth's modest *analogia pulchritudinis*, his analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly beauty, is not merely a historical artefact but the gift of a foundation upon which future generations can build.

³² K. Barth, 'Letter to K. Lüthi, June 22 1963', in *Letters 1961-1968*, tr. G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 100-101.

Part III: Significance

Chapter 7: Implications for Contemporary Theological Aesthetics

7.1. Introduction

We have now achieved a significant milestone. For more than fifty years Christian theologians have remained in thrall to von Balthasar's claim that Barth recovered the Church's belief in the beauty of God but lacked the conceptual wherewithal to complete the task by relating it to more mundane forms of beauty. But we have demonstrated that this interpretation greatly underestimates his historical contribution. For Barth does in fact assume a distinctive form of *analogia pulchritudinis*. He believes that the beautiful unified and distinct form of unity and distinction or simplicity and multiplicity of God's glory *ad intra* and *ad extra* may be mirrored in the winsome combination of both confidence and modesty with which the Church testifies about it to the world *extra muros ecclesiae* and may find further reflections amongst the world's own forms and concepts of beauty. He had the rudiments of this conviction during the early stages of his academic career, integrated them in his climactic account of beauty and then retained it throughout the years which followed.

Yet some may legitimately ask what difference this new interpretation makes. Does it achieve anything more than a righting of the historical ledger? In this final chapter we must complete our reappraisal of Barth's understanding of beauty by taking up this final question. In sum we will answer 'much'. In this chapter, to give just one example, we will demonstrate that Barth's *analogia pulchritudinis* may make a profound contribution to the growing field of theological aesthetics.

The mid-twentieth century publication of Hans Urs von Balthasar's unprecedented seven-volume meditation upon beauty and the conditions of its perception triggered not only a

steady proliferation of theological forays into similar problems of aesthetics but increasing calls for their formal consolidation into a new sub-discipline of theology known as ‘theological aesthetics’.¹ But while many practitioners of this fledgling field of inquiry have remained content to ply their trade with the tools von Balthasar bequeathed them, others continue to search for a more satisfactory basis for their endeavours.²

In this chapter we will conclude our reinterpretation of Barth’s view of beauty by suggesting that it may be just what they are looking for. We will argue that Barth’s *analogia pulchritudinis* provides a foundation for theological aesthetics which many may find more useful than the current alternatives: one with many of the strengths but few of the drawbacks of those currently on the market. Naturally the primary aim of this argument is to persuade at least some to take up the framework which Barth offers and develop it into a distinctively Barthian theological aesthetics. But our hope is that it may also serve as something of an apology for Protestant theological aesthetics more generally by presenting Barth as a kind of limit-case. After all, if even the supposedly most notorious Protestant despiser of culture provides grounds for a theological aesthetics, then Protestant theology can no longer be dismissed as simply inimical to it³. But in order to substantiate such claims we must begin by defining this important field of inquiry.

¹ Bychkov, xiv.

² Bychkov, xviii ff.

³ For a balanced appraisal of the history of the relationship between Protestants and the arts more broadly see T. Hart, ‘Protestantism and the Arts’, in A. McGrath and D. Marks (eds), *Blackwell Companion to Protestantism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 268-286.

7.2. *Foundation for a Theological Aesthetics*

Use of the term theological aesthetics varies at least as much as the two highly contested terms from which it derives.⁴ However, the classic definition given it by von Balthasar still remains the most popular and hence reliable guide to the activity as it is practised today.⁵ For von Balthasar theological aesthetics is, in the narrow sense, simply a conceptual inquiry into the problems of philosophical aesthetics by means of the sources, norms and methods peculiar to Christian theology, above all, what God has revealed to the Church in the person of Jesus Christ. So defined theological aesthetics takes the form of an attempt to develop distinctively Christian accounts of phenomena like imagination, art, metaphor, the sublime and perception.⁶ Yet since the time of von Balthasar the term has acquired a more general sense as well which encompasses the converse endeavour of aesthetic theology. This employs the forms, methods and theories of aesthetics to illuminate and communicate the objects of Christian theology. Common examples of this activity include the use of metaphor theory to clarify Christian doctrines like revelation and redemption; narrative theory to reconceive theological method; visual art as sources of Christian tradition and literature to illustrate theological truths.⁷

While there has been a long history of reflection upon aesthetic problems such as images, beauty, music, and perception in the Church it is only since the publication of von Balthasar's *Herrlichkeit* in the middle of the twentieth century that a call has emerged to

⁴ Bychkov, xi; Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 5.

⁵ Balthasar, *GL1*, 37; Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'In Retrospect', in J. Riches (ed), *The Analogy of Beauty: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 217. His definition is perpetuated, for instance, by both Viladesau and Bychkov. See R. Viladesau, 'Aesthetics and Religion', in F. Burch Brown (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts* (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 29; Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 22; Bychkov, xii.

⁶ Viladesau, *Aesthetics and Religion*, 29; Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 22.

⁷ Viladesau, *Aesthetics and Religion*, 29; Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 22.

consolidate such pursuits into a new branch of theology which would complement dogmatics and ethics.⁸ There appear to be a variety of reasons for this turn of events. Fundamentally it is simply a logical development which mirrors a reorganisation of philosophy several centuries earlier. In 1735 Alexander Baumgarten for the first time categorised previously unrelated philosophical inquiries into perception, imagination, art and beauty as forms of ‘aesthetics’ (from the Greek αἰσθησις meaning ‘perception’).⁹ The widespread and enduring popularisation of this classification has made it virtually inevitable that theology would at some stage follow suit by recognising a similar formal relation between its own objects of inquiry.¹⁰ There is undoubtedly also a pedagogical motive behind such calls. Throughout the past century scholars like Frank Burch Brown have increasingly drawn attention to how thoroughly aesthetic the Christian faith is. It centres on a revelation of God in physical form which must be cognised through the senses, is proclaimed through the literary forms and devices of sacred texts and commemorated by a rich variety of artistic media each week in the liturgy of the Church.¹¹ Guidance on aesthetics is thus indispensable to the Church’s self-understanding. But above all the desire for a theological aesthetics has arisen to fill a significant apologetic need. Later in the chapter we shall see that several developments in modern philosophical aesthetics have seriously challenged the Christian Church, not only undermining its traditional metaphysical and ethical claims but even its own spirituality. A credible Christian counter-interpretation of aesthetics is felt by many to offer the only real hope of neutralising such threats.¹²

⁸ Bychkov, xiv.

⁹ Guyer, 25.

¹⁰ The classification has not been without critics. See P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, tr. R. Nice (Abingdon: Routledge, 1984) & T. Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990). For a response see R. Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 457-508.

¹¹ Burch Brown, *Religious Aesthetics*, 37-46, 112-184; Viladesau, *Aesthetics and Religion*, 27-28.

¹² Bychkov, xiii.

Since calls for a theological aesthetics emerged in the middle of last century a variety of theoretical foundations for the venture have been proposed. Burch Brown, for instance, argues for its engrafting into the discipline of theology on the basis of a largely philosophical redefinition of both aesthetics and theology which casts them as interdependent fields of inquiry.¹³ But by far the most common justification for the enterprise remains the sort which Balthasar himself offered: a systematic theology of the aesthetic value of beauty. Generally speaking, these come in two main varieties which are distinguished according to the specific framework they use to relate theological and inner-worldly beauty.

On the one hand many continue to practise the discipline on the basis which von Balthasar himself provided: a systematic theology of beauty which relates theological and worldly beauty by means of the *analogia entis*.

Adding his own rendition to the Thomistic tradition, Balthasar conceives of beauty in general as a quality which supervenes upon both form (*Gestalt* or *species*) and the splendour (*Glanz* or *lumen*) which erupts from it.¹⁴ Form is the specific arrangement or organisation in which matter is realised as things. In principle there are, of course, an endless variety of these. According to von Balthasar the distinctive shape of things therefore enables them to communicate not only themselves to others but, through this, the infinite possibilities or ‘depths’ of universal being as well.¹⁵

¹³ Burch Brown, *Religious Aesthetics*, 18-19.

¹⁴ Balthasar, *GL1*, 19-20, 115-116, 146-147; K. Kilby, *Balthasar: A (Very) Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 43-45.

¹⁵ A. Nichols, *A Key to Balthasar: Hans Urs von Balthasar on Beauty, Goodness, and Truth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 16-18.

Appropriating the *denkform* of his beloved teacher Przywara, Balthasar conceives more specifically that by virtue of their creation all the resplendent forms of the world dynamically participate in - both descend from and return or 'point' back to - the perfect form of their Creator.¹⁶ An inchoate awareness of the transcendent ground of their beauty is thus possible simply by ordinary perception of them or in other words 'the light of reason' (the 'religious *a priori*') alone.¹⁷ However, this knowledge is only completed and perfected by the self-revelation of the perfect form of the Creator in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit to the Church.¹⁸ According to von Balthasar the truly supreme art of the Creator is to be found not in the world *per se* but rather the history of its redemption which is recounted in the pages of Holy Scripture. To the trained eye the seemingly random events of this history converge in the 'super-form' (*Übergestalt*) of the Son of God's unprecedented kenotic love for sinful humanity which He expressed by His unity with it in Jesus Christ (*Gestalt Christi*).¹⁹ In this shape the depths of absolute Being itself at last break forth unmistakably: the self-surrendering love of the Father for the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit throughout eternity (*Gestalt Gottes*).²⁰ The light of faith (the 'theological *a priori*') bestowed by the Holy Spirit elevates the ordinary cognitive faculty of the Church so that it may meet this unfathomable form of love which impresses itself

¹⁶ Balthasar, *GL1*, 152-153, 420-421; Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'Revelation and the Beautiful', in *Explorations in Theology*, i: *The Word Made Flesh*, tr. A. Littledale and A. Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 111-112; A. Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad: A Guide Through Balthasar's Aesthetics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 6; R. Hovsare, *Balthasar: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2009), 68-69.

¹⁷ Balthasar, *GL1*, 157-159, 162-165, 420-421; Balthasar, *Revelation and the Beautiful*, 111-112; Nichols, *Key to Balthasar*, 33-38.

¹⁸ Balthasar, *GL1*, 157-159, 162-165, 420-421; Balthasar, *Revelation and the Beautiful*, 111-112; Nichols, *Key to Balthasar*, 33-38.

¹⁹ Balthasar, *GL1*, 148, 186, 228, 422, 466-468; Balthasar, *Revelation and the Beautiful*, 116-118, 113-114; S. Wigley, *Balthasar's Trilogy: A Reader's Guide* (London: Continuum, 2010), 41-42.

²⁰ Balthasar, *GL1*, 148, 186, 228, 422, 466-468; Balthasar, *Revelation and the Beautiful*, 116-118, 113-114; Wigley, *Balthasar's Trilogy*, 41-42.

upon it with a reciprocal act of self-surrender: eschewing fantasy and projection in favour of an imaginative expression of it.²¹ By persistently beholding this form the Church is joyfully drawn into an ever deeper surrender and thus conformation of her whole being to it.²² And by this means she resumes her mission of sacramentally mediating the ground of beauty to the world once more.²³

Yet on the other hand many in the field of theological aesthetics are reluctant to accept the assumptions inherent to von Balthasar's framework. So these scholars justify their endeavours through a systematic theology of beauty which relates theological and inner-worldly beauty by means of an *analogia fidei* instead. The work of the Reformed South African theologian John De Gruchy is representative of such an approach.²⁴

De Gruchy's aim is the development of not just any theological aesthetics but one which specifically complements and enhances the work of Christian ethics which has been the driving passion of his career.²⁵ He embraces the best insights of both Barth and von Balthasar on beauty in order to lay a 'solid foundation' for this.²⁶ Following Barth, he defines beauty as simply the form of God's glory rather than a transcendental quality of

²¹ Balthasar, *GL1*, 171-173, 238-239; Balthasar, *Revelation and the Beautiful*, 105; F. Murphy, 'Hans Urs von Balthasar: Beauty as a Gateway to Love', in O. Bychkov and J. Fodor (eds), *Theological Aesthetics After von Balthasar* (Milton Keynes: Ashgate, 2008), 12-13.

²² Balthasar, *GL1*, 186-187, 230; Balthasar, *Revelation and the Beautiful*, 119-120; Wigley, *Balthasar's Trilogy*, 42-43.

²³ Balthasar, *Revelation and the Beautiful*, 109.

²⁴ J. De Gruchy, 'Holy Beauty: A Reformed Perspective on Aesthetics within a World of Unjust Ugliness', in B. Gerrish (ed), *Reformed Theology for the Third Millennium* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 13-25; J. De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*. Many others have developed systematic theologies of beauty by means of the same framework but without explicitly using it to justify a theological aesthetics. See, for instance, R. Jenson, 'Beauty', in *Essays in Theology of Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 147-155; J. Begbie, *Created Beauty*, 19-44.

²⁵ De Gruchy first became cognisant of the connection between the two by observing the role that artistic beauty played in the struggle against Apartheid in his native country. De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 1-2; De Gruchy, *Holy Beauty*, 13-14.

²⁶ De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 7.

being per se.²⁷ And following both he conceives that this finds its ultimate basis in the Triune God and its supreme expression in His act of redemption in Jesus Christ.²⁸

But beyond this rich concept of theological beauty which has been bequeathed him De Gruchy feels himself empty-handed for the task which is before him. He certainly agrees with von Balthasar on the need to establish a relation between such ideal beauty and the more familiar forms of it which we encounter in the world every day.²⁹ However like many Christians he is reticent to embrace the speculative ontology undergirding the *analogia entis* in order to achieve this.³⁰ Moreover he is blinded by von Balthasar's exegesis into believing that Barth offers him no viable alternative to it.³¹

The solution he proposes is to relate theological and worldly beauty instead by developing the unrealised implications of Bonhoeffer's *analogia relationis*.³² Like von Balthasar De Gruchy recognises that Bonhoeffer's *denkform* has the potential to resolve the dilemma posed by Barth's actualism and Przywara's ontology by conceiving that the divine act of redemption in Jesus Christ creates and thus takes form in the world through the being of the Church.³³ But De Gruchy argues that before his untimely death even Bonhoeffer was beginning to realise that this must include not only the religious and ethical but also the aesthetic dimensions of this event as well.³⁴ He extends Bonhoeffer's Irenaean concept of polyphony in order to imagine how this might occur. As a *cantus firmus* integrates

²⁷ De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 113-114.

²⁸ De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 7, 109, 114.

²⁹ De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 117; De Gruchy, *Holy Beauty*, 19-20.

³⁰ De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 117, 165.

³¹ De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 119-120; De Gruchy, *Holy Beauty*, 18-20.

³² De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 117, 165.

³³ De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 117, 163.

³⁴ De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 147-158.

otherwise incongruous melodies, so Jesus Christ recapitulated all elements of earthly existence during His life here: the religious, ethical and also aesthetic. And so He commands the same of the earthly body of which He remains Head in this world.³⁵ De Gruchy consequently believes that if the Church only develops its sincere faith into a life of responsible action in the world which, at full maturity, incorporates even aesthetic activities like friendship, the erotic and play then it will inevitably become a powerful force for good in the world again.³⁶

But by now we have established that in fact Barth developed a comprehensive systematic theology of beauty of his own across the course of his career. This relates theological and inner-worldly beauty not by means of an *analogia entis* or a static *analogia fidei* but his own actualistic *analogia fidei*. Recognising the potential of scholastic allusions to beauty to both enrich and exonerate his theology Barth proposed that although the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth has no form or comeliness when the Son of God manifests His glory through it His divine and human natures assume a supremely beautiful form of unity and distinction which is a reflection of the perfectly beautiful unified and distinct form of the glory of the immanent Trinity. And when the Holy Spirit enables the Church to contemplate this it not only moves them to a similarly beautiful definite and yet modest attestation of it but enables them to recognise reflections of it in the world around them as well. But if that is true then even though Barth himself never put it to such use his systematic theology of beauty could provide an alternative foundation for contemporary theological aesthetics.

³⁵ De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 158-168.

³⁶ De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 165-166 cf. 128-135; De Gruchy, *Holy Beauty*, 15.

Of course such a claim is immediately vulnerable to objections on at least three fronts. In the first place on the basis of the nature of aesthetics itself. Some today may judge it ill-conceived because they believe that beauty is largely irrelevant to the discipline of philosophical aesthetics. Inquiry into beauty was certainly central to aesthetics for the first two centuries of its formal recognition as a branch of philosophy. So central, in fact, that the discipline was almost completely reduced to it. But twentieth century practitioners have responded by largely abandoning the problem altogether. Since theological aesthetics is after all a study of the problems of aesthetics from a distinctively Christian point of view then a theology of beauty - whether Barth's or anybody else's - would simply provide no grounds for such an endeavour.

Such an objection may once have carried considerable weight. But today it can be answered through a simple update on the field of philosophical aesthetics. It is certainly true that early twentieth century aesthetics responded to the reduction of high modern aesthetics to beauty by rejecting it altogether.³⁷ But in recent literature a much more balanced appraisal of its place has begun to emerge. The majority of scholars in the field now accept beauty as a legitimate problem of aesthetics again.³⁸ Rafael De Clercq, for instance, notes that 'beauty has made a comeback in recent years' and even experienced a 'reversal of fortunes' before providing a sample of the manifold volumes recently published on the topic by authors like Scarry, Mothersill, Zangwill, Sircello, Brand,

³⁷ M. Beardsley, 'Theories of Beauty Since the Mid-Nineteenth Century', in P. Wiener (ed), *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, i (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 207-208. The reasons for beauty's displacement are complex. However Begbie and De Gruchy suggest that the rejection was also prompted by the sentimentality and quietism which this focus promoted. See De Gruchy, *Holy Beauty*, 14; J. Begbie, 'Beauty, Sentimentality and the Arts', in D. Treier, M. Husbands and R. Lundin (eds), *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007), 45-69.

³⁸ N. Zangwill, 'Beauty', in J. Levinson (ed), *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford: OUP), 325; J. Levinson, 'Philosophical Aesthetics: An Overview', in J. Levinson (ed), *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford: OUP), 6; R. De Clercq, 'Beauty', in R. Gaut and D. Lopes (eds), *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 299.

Danto, McMahon, Nehamas, and Scruton.³⁹ Many scholars even argue for its reinstatement as the central concept of philosophical aesthetics again. Nick Zangwill, for instance, regards it as the ‘preeminent’ category of philosophical aesthetics.⁴⁰ And Mary Mothersill argues for its return to the centre of philosophical aesthetics on account of its greater role in pre-philosophical levels of discourse than alternative concepts like ‘aesthetic value’.⁴¹ Although those who do so are careful to avoid thereby implying that it is the only relevant aesthetic value again. In light of this a systematic theology of beauty such as Barth’s certainly could provide grounds for a theological aesthetics so long as beauty is construed as just one of a host of problems relevant to such an inquiry.⁴²

Yet some may justifiably suspect that Barth’s theology of beauty still could not serve such a purpose because in the second place of the Christocentric character of his theology. As we have seen theological aesthetics is usually defined as an inquiry into the manifold problems of aesthetics from a Christian point of view. But for Barth theology is the science of the Word of God. It is, in other words, obedient thinking-after (*nachdenken*) a single object, namely, the Word of God alone. Some may therefore argue that Barth’s systematic theology could never legitimately be used to support a theological aesthetics since such an endeavour would be diametrically opposed to its whole ethos.

³⁹ De Clercq, 299.

⁴⁰ Zangwill, 325.

⁴¹ M. Mothersill, ‘Beauty and the Critic’s Judgment’, in P. Kivy (ed), *Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 156-157; Zangwill, 325.

⁴² Many older definitions of theological aesthetics fall short by this standard. They tend to reduce the problems of the discipline to beauty, art and perception with the latter two often interpreted almost entirely in terms of the former. See, for instance, the earlier definition of theological aesthetics by Viladesau who seems to have inherited this tendency from von Balthasar’s own approach to the enterprise. Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 22 cf. 32. Thankfully, Viladesau broadens the scope of theological aesthetics in his more recent definition of it. See Viladesau, *Aesthetics and Religion*, 27, 29.

It is certainly true that Barth remained firm in his insistence that theology should take the form of hearing and teaching the Word of God alone throughout his career.⁴³ By this means he sought to return Protestant dogmatics to its Scripture principle again. It is also true that Barth therefore repeatedly denounced alternative preoccupations of theology as forms of idolatry. And on at least one such occasion, as we have seen for ourselves, he explicitly included the general problems of aesthetics amongst such distractions.

[T]he moment dogmatics even temporarily surrenders to and loses itself in the contemplation of this beauty as such, instead of letting itself be held by the object, this beauty becomes the beauty of an idol... There are interesting but otiose problems, which stand in no essential connexion with the need and hope of the Church and which a dogmatics thinking and speaking from a Church attitude must recognise as such and therefore suppress or exclude. There is a logical, historical, linguistic, even a juristic aesthetics, in contact with which dogmatics at once loses touch with its own object, and therefore becomes estranged from its proper task.⁴⁴

This characteristic of Barth's theological method therefore certainly appears to imply that his theology is simply opposed to theological aesthetics. But in fact that is not really the case at all. For although Barth repeatedly insists that theology give its undivided attention to the Word of God, as we saw in chapter two he always believed that, since this is in fact a manifestation of the God who is the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer of all things, it is a revelation of the truth not only about God but the entire world as well.

Revelation is indeed truth: the truth of God, but necessarily, therefore, the truth of man in the cosmos as well. The biblical witnesses cannot bear witness to the one without also bearing witness to the other, which is included in it.⁴⁵

And throughout his career, as we witnessed in chapters four to six, Barth consistently specified that the Word of God reveals the truth about aesthetics as well.

⁴³ Barth, *GD*, 3ff; Barth, *CDI/2*, 813-814, 851-853.

⁴⁴ Barth, *CDI/2*, 841-842.

⁴⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 110. See also Barth, *CPS*, 288-290, 295.

[T]he Bible offers us a knowledge of God: ...the beginning and the end... Creator and Redeemer. It is not a meaning apart from other meanings, for in it all others – the meanings of natural science, of history, of esthetics, and of religion – are at once included and concluded.⁴⁶

Because of this conviction, although Barth warns theology against a preoccupation with the problems of aesthetics in general, as we saw in chapter four he nevertheless concedes that it must attend to a limited number of these in order to discharge its task of faithfully exegeting the Word of God.

The Church attitude precludes further the possibility of a dogmatics which thinks and speaks aesthetically. It is true, of course, that the object with which it has to do has its characteristic and quite distinctive beauty which it would be unpardonable, because ungrateful, to overlook or to fail to find pleasing. But the moment dogmatics even temporarily surrenders to and loses itself in the contemplation of this beauty as such, instead of letting itself be held by the object, this beauty becomes the beauty of an idol. No doubt certain formal requirements of completeness, symmetry and balance can and must be satisfied, because they are requirements of the object itself. But other requirements of this kind have their origin and justification only in the contemplating subject and its arbitrary fancy. There are interesting but otiose problems... a logical, historical, linguistic, even a juristic aesthetics, in contact with which dogmatics at once loses touch with its own object, and therefore becomes estranged from its proper task, if it does not allow this object to fix its limits and call it to order.⁴⁷

Although it is true then that Barth's theology would be opposed to a theological aesthetics practised in the unqualified way we have described so far as an inquiry into any problems of aesthetics, it would by no means be incompatible with but could support a theological aesthetics defined more narrowly as an inquiry into those problems of aesthetics which are first and foremost implications of the Word of God itself.

Finally, some may insist that Barth's theology of beauty could never provide a foundation for a theological aesthetics because of the actualistic character of his

⁴⁶ Barth, *Biblical Questions*, 51-52. See also Barth, *KGSG*, 18-19; Barth, *CDII/1*, 656; Barth, *CDIV/3.1*, 163.

⁴⁷ Barth, *CDI/2*, 841-842.

theology. This appears to be the assumption, for instance, of the Roman Catholic theologian, Oleg Bychkov. In an attempt to provide a rudimentary definition of a Protestant approach to theological aesthetics in his introduction to the authoritative collection of essays, *Theological Aesthetics After von Balthasar*, Bychkov suggests two characteristics. He claims that Protestants typically hold a dynamic or actualistic rather than static or substantialist form of divine beauty. And he believes that this, in turn, prevents them from participating in a more conventional form of theological aesthetics understood as a conceptual inquiry into objective form, and leaves them with only an attenuated form of it: a psychological investigation into subjective experience of the aesthetic.

Perhaps its main distinctive feature is the view that neither the divine nor revelation of the divine has any permanent or stable form, which means that one cannot build a theological aesthetics on any attempt to ‘uncover the form’. If one were to turn to aesthetic experience, one would have to rely on emotive and affective aspects of it, for example, on delight rather than beauty.⁴⁸

Bychkov supports this interpretation by attempting to show that it is exemplified by Barth’s own approach to beauty. He claims that Barth diverges from the classical tradition of beauty by defining it not primarily as objective form but rather that which pleases when seen. According to Bychkov this, in turn, inevitably leads Barth to concede that beauty is not really a matter which can be discussed but must be simply experienced or felt by us.

One example from the Reformed tradition is Barth’s insistence on the importance of divine beauty in the Bible (CD II/1, pp. 653–4); his concept of beauty is different from the classic ‘appearance’ model adopted by von Balthasar. According to Barth, (CD II/1, p. 653) beauty is mainly linked to the concepts of the ‘pleasant, desirable and enjoyable’ (cf. CD II/1, p. 654). For Barth there cannot be an extended conceptual discussion of the aesthetic element in God: there is ‘something here which must be perceived rather than discussed ...’ since ‘this insight depends too much on the presence of the necessary feeling ...’ (CD II/1, p. 656).⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Bychkov, xvi.

⁴⁹ Bychkov, xvi.

Bychkov's interpretation of the fundamental distinguishing feature of a Protestant approach to theological aesthetics is sound enough. Generally speaking Protestants like Barth certainly do prefer to conceive the beautiful form of divine revelation dynamically or actualistically rather than statically or substantially. This is largely just an outworking of their commitment to the epistemological priority of God's act of redemption in Jesus Christ or, in other words, the Scripture principle.⁵⁰

But the inference which Bychkov draws from this is profoundly mistaken. It simply is not true that such an actualistic form of divine beauty leaves Protestants unable to join in the endeavour of theological aesthetics to discover and describe the objective form of beauty. This is because although Protestants like Barth believe that the form of God's beauty, since it remains His own prerogative to disclose, has no extension in time and space and thus no possibility of being observed at our whim, they maintain that the beautiful form of human witness to it in this world does.

We saw for ourselves in chapter four that by the mid 1930's Barth had become convinced that all those who bear witness to the Word of God in this world – whether prophets, apostles, preachers or even theologians – must declare not only its content but its beautiful form as well. While he maintained that the beautiful form of such creaturely witnesses is not in itself the form of God's beauty he believed that it nevertheless points in the direction of it like the extended finger of John the Baptist. Moreover, it is ventured upon the promise and hence in the expectation that from time to time by the grace of God it would indeed pick out its referent and hence truly become the living form of

⁵⁰ See, for instance, D. Treier, M. Husbands & R. Lundin, *Introduction*, 10; J. Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 224-226.

God's beauty.

Bychkov's subsequent claim that this tendency of Protestant theological aesthetics is evident in Barth's own approach to beauty is also profoundly mistaken. It is based upon an oddly simplistic reading of not only Barth's account of beauty but the history of aesthetics as well which seems to be motivated more by the logical demands of his own typology than those of good historiography. In fact we saw for ourselves in chapter four that the classic tradition of beauty which received systematic expression in Aquinas viewed it as a quality which supervenes not simply upon objective form (*proportio, integritas and claritas*) but more specifically objective form which delights or pleases subjectively when seen. And we saw moreover that Barth does not depart from but continues this tradition by integrating both of these elements in his own concept of God's beauty. When we read Barth's occasional comments about the importance of our feelings in verifying beauty in the context of his whole argument in *Church Dogmatics* §31.3 then we find that they are an admission not that psychological or existential accounts of beauty are all that is possible for us but rather that we cannot hope to prove God's beauty simply by a description of its objective form alone without the addition of a subjective confirmation that we find this form pleasing as well.

The actualistic character of Barth's theology of beauty is therefore no impediment to a theological aesthetics. It seems likely that Bychkov was led to this conclusion less by a serious study of Barth's theology than by von Balthasar who frequently raised this suspicion in his own works.⁵¹ Nevertheless the actualistic character of Barth's theology

⁵¹ For instance, 'In any event, we must not fail to note that Barth was aware that the delineations of an authentic theological aesthetics which he offered had no roots within the realm of Protestant theology, and that, in order to give such a theological aesthetics a home in his own theology, Barth himself had to cut his

of beauty does remind us that a truly Barthian theological aesthetics must remain a self-consciously provisional account of aesthetic problems which awaits final verification by the living Word of God itself.

7.3. *Similarities to Current Alternatives*

Having made the case that Barth's systematic theology of beauty provides us with a coherent foundation for contemporary theological aesthetics we must now go a step further and briefly suggest that it is moreover one with at least the same strengths as the current alternatives. The systematic theologies of beauty which we encountered just a few moments ago have become popular because they articulate a plausible Christian counterinterpretation of this central aesthetic value, one which is not only rigorously Christian but generalizable as well, which may consequently serve as a paradigm for theological analysis of aesthetic values in general. But they achieve this largely by emphasising several fundamental characteristics. In this section we will then briefly show that Barth's own theology of beauty shares many of these same attributes and is thus at least as attractive a foundation for theological aesthetics as the current alternatives. But in order to do this it will be helpful if we begin by briefly rehearsing the general fate of beauty in the modern period to which such theologies are largely a response.

By now the story of the mixed fortunes suffered by beauty in the modern West is fairly well known.⁵² By the early eighteenth century a distinctive mode of engaging beautiful

actualism back sufficiently to make room alongside it for the concept of authentic objective form'. Balthasar, *GL1*, 55. See also Balthasar, *Revelation and the Beautiful*, 106-108. For a further refutation of Balthasar's claim see Barnett, 299-313.

⁵² This general interpretation of the history of aesthetics relies especially on N. Wolterstorff, *Art Rethought: the Social Practices of Art* (Oxford: OUP, 2015), chapter 1 and is also found in several theologies including Brown, *Religious Aesthetics*, chapter 1; Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise*, 187-199; and Balthasar, *GL1*, 49 and philosophies by Jerome Stolnitz, George Dickie and Noel Carroll. But it has been criticised as overly simplistic by Paul Guyer. See Guyer, 27-35.

things – whether natural or artistic – had become popular amongst the middle classes. This entailed laying aside whatever other interests or purposes one may have for them – whether religious, intellectual, moral or social – and simply appreciating them for what they were in themselves. Of course it was not long before this form of attention was given systematic expression (classically by Immanuel Kant), a name (‘disinterested attention’) and accepted by both critics and philosophers alike as the only way to truly appreciate beauty. Now even critics of this development happily concede that the subsequent autonomy of beauty from all other domains of life wrought by it has not been without considerable benefits. In a sense it enabled beauty to be treated as a serious object of both popular and critical attention for the very first time. But it has also come at a considerable cost. Above all it has compounded the disintegration of an ontology in which the unity of the transcendentals had previously made the truth compelling, the good desirable and Christian spirituality possible and opened the door instead to dogmatism, moralism and a rift between theology and spirituality.⁵³

Those systematic theologies of beauty which are currently offered as foundations for theological aesthetics are formulated against the backdrop of this general development. They seek to redeem this modern secular concept of beauty by offering a plausible Christian counterinterpretation of it. Typically they achieve this by emphasising four main characteristics of it.

In the first place they postulate a Trinitarian basis and a Christological focus of beauty. We saw for ourselves above, for instance, that von Balthasar conceives that the beautiful form of the self-surrendering love of the Trinity (*Gestalt Gottes*) finds its climactic

⁵³ Balthasar, *GL1*, 19; De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 106-107.

historical expression in the unprecedented love of the Son of God for humanity (*Gestalt Christi*) and that John De Gruchy follows him by proposing a Trinitarian basis and Christological concentration of beauty.

In the second place they restore the integral character of beauty. In other words they reintegrate it with those values from which it has become alienated in modern life. We have just seen how von Balthasar reunites beauty with the religious by finding its ultimate basis in the Trinity. But he also reintegrates it with the intellectual by conceiving of it as a form which must be imaginatively expressed by us on the basis of our sensory impressions of it; the moral by insisting that our whole being must be conformed to it; and even the sublime by proposing that beauty supervenes upon both form and splendour. Even De Gruchy reconciles the beautiful with the religious and moral by viewing these as three dimensions of existence which are recapitulated by both Christ and His Church.

Finally these contemporary theologies of beauty also attempt to ensure their specifically Christian concepts of beauty nevertheless remain generalizable in character or, in other words, capable of application to a wide variety of particular instances. Typically they achieve this by ensuring that their definitions of beauty are both minimal and have continuity with the classical conditions of beauty: *proportio*, *integritas* and *claritas*. For instance, John De Gruchy views beauty as simply form and Balthasar as form and splendour. Although some scholars have questioned whether they succeed in their ambition by this means their concerns have generally remained in the minority.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ See for instance G. Pattison, 'Is the Time Right for a Theological Aesthetics?', in O. Bychkov & J. Fodor (eds), *Theological Aesthetics After von Balthasar* (Milton Keynes: Ashgate, 2008), 109-114; Kilby, *Balthasar*, 45-48; and N. Boyle, 'Art, Literature, and Theology: Learning from Germany', in R. Sullivan (ed), *Higher Learning and Catholic Traditions* (Notre Dame: UNDP, 2001), 105-106.

But by now we should easily recognise that Barth's own theology of beauty shares many of these same fundamental characteristics. We have seen, of course, that Barth finds the ultimate basis of beauty in the Trinity. For him, 'the triunity of God is the secret of His beauty'.⁵⁵ Moreover beauty has a Christological focus. According to Barth, 'th[e] work of the Son... reveals the beauty of God... to a supreme degree'.⁵⁶ But he also takes considerable strides towards restoring its integral character as well. He reunites beauty with the religious by viewing its primary analogate as the form of the Triune God and the intellectual and moral by claiming that this form of the divine glory must not only be known but obediently witnessed to by us as well. Although there is no evidence that Barth himself ever realised it, his belief that beauty is the form of God's glory and hence a unity of form and splendour even implies or provides the groundwork for a reconciliation of beauty with the sublime as well.⁵⁷ Finally Barth develops a view of beauty which is at least as generalizable in character as the current alternatives. His understanding of beauty as the unified and distinct form of the unity and distinction or simplicity and multiplicity of God's glory not only perpetuates the most common understanding of its conditions - *proportio*, *integritas* and *claritas* - but is also simple enough to be applied to a wide variety of specific instances as well.

7.4. *Differences to Current Alternatives*

But we must go further still and suggest that Barth's theology of beauty provides a foundation for theological aesthetics which has not only many of the same strengths as

⁵⁵ Barth, *CDII/1*, 661.

⁵⁶ Barth, *CDII/1*, 661.

⁵⁷ See, for instance, Begbie who reunites the beautiful and sublime upon a similar basis. Begbie, *Created Beauty*, 23-24. Such an interpretation would make Barth's theology an ally to the ambition of Betz, Hart and Millbank. See Millbank, *Sublimity*, 258-284; Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*, 242-243; and Betz, *Beyond the Sublime (Part One)*, 367-371. For an attempt to reconcile Hart, Betz and Barth on this point see K. Starkenburg, 'Beauty, Glory and Trinity in Karl Barth and David Bentley Hart', in W. McMaken & D. Congdon (eds), *Karl Barth in Conversation* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2014), 152-157.

the current alternatives but also few of their weaknesses as well. In order to be plausible contemporary systematic theologies of beauty typically relate God's beauty to the more mundane forms of beauty which we experience every day. And as we have seen they usually construe this relation as static in character. But by doing so they unwittingly make themselves vulnerable to a number of significant problems. By conceiving this relation instead dynamically or actualistically Barth's theology of beauty largely avoids these. It thus has the potential to be a more useful and hence attractive foundation for theological aesthetics than those currently available.

In the first place Barth's theology of beauty avoids the need for a speculative and contentious extra-biblical ontology. We will recall that von Balthasar relates divine and worldly beauty by means of the *analogia entis*. As we saw in the opening chapter this idea has its basis in the ancient Greek metaphysical concept of the participation (*methexis*) of becoming in being which enables knowledge of the latter by means of the former. It was adapted for Christian use by Przywara and others largely just by recognising Jesus Christ as the supreme instantiation of this ontological participation and hence the perfection of the knowledge attained by it.⁵⁸

But as we saw earlier in this chapter many Christians today remain reluctant to relate divine and worldly beauty by this means because they find this sophisticated ontology implausible theologically. They fear that it undermines the transcendence of God and the gratuity of His grace. But more importantly they remain unconvinced that it is truly warranted by Scripture in the first place. We saw, for instance, that such concerns led

⁵⁸ See, for instance, Betz, *After Barth*, pp44-86.

John De Gruchy to relate divine and worldly beauty by means of Bonhoeffer's *analogia relationis* instead.⁵⁹ Similar reservations have led the prolific Protestant scholar of theology and the arts, Jeremy Begbie, to relate them by means of the New Testament concept of *koinonia*.⁶⁰

But many other Christians today resist relating divine and worldly beauty on the basis of this ontology because they find it implausible philosophically. Since the dawn of the modern period the metaphysics of participation have sustained intense philosophical criticism. On the one hand, Kant's arguments against natural theology have led many to conclude that it is illogical. It rests on at least two dubious assumptions. Firstly, that varying degrees of a quality (e.g. heat) imply a supreme idea of it. And secondly, that such a supreme idea is necessarily real or exists.⁶¹ On the other hand, Heidegger's critique of 'onto-theology' has helped them to recognise that it is also immoral. It not only robs the world of mystery and a God worthy of its devotion but exposes it to technological mastery as well.⁶² For reasons like these many modern Christians conclude that 'what is forever excluded... is a pure and simple repetition of the philosophers of participation and presence'.⁶³ This is the case even for some of those from Roman Catholic backgrounds which are traditionally more sympathetic to such an ontology. The Neo-Thomist scholar of theological aesthetics, Richard Viladesau, for instance, establishes a

⁵⁹ De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 117, 165.

⁶⁰ Begbie, *Created Beauty*, 26.

⁶¹ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. P. Guyer and A. Wood (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 551-590 (A567/B595-A642/B670); Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 116-117.

⁶² M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, tr. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 51, 60, 72; M. Westphal, 'Overcoming Onto-theology', in J. Caputo and M. Scanlon (eds), *God, the Gift and Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 147-148; M. Westphal, 'Onto-theology, Metanarrative, Perspectivalism and the Gospel', in M. Penner (ed), *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 144-145.

⁶³ Paul Ricoeur, *Preface A Raphael Célis: L'oeuvre et l'imaginaire. Les origines du pouvoir-être Créateur* (Bruxelles: Publ. des Fac. Universitaires Saint-Louis, 1977).

theological aesthetics upon the basis instead of a transcendental argument from the experience of beauty.⁶⁴

But as we have seen Barth's systematic theology of beauty relates divine and worldly beauty not by means of the *analogia entis* but an actualistic *analogia fidei*. It thereby avoids the need for this speculative and contentious ontology.

Finally Barth's theology of beauty also largely escapes the idealising or 'platonizing' tendencies of alternative foundations for theological aesthetics. Greek philosophy is infamous for its assumption of a spirit-matter dualism which tends to denigrate the material universe in favour of the ideal. Many Christians have consequently worried that the Western aesthetic tradition, which is heavily reliant upon Greek philosophical distinctions like 'form' and 'matter', inevitably devalues material forms of beauty as well. Colin Gunton, for instance, attempts to overcome this proclivity by crafting a theological definition of matter which views form as something intrinsic rather than extrinsic to it.⁶⁵

Balthasar is alert to this danger and even tries to avoid it by employing a Thomistic ontology which conceives that forms only subsist in the matter of things.⁶⁶ However many have pointed out that his use of the *analogia entis* ultimately condemns him to remain in bondage to it. By instating a static relation between divine and worldly beauty this *denkform* bestows upon material beauty a permanent reference to God's beauty. It

⁶⁴ Viladesau, 120-140.

⁶⁵ C. Gunton, 'Creation and Re-creation: An Exploration of Some Themes in Aesthetics and Theology', *Modern Theology*, 2/1 (1985), 1-19. For a similar concern see Begbie, *Created Beauty*, 25-26.

⁶⁶ De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 108.

thereby reduces it to a mere instrument or means to the end of ideal beauty.⁶⁷ Although De Gruchy rejects the *analogia entis* inasmuch as his *analogia fidei* also postulates a static relation between divine and worldly beauty and hence makes material beauty a permanent sign of the divine then it falls into the same tendency.

But we have seen that by contrast Barth's actualistic *analogia fidei* posits a dynamic relation between divine and worldly beauty. It thereby assigns material beauty only an occasional reference to divine beauty. This means that while in extraordinary circumstances it may be temporarily elevated to the responsibility of serving as an instrument or means to the end of God's beauty, ordinarily it is simply an end in itself. Barth's systematic theology of beauty thereby largely avoids the idealising or platonizing tendency of its peers.

7.5. Conclusion

Our claim that Barth does not just recover divine beauty but develops a distinctive form of *analogia pulchritudinis* as well certainly advances contemporary scholarly understanding of his theology and achievements. But it is rich with further significance as well. In this chapter we have given just one example by showing that it could provide a foundation for theological aesthetics which many may well find more attractive than the current alternatives. Although Barth never himself put it to such use there nothing in his theology which prohibits this application of it. Like its peers Barth's theology of beauty is a rigorously Christian account of beauty which is nevertheless generalizable and

⁶⁷ L. Barrett, 'Von Balthasar and Protestant Aesthetics: A Mutually Corrective Conversation', in O. Bychkov & J. Fodor (eds), *Theological Aesthetics After von Balthasar* (Milton Keynes: Ashgate, 2008), 102-103; R. Williams, 'Balthasar and Rahner', in J. Riches (ed), *The Analogy of Beauty: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 21; De Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, 108.

may thus serve as a model or paradigm for the study of aesthetic problems from a distinctively Christian point of view. But unlike them it can do so whilst avoiding reliance upon a speculative and contentious extra-biblical ontology and denigrating material beauty. It may thus provide a more satisfactory basis for the discipline of theological aesthetics. The potential of this *denkform* by no means ends there. However it will be the burden of future research to discover yet further unrealised constructive applications of it.

Conclusion

For more than fifty years now Hans Urs von Balthasar's claim that Barth should be credited with recovering belief in the beauty of God but not a more comprehensive theology of beauty in which this bears a relation to more common experience of the value has been accepted with little question by those working in the field of theological aesthetics. And there is good reason why it has been. Balthasar's voluminous publications on both Barth's theology and theological aesthetics make him an expert on the topic with few peers. His exegesis of Barth's work is renowned for both its sympathy and insight. And unlike subsequent generations in the discipline Balthasar had privileged access to Barth as both his contemporary and colleague in Basel.

But for the past thirty years as more primary sources by Barth have become publicly available for the first time and English language study of Barth's theology has flourished Balthasar's pioneering interpretations of Barth's theology have gradually been subjected to a review. This began in earnest especially with Bruce McCormack's reappraisal of Balthasar's interpretation of Barth's development of analogy and continued with Keith Johnson's re-examination of his claims about Barth's attitude towards the *analogia entis*. But there is good reason to now do so with Balthasar's reading of Barth's view of beauty as well.

For not only do such new publications shed clearer light on Barth's beliefs about beauty but Balthasar's interpretation has a range of undesirable side effects as well. It underestimates Barth's historical contribution to theology. It makes his thought on the matter of little constructive use to both theology and theological aesthetics. But worse it unwittingly perpetuates the myth that Protestants are out of their depth when it comes to

aesthetics. That they do not have the conceptual resources to justify a theological exploration of the problems of aesthetics or even to make sense of the relatively common experience of finding spiritual significance in natural and artistic beauty.

Although Barth's most famous reflections on beauty might appear at first to be entirely consistent with Balthasar's interpretation when they are read in their proper context, the literary context of his account of God's glory and historical context of his wider deliberations on the theme, nothing could be further from the truth. Instead they make clear that Barth not only recovered belief in God's beauty but developed a distinctive form of *analogia pulchritudinis* as well.

There is no secret defect in Barth's concept of analogy which could have prevented him from accomplishing this. Such a suggestion is little more than needless self-serving polemic. Barth advanced and refined a coherent form of analogy of theological and ecclesial realities throughout his career. He always made room for the *world extra muros ecclesiae* to play a role within it. And a version of this analogy of theological, ecclesial and worldly realities lies suggestively in the background of his most famous account of beauty. Barth had three rudiments of an analogy of beauty from the earliest stages of his academic career: a provisional analogy of theological and ecclesial beauty, a theoretical basis for it in the form of God and theology, and a belief that natural revelation implied that even natural and artistic beauty and philosophical aesthetics could bear witness to God. In his climactic account of beauty Barth integrated these into an *analogia pulchritudinis* for the first time. And he retained the chief tenets of it throughout the remainder of his career.

This discovery certainly corrects the historical record concerning Barth's achievements in theology. It shows that he contributed more to the recovery of the theology of beauty than he has hitherto been credited for. It also opens up his theology of beauty to a much greater variety of constructive applications than was previously possible not least of which may be providing a more useful foundation for theological aesthetics. But perhaps even more importantly it should go some way to finally putting to death the myth that aesthetics lies beyond the competence of Protestant Christians once and for all. For if even the supposedly most notorious Protestant despiser of culture, the one who allegedly threw his own theology like a stone at it, can justify theological aesthetics and find a reflection of the divine in the crescendo of a Mozart concerto or the rolling green meadows and white peaks of the Bernese Oberland then surely all Protestant Christians can as well.

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