

The Spirit of God and the Christian Life

A Constructive Study of Karl Barth's Pneumatology with
Special Reference to His Incomplete Doctrine of Redemption

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Abbreviations

- CD: Church Dogmatics*. Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, et al. 4 vols. in 14. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956-1977.
- ChD: Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf*. Edited by G. Sauter. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1982.
- CL: The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV/4, Lecture Fragments*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981.
- DO: Dogmatics in Outline*. Translated by G. T. Thomson. London: SCM, 1949.
- ET: Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*. Translated by Grover Foley. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963.
- Ethic: Ethics*. Edited by Dietrich Braun. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981.
- GD: Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*. Edited by Hannelotte Reiffen. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.
- HC: The Holy Ghost and the Christian Life*. Translated by Richard Birch Hoyle. London: Frederick Muller, 1938.
- KD: Kirchliche Dogmatik*, 13 vols. Munich: Kaiser, 1932; Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1938-1965.
- PT: Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History*. Translated by Brian Cozens and John Bowden. London: SCM, 1972.
- Prayer: Prayer: 50th Anniversary Edition*. Edited by Don E. Saliers. Translated by Sara F. Terrien. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Romans I: Der Römerbrief* (Erste Fassung) 1919. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1985.
- Romans II: The Epistle to the Romans*. Translated by Edwyn C. Hoskyns. London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1950.
- TC: The Theology of John Calvin*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- TS: The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen, Winter Semester of 1923/24*. Edited by Dietrich Ritschl. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1978.
- UCR: Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*. 3 vols. Ed. Hannelotte Reiffen and Hinrich Stoevesandt. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1985-2003.
- WAM: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*. Translated by Clarence K. Pott, Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986.

I. Introduction: Redemption, Pneumatology and the Christian Life in Karl Barth

In the mid-1950s, Barth explained to his students the importance of pneumatology as follows:

Today I would speak more of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps I was too cautious. You students should not make that mistake in your polemical writings....! A good theology can be based on any of the three articles of the Creed. You could base it on the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit... I personally think that a theology of the Spirit might be all right after AD 2000, but now we are still too close to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹

The above quotation not only shows that Barth underlined the significance of pneumatology, but also proposed it as a future for Christian theology. Moreover, one may hardly miss that Barth regarded a Spirit theology as a constructive project through which other theological topics can be assessed and rearranged. These remarks may immediately provoke scholarly scepticism because Barth's pneumatology has often been regarded as one of his most undeveloped doctrines. At least since the 1920s, when Barth attracted both scholarly and public attention after the publication of *The Epistle to the Romans* he had come under severe criticism for leaving little room for reflection on the Spirit in theology.² In this sense, for example, Jenson claimed that "[L]ong stretches of Barth's thinking seem rather binitarian than trinitarian."³

In contrast, I propose, Barth's seemingly underdeveloped pneumatology mirrors his highly sophisticated, but very suggestive, reflection upon the Spirit against the backdrop of his intellectual, religious, political and social context. In this respect, this

¹ Karl Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, ed. John D. Godsey (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), 27–28.

² In order to meet this criticism, Barth delivered lecture on the Spirit in 1929, and this lecture was published under the title of *The Holy Ghost and the Christian Life*. Despite this lecture his critics have constantly argued that Barth did not pay enough attention to the work of the Holy Spirit while underlining the work of Christ. See Karl Barth, *The Holy Ghost and the Christian Life*. trans. R. Hoyle (London: Frederick Muller, 1938). Hereafter *HC*.

³ Robert W. Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," *Pro Ecclesia* 2 (1993): 296.

thesis can be characterized as a constructive study of Barth's pneumatology. It will excavate the deeper logic of Barth's Spirit theology by appropriating his reaction to previous centuries' thinkers, and by unearthing pneumatological themes in his other doctrines. Moreover, and more importantly, I will deeply engage with Barth's incomplete doctrine of redemption to find a more proper and comprehensive setting for conceiving of the Spirit's *ad intra* and *ad extra* act. To do justice to the scope and depth of Barth's discussion of the Spirit's redemptive work, my thesis approaches this much debated topic by developing my own methodologies and organizing the structure of my argument in a deliberate and specific way. Before moving on to expounding these crucial issues, I will briefly demonstrate the ways in which modern scholars have critically evaluated Barth's so-called underdeveloped pneumatology. This review will help to identify the core problems that have plagued Barth scholarship and offer guidance in undertaking our own research on this topic.

Modern Receptions of Barth's Pneumatology: A Typology

Those who are familiar with Barth would acknowledge that his pneumatology is one of the most extensive descriptions of the Spirit in Christian history.⁴ However, critics have argued that his christocentric approach leaves little room for reflecting the person and work of the Spirit. Furthermore, his unfinished magisterial *Church Dogmatics* (hereafter *CD*) and the absence of the final volume on pneumatology have triggered the question as to whether he had something new to say about the Spirit.⁵ In order to investigate

⁴ According to Rogers, Barth wrote more than 2100 pages with 'Spirit' in bold-face theses in his dogmatics and published more than one book with 'Spirit' in the title. See Eugene F. Rogers Jr, "The Eclipse of the Spirit in Karl Barth," in *Conversing with Barth*, ed. John C. McDowell and Mike Higton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 173.

⁵ Barth's *Church Dogmatics* V (the volume on the Spirit, redemption and eschatology) was never written, and his volume on reconciliation (IV) also remained incomplete. Some critics even speculate that the

these matters in detail, I create a four-fold typology for reviewing modern critical appropriations of Barth's Spirit theology.

1. Danger of Modalism and Evaporation of the Spirit's Personality

One of the most common and severe charges against Barth is his modalistic tendency in the doctrine of the Trinity.⁶ Barth resisted using the term 'person,' because this term might have implications of modern individualistic, psychological and idealistic views of personhood. Instead, he opted for the German term *Seinweise*, which was translated into 'mode of being' in English.⁷ When 'the person' was replaced by 'the mode of being,' however, it was inevitable to understand God as one personal Subject, who exists in three modes of revelation — the Revealer as the Father, the revelation as the Son and the revealedness as the Spirit. Many critics, however, have found that, because the role of revealedness is to unite the Revealer and the revelation, the bond between the two is already implied in their eternal loving relationship as the Father and the Son. In Barth's

absence of a volume devoted to eschatology and pneumatology is perhaps a matter of his undeveloped thought on these theological topics. See Colin E. Gunton, *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 163; Robert W. Jenson, *God after God: The God of the Past and the God of the Future as Seen in the Work of Karl Barth* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 173.

⁶ See Catherine LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 252; Alan J. Torrance, "Trinity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. J. B. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 81; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology, Vol 1*, trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 296; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, trans. M. Kohl (London: SCM, 1981), 139, 143; Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, New pbk. ed. (London: Burns & Oates, 1977), 184; Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad Pub., 1997), 109–111.

⁷ The translators and editors of CD I/1 confess their difficulty in choosing a proper English word for *Seinweise*. Barth himself preferred 'the way of being' to 'the mode of being' to avoid any hint of modalism, but they contended that 'mode of being' would be a better word to refer back to the Cappadocian *τρόπος υπάρξεως* and the *modus entis* of Protestant Orthodoxy. Therefore, *Seinweise* was translated into 'mode of being.' See, Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 2nd ed. ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), viii. Hereafter volumes of *Church Dogmatics* will be cited by CD followed by volume and part numbers. When I make reference to the original German, I use the notation KD.

theology, therefore, the Spirit is superfluous in the Godhead, or, at the very best, it can be understood in an impersonal way.⁸

2. Pneumatology's Subordination to Christology and Lack of Eschatological Insights

Many critics argue that Barth often confused the role of the Spirit with that of Christ and thus subdued the Spirit's work in history under Christ's reconciliation in eternity. In Barth's theology, the Spirit's main work is to make it possible for humanity to recognize and to receive Christ's universal reconciliation. In my view, Barth was right when he emphasized the Spirit's *noetic* function, because this epistemological understanding has a deep root in the biblical and the Christian traditions. Moreover, Barth's opposition to the Enlightenment's optimism about human epistemological capacity influences his conception of the Spirit as the sole legitimate source of theological knowledge. However, critics claim that the Spirit's *noetic* function risks being understood as a noetic 'addendum' to what Christ already achieved ontically.⁹ Additionally, despite Barth's pioneering attempt to revive eschatology in modern theology,¹⁰ some scholars charge that Barth confines the Spirit's main role to actualizing what has already happened in Christ rather than opening a new future in

⁸ Eugene F. Rogers Jr, *After the Spirit: A Constructive Pneumatology from Resources Outside the West* (London: SCM, 2006), 22, 32. See also CD I/1, 469.

⁹ See Rowan Williams, "Word and Spirit," in *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 115; Sarah Coakley, "Why Three? Some Further Reflections on the Origin of the Doctrine of the Trinity," in *The Making and Remaking of Christian Doctrine: Essays in Honour of Maurice Wiles*, ed. Sarah Coakley and David A. Paulin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 33; Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. John F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 44, n. 91; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (London: SCM, 1968), 170.

¹⁰ For example, Pannenberg argued that the Spirit was an eschatological reality for primitive Christianity, and this eschatological character of pneumatology had recently been rediscovered by Barth. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Apostles' Creed in the Light of Today's Questions*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1972), 133–135; See also, Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed. trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 314. Hereafter *Romans II*.

history.¹¹ In Barth's theology, thus, the Spirit's subordination to Christ is arguably connected to Barth's lack of eschatological insights.

3. No Room for Human Autonomy and Faith

Although Barth has been criticized because of his insufficient reflection on the distinctive role of the Spirit, critics also claim that he so emphasized the Spirit's transcendentalism that there remains little room for human freedom and faith.¹² Barth's opposition to liberal Protestantism, Catholicism, and Christian existentialism made him reject any point of contact between the Creator and the creature in humanity or religion; besides the downward movement of the Spirit, there is no other relation between God and humanity, and in this relation there is no place for the upward reach of a spirit of man/woman.

4. Insufficient Reflections on History, Nature, and the Church

Some critics contend that another aspect of the Spirit's 'totalitarianism'¹³ is Barth's unsatisfactory explanations about the 'fields' of the Spirit's work. In other words, he had undeveloped doctrines of history, creation and the church, in which the Spirit

¹¹ See Jean Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. Paul McPartlan (London; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 203; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (London: SCM, 1974), 255; Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 126–127.

¹² See Arnold B. Come, *Human Spirit and Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), 86; Frank D. Macchia, "The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Life: An Evangelical Response to Karl Barth's Pneumatology," in *Karl Barth and Evangelical Theology: Convergences and Divergences*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press; Grand Rapids, MI, 2006), 163–165; Roger Haight, *Jesus, Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999), 315, n. 2.

¹³ This controversial term was used by Hendry in order to critique the Reformed tradition's exclusive emphasis on God's grace. See George Stuart Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* (London: SCM, 1965).

encounters the creature.¹⁴ As people pay more attention to these ‘earthly’ elements in religion rather than supernatural ones nowadays, and as postmodern thinking increasingly invites people to value their spiritual life, there may increasingly be more and sharper criticisms levelled at Barth’s notions of history, nature, and the church as regards his arguably deficient pneumatology.

The Doctrine of Redemption as the Locus of Pneumatology

In face of these conflicting and contrasting appropriations of Barth, this thesis aims to show that it is possible to read Barth as offering a robust Spirit theology, in which he attempted to rehabilitate human subjectivity and to facilitate ethics within a wider framework of God’s dealing with humanity and human response to God. More specifically, I will pay special attention to Barth’s doctrine of redemption (*Erlösung*),¹⁵ where the *Creator Spiritus* constitutes the eschatological existence of human beings as God’s children by shaping them as free, responsible, historical and prayerful agents.

To explore this possibility, I will approach Barth with four fundamental methodological assumptions. They will provide constructive and critical insights into Barth’s unfinished doctrine of redemption, thereby distancing my interpretation from those of previous researchers. First, Barth’s Spirit theology should be investigated with reference to his fragmentary accounts of redemption. Many critics acknowledge that

¹⁴ See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM, 1977), 209; Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1985), 161–162; Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 171; Rogers Jr, *After the Spirit*, 32; Colin E. Gunton, *The Barth Lectures*, ed. Paul Brazier (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 200.

¹⁵ In Barth’s *CD*, *Erlösung* was translated into the English word ‘redemption’ which often refers to Christ’s atonement. Compared to ‘redemption,’ the German word *Erlösung* has strong eschatological (and thus pneumatological) implications. Nevertheless, I will utilize the term ‘redemption’ because it has been widely utilized by Barth scholars and because Barth was aware of this English translation. Barth himself admitted “a certain ambiguity in the term ‘redemption’ and ‘*Erlösung*.’ Neither of them carries the exact meaning of the biblical notion.” See Barth, *Karl Barth’s Table Talk*, 53.

Barth could not even begin the first page of *CD V*, which would be devoted to the Spirit's redemption. However, they do not draw the logical consequence that any attempt to interpret Barth's overall vision simply on the basis of the completed volumes of *CD* may be distorted, and fail fully to contextualize Barth's accounts of the Father's creation and the Son's reconciliation.¹⁶ It follows that their studies arguably utilize improper categories and perspectives, distilled from other doctrines or from other theologians' work, rather than discovering the deeper structure of Barth's own pneumatology. In contrast, I propose, Barth's Spirit theology should be studied primarily in light of its own logic, concepts and motifs within the doctrine of redemption, and it is possible to make reasonable conjectures about Barth's vision of the Spirit's redemption on the basis of his earlier and posthumous writings on the topic.

Second, Barth's Spirit theology needs to be examined by highlighting pneumatological themes interwoven into other doctrines. A few years after the third part of his doctrine of reconciliation (*CD IV/3*, 1959-1960) was released, Barth was asked whether he would publish more to complete his *CD*. The answer was "*Nein!*" because he himself thought that he had already written 'enough,' and he recommended those who were waiting for his new books to read the previous parts.¹⁷ This remark encourages us to explore basic pneumatological themes from what he already said in other doctrines, including redemption, revelation, the perfections of God and election.

Third, Barth's pneumatology should be examined in relation to his critical response to 18th- and 19th-century thinkers. Barth understood the previous century's

¹⁶ Among many reviews of Barth's pneumatology, Hunsinger insightfully summarized the incompleteness of Barth's doctrine of redemption and its implication for his pneumatology. See George Hunsinger, "The Mediator of Communion: Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John B. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 177–180; See also Hunsinger quoted in Eugene F. Rogers Jr, "Supplementing Barth on Jews and Gender: Identifying God by Analogy and the Spirit," *Modern Theology* 14, no. 1 (1998): 59.

¹⁷ Karl Barth, *How I Changed My Mind*, ed. John D. Godsey (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1969), 86.

theologians as living figures, who still exerted a continuing influence. Accordingly, he wrote, “There is no past in the Church, so there is no past in theology.”¹⁸ Of course, most scholars have assumed that Barth’s radical break with his liberal teachers and his critique of their neglect of the deity of the Spirit made him exclusively centre on Christology, thereby undermining pneumatology. However, this simplified explanation has improperly overlooked the importance of previous centuries’ religious thought in constituting Barth’s vision of the Spirit’s redemption. In contrast, my study will show that Barth’s critical, but sympathetic, reading of his predecessors enabled him to develop his own distinctive argument on the Spirit’s being and to connect the Spirit’s act with the Christian life.

Fourth, I will take seriously two of Barth’s fundamental assumptions to the extent that they will determine the basic structure of my thesis: the content of theology determines the method, not vice versa, and “*Opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*” (the external works of the Trinity are undivided). On the one hand, for Barth, the priority of the subject-matter determines the ordering principle of dogmatics.¹⁹ This is well illustrated in his mature dogmatics, written according to the *opera Dei ad extra*, rather than merely restating the *loci* of Reformed Orthodoxy.²⁰ On the other hand, although the Father’s work is attributed to creation, the Son’s to reconciliation and the Spirit’s to redemption, all three divine modes of being participate together in the divine acts of

¹⁸ Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History*, New ed., trans. John Bowden and Brian Cozens (London: SCM, 2001), 3. Hereafter *PT*.

¹⁹ See, for example, *CD* I/1, 367; *CD* II/1, 44.

²⁰ Whereas Barth’s first dogmatic cycle, *Göttingen Dogmatics* (Hereafter *GD*), mostly follows the *loci* of the Reformed tradition, his mature *Church Dogmatics* is organized according to the being and act of the triune God. About the *GD*’s use of the Reformed order of *loci*, see Daniel L. Migliore, “Karl Barth’s First Lectures in Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion,” in *Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 35.

history.²¹ Accordingly, instead of seeking one dominant pneumatological perspective, I will examine Barth with special attention to his profound sense of the inter-relatedness of all Christian doctrines as reflecting the unity of the Trinity's act. In other words, my thesis will not separate one doctrine or a certain text from others, but organically read 'across' and 'through' his theology, tracing the underpinning pneumatological ideas.

The Doctrine of Redemption Revisited: Creation's Groaning and the Spirit's Prayer

As I have briefly discussed above, the uniqueness of my approach can be found in my intensive engagement with his unfinished doctrine of redemption. Redemption for Barth is human beings' eschatological participation in the triune God, which means that the Creator-creature relationship in the Father's creation and the Judge-sinner relationship in the Son's reconciliation have been transformed into the Father-children relationship.²² My thesis will bring a refreshing perspective to this widely discussed topic by paying special attention to the link between Barth's doctrine of redemption and his lifelong interest in Paul's Spirit theology. I will further argue that Barth's doctrine of redemption culminates in his discussion of the Spirit's shaping of praying agents, who hear and live in accordance with the divine Word. In addition, my study will show that Barth's deeply suggestive reading of Paul's pneumatology in Romans 8 plays a vital role in constituting these tantalizing reflections on the Spirit's redemptive work and consequent Christian life.

²¹ See *CD* I/1, 362, 392, 397.

²² Barth often utilized this trinitarian structure during and after his Münster period, as distinctively shown by his lectures on ethics, dogmatics and pneumatology. Nevertheless, his earlier theology implicitly hints at his trinitarian reflection on creation, reconciliation and redemption. The next chapter on redemption will deal with this issue.

This Pauline text, which has been prized by Douglas Moo as “the inner sanctuary within the cathedral of Christian faith,”²³ has been the basis for rich pneumatological reflections since early Christianity.²⁴ This rich biblical pneumatology shows that, when human beings cry “Father” (Romans 8:15) in their finiteness, the Spirit mediates between God and them in their prayer. I will demonstrate in the following chapter that Barth’s key pneumatological themes are embedded within his exegesis of Romans 8 – the Spirit’s incorporation of humanity into the intra-divine fellowship, the Spirit’s redemptive work in the form of prayer, the Spirit’s shaping of human agency, and prayer as the beginning of the Christian life. In order to grasp in a comprehensible manner Barth’s subtle and nuanced treatment of the Spirit’s prayer for humanity and humankind’s responsive prayer in the Spirit, I will coin and utilize the term ‘pneumatic prayer’ and ‘prayerful pneumatology.’

The relationship between the two is well illustrated in Barth’s swansong, *Evangelical Theology* (1962), which perhaps shows the theologian at the height of his theological maturity, faithfulness to the Word and spiritual insight. In the lecture on ‘prayer,’ especially, the Spirit’s redemptive act in and through prayer is concisely articulated as follow: “*Veni, Creator Spiritus*: In his movement from below to above and from above to below, the one Holy Spirit achieves the opening of God for man and the opening of man for God.”²⁵ If ‘pneumatic prayer’ refers to the former movement, ‘prayerful pneumatology’ refers to the latter. As the Spirit’s movement is inseparably

²³ Douglas J. Moo, *Romans 1-8* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 499.

²⁴ See Sarah Coakley, “The Trinity, Prayer and Sexuality,” in *Feminism and Theology*, ed. Janet Martin Soskice and Diana Lipton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 262. Rogers argued that this text allows theologians to conceive of the Trinity as “a community of inclusion” and the Spirit as the “entry” into this intra-divine fellowship. See Eugene F. Rogers Jr, *The Holy Spirit: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 44.

²⁵ Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*. trans. Grover Foley (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1963), 169. Hereafter *ET*.

twofold, pneumatic prayer and prayerful pneumatology cannot be isolated from each other. I suggest that the Spirit's prayer and humanity's prayerful participation in it constitute the thrust of Barth's doctrine of redemption.

Some recent scholars observe that in Barth's mature doctrine of reconciliation, especially in his posthumously published lecture fragments *The Christian Life*, the Spirit's redemptive act is interlocked with the Christian life by God's command to pray.²⁶ In my view, this prayerful link is no 'last minute-decision,' for Barth had scrutinized it since his student days, even considering this topic for his doctoral proposal. Barth could not commence his doctoral research as he left Marburg to take the assistant pastor position in Geneva in 1909. His desire to continue his study, nevertheless, was expressed in his correspondences with his teacher, Wilhelm Hermann, in 1910, which fragmentarily show what kind of theological issues were in his mind. Barth's own initial proposal on the impact of Jesus' death did not satisfy Hermann, and thus more plausible and manageable subjects were recommended: (1) mystical elements of religion, (2) Lutheran Orthodoxy's dependence on Kantian philosophy of religion, (3) the ideas of religious duty in Protestantism, (4) the idea of individuality in Schleiermacher, (5) Schleiermacher's relation to Kantian ethics, (6) the re-immersion of a practical vision of religion by Schleiermacher, (7) Schleiermacher's doctrine of prayer, or (8) the idea of immortality in Christian communion.²⁷

²⁶ See Eberhard Jüngel, "Invocation of God as the Ethical Ground of Christian Action," in *Theological Essays I*, trans. John B. Webster (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989); John Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Matthew Boulton, "'We Pray by His Mouth': Karl Barth, Erving Goffman, and a Theology of Invocation," *Modern Theology* 17, no. 1 (2001): 67-83; Donald K. McKim, "Karl Barth on the Lord's Prayer," *The Center Journal* 2, no. 1 (1982): 81-99; Nigel Biggar, "Karl Barth's Ethics Revisited," in *Commanding Grace: Studies in Karl Barth's Ethics*, ed. Daniel L. Migliore (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010).

²⁷ Wilhelm Hermann to Karl Barth, 08.05.1910 (KBA 9310.11) and 08.05.1910 (KBA 9310.12) Original in Karl Barth Archive.

Because the descriptions of these topics are too brief, and because not every letter between Barth and Hermann during this period is accessible to us, it is difficult to gauge Barth's enthusiasm about these and hard to speculate how he would have developed these initial ideas. Nevertheless, there seem to be common themes behind them. Under the influence of Marburg Neo-Kantianism, the young Barth had interest in the Kantian tradition's emphasis upon the practical dimension of religion in general and in Schleiermacher's appropriation of Kantian philosophy of religion in particular.²⁸ Moreover, and more importantly, his teacher was already encouraging him to conceive of prayer as a central practice in and through which the individual's moral orientation is brought into the heart of the Christian faith.

Barth's encounter with Religious Socialism intensified his interest in the ethical dimension of Christianity on the one hand, and eventually led to disagreement with Hermann's excessive emphasis upon the inner life on the other. The young Barth of the early 1910s, nevertheless, could not yet find his own distinctive voice concerning what the unique nature of the Christian life was, how the integrative role of prayer should be conceived, and by what right his approach could be justified. In an essay written during his ministry in Safenwil, entitled "Jesus and the Movement of Social Justice (1911)," for example, he linked the Christian faith with social actions by juxtaposing a Schleiermachean-Hermannian notion of life-giving power which enters into history through Jesus and Calvin's idea of a city of God on earth, with a twist of his radical appeal to the Kingdom of God.²⁹ Interestingly, this essay attempted to fill the inherent

²⁸ See Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1993), 45, 54.

²⁹ About the complex themes embedded in this essay and its importance in the development of Barth's thought, see Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 86-92; Timothy Gorringe, *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 30-32; Gary J. Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt*

gap between ‘Jesus’ and ‘the movement for social justice’ with a Religious Socialist version of pneumatology.³⁰ He critiqued the dematerialized conception of the Spirit in the Christian tradition, which had propelled the development of apolitical readings of Jesus’ proclamation. Instead, he suggested that Jesus’ Spirit is the social spirit which is constantly instilled within individuals and thus empowers them to transform the material world. Although Barth hereby proposed the Spirit’s work as the basis for Christian moral actions, he still needed to clarify further how God’s Spirit is connected to Jesus and to the human spirit, and to explain the way in which ethical human agency is constituted by the Spirit. As I will discuss in the next chapter on redemption, his renewed understanding of the Spirit and his special interest in the importance of prayer allowed him to offer his own comprehensible framework for reflecting on human agency, the Christian life and the Kingdom of God together. In short, Barth’s connection of the moral nature of the Christian faith with the practice of prayer within the context of the Spirit’s redemptive work had been an underpinning key motif since his student days, although Barth had to clarify, correct and improve his earlier views as he developed his own distinctive voice and theological method.

Perceiving the Redeemer’s Work *Ad Extra*: The Structure of the Thesis

After excavating the deep structure of the Spirit’s *redemption* in the next chapter (II), I will then revisit Barth’s trinitarian theology in light of pneumatological themes embedded in this incomplete doctrine. I will especially turn to the three comprehensive modes of the Spirit’s redemptive work *ad extra* – the mediation between divine and

in *Modern Theology: Theology without Weapons* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 32–36.

³⁰ Karl Barth, “Jesus Christ and the Movement for Social Justice,” in *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*, ed. George Hunsinger (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 26–29.

human logic in *revelation* (III), the drawing of the creation into God's self-glorification through *divine beauty* (IV), and the calling of human beings into the drama of salvation in *history* (V).

Contrary to claims that Barth reduced the Spirit's work to the subjective or noetic function of revelation, the chapter on *revelation* will show that Barth viewed revelation as God's primary mode of dealing with humanity in history. God remains the subject of revelation, even when positing God's-self in Christ as the object of human knowledge. By drawing men and women into this christologically structured subject-object relationship, the Spirit constitutes them as secondary subjects who hear and speak about the Word, freely exercising their cognitive and linguistic capacities. Here, instead of the intellectual faculty of the autonomous self, prayer is presented as the basis for human acknowledgment of and response to God.

The chapter on *beauty* will examine Barth's doctrine of glory, focusing on the Spirit's interpretation of beauty as the revelatory form of the divine glory. God's beauty subjectively attracts, persuades and convinces humanity to participate in the objective movement of God's self-glorification. There are two specific reasons why this thesis highlights God's perfection of glory. First, Barth often stated that his doctrine of redemption would be mainly about eschatology. It is not very well known, however, that he related the eschatological consummation of creation with God's glory in his *Göttingen Dogmatics* (hereafter *GD*) which is the only complete dogmatic cycle he wrote during his entire life. Second, Barth's doctrine of God in *CD* II/1 culminates in the section on glory, which ends with all creation's eschatological participation in God's self-glorification movement. While many studies on Barth's eschatology have paid close attention to the concept of hope or *parousia*, the concept of glory has not been

investigated as much. This chapter, thus, intends to enrich scholarly discussions on Barth's pneumatology and eschatology alike.

The chapter on *history* will be devoted to the Spirit's redemptive work in history as presented in his doctrine of election. For Barth, Jesus Christ is both the electing God and the elected human. This statement results in his radical claim that God elects all human beings in Jesus Christ before the creation and, moreover, that history is the drama of unfolding this gracious decision. If the Spirit's redemptive work is not properly considered, however, Barth's Christology in this doctrine can be misconceived as a metaphysical principle, which eventually nullifies the importance of faith and the diversity of humankind, because it only informs us that everyone is under God's gracious election in Christ.³¹ It is the Spirit who makes God's eternal decision 'good news' for us in our particular historical situation by calling us through the concrete community into the drama of salvation. In this doctrine, prayer is a crucial human act of discerning God's plot and playing one's own part in the drama under the direction of the Spirit.

It should be noted before moving on to the next chapter that Barth developed and utilized these pneumatological themes, not because they have validity on their own or a capacity for thoroughly covering the whole of the Spirit's act, but because they help to illuminate peculiar modes of God's engagement with humanity in a comprehensible and integrative manner. The themes of revelation, beauty and history cannot exhaust the mystery of God's act and its rich theological implications. However, each motif respectively underlines God's coming to us, God's invitation of us to the divine life and

³¹ Lossky also claimed that without the Spirit's particularizing and individualizing act, Christ is conceived as the universal and general metaphysical principle. See Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, ed. John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird (Crestwood, N. Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 97–110.

God's self-binding to our creaturely life, thereby constituting a wider background for conceiving of the Spirit's redemptive act. In this light, I will investigate these motifs, not to offer a complete and systematic framework for interpreting Barth's pneumatology, but to perceive the varied ways in which human participation in the Spirit's redemptive act attests the content of theology – 'God with us.' In addition, to learn how to recognize these themes can greatly help us see the Spirit's work of shaping, sustaining and educating a free and responsible human agent in Barth's theology as well as in our Christian life. Instead of treating Barth's ethics as an independent chapter, therefore, I have incorporated into each chapter discussions of how each mode of the Spirit's work constitutes human agency and encourages moral actions.

This methodological decision also means that many other crucial pneumatological topics and texts cannot be explored in this thesis. Most of all, I regret not being able to discuss ecclesiology due to the limited focus and scope of my research. It is true that the young Barth had somewhat negative attitudes towards the church, but, as Nimmo succinctly articulated, the mature Barth's pneumatology is the doctrine of the *enchurched* Spirit.³² Moreover, because my primary aim is to constructively approach Barth's doctrine of redemption, the mature Barth's deeply rich and extensive treatments of the Spirit, as presented in his doctrine of creation (*CD* III) and reconciliation (*CD* IV), cannot be sufficiently referenced in this piece of writing. Nevertheless, I propose that to study the grammar, logic and concept of redemption, and to explore their variations within Barth's discussion of God's revelation, beauty and history, will be a great resource for any further research on his pneumatology.

³² Paul Nimmo, "Barth and the Election-Trinity Debate: A Pneumatological View," in *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology*, ed. Michael T. Dempsey (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), 178.

II. Prayer, the Spirit and Redemption: A Constructive Reading of Barth's Pneumatology

In 1986, a novella was published under the title of *Karl Barth and the Buckwheat Flower* (バルトと蕎麦の花) by a Japanese writer Sakata Hiroo (阪田寛夫). This beautifully written story is about a countryside pastor who equally admires Barth's theology and Japan's traditional short poem, 'tanka' (短歌). A tanka is usually composed of five uncomplicated units, so it is suitable for expressing one's private emotion, feeling, or thought in simple and natural language. People often wonder how the pastor does not feel the contradiction between Barth's emphasis upon the Word of God and this personal and indigenized style of poetry. The pastor is humble, calm and self-reserved, yet his simple preaching strangely exerts lasting, but not dramatic, influence upon the hearers of the Word (although there are not many members in his church). Because of his 'Barthian' view on the gap between God and humanity, however, the pastor used to contend that prayer is not particularly important; rather, what is significant is to think and act in accordance to the Word, and he himself shows a deep interest in social issues. This novel, in my eyes, vividly captures enduring key motifs in Barth's theology: the priority of the Word, the possibility of genuinely free culture, the demanding nature of his message and rhetoric, the link between faith and ethics and other issues.

One thing to which Hiroo failed to do justice, however, is the fact that Barth took prayer very seriously throughout his career. This novel may mirror the lack of scholarly interest in and widely circulated prejudice towards against Barth's view of

prayer at the time.³³ However, Barth left a considerable amount of materials on prayer and took it as a key theme in his theology.³⁴ The importance of prayer, for example, is articulated by Barth in one simple sentence: “To be a Christian and to pray are one and the same thing.”³⁵ In this light, this chapter attempts to show that prayer does indeed play an essential role not only in making sense of Barth’s overall argument on the God-human relationship, but also in associating his theology with the Christian life. More importantly, I will demonstrate that Barth discussed these promising themes mostly within the wider context of his treatment of the Spirit’s redemptive work. Most significantly, I will present Barth’s innovative interpretation of the Spirit’s sigh and prayer in Romans 8 as an enduring motif in my exploration of the interconnectedness of prayer, the Christian life and the Spirit’s redemption.

To explore this possibility, I will first critically review two influential monographs on Barth’s pneumatology to search for an appropriate interpretive framework with which to read him. The next section, then, will turn to Barth’s unfinished doctrine of redemption in which he assessed the Spirit’s role in relation to the Trinity’s perfecting of creation and reconciliation. I will, finally, suggest that his beautiful and refreshing insights into the Spirit as the praying agency serve as an enduring key theme in his theology. This chapter’s initial study of Barth’s doctrine of redemption will offer a rich and comprehensive theological background against which the distinctive modes of the Spirit’s act *ad extra* is discussed in the next three chapters.

³³ Hesselink’s survey shows that monographs on Barth published before 1980 rarely mention the theme of prayer. See I. John Hesselink, “Karl Barth on Prayer,” in Karl Barth, *Prayer: 50th Anniversary Edition*, trans. Sara F. Terrien (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 74-75. Hereafter *Prayer* will refer to Barth’s *Prayer*.

³⁴ See, for example, *Prayer*; CD III/3, 264-288; CD III/4, 87-115; ET, 159-170. Karl Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV, Lecture Fragments*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (London; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 85-109. Hereafter *CL*. Along with these academic works, he also left a number of sermons on prayer.

³⁵ *Prayer*, 15.

1. Beyond Rosato and Thompson: Disputed Questions in Barth's Pneumatology

Philip J. Rosato's *The Spirit as Lord* (1981) and John Thompson's *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth* (1989) are the two main academic books on Barth's pneumatology published in English. They not only demonstrate significant analyses and insightful descriptions of Barth's Spirit theology, but also provide very divergent interpretations. In this section, I will examine the ways in which Rosato and Thompson differently assess Barth and then identify the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments.

1.1. Barth's Pneumatic Turn: Rosato's Pneumatological Improvisation

Since Philip Rosato's *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* appeared in 1981, it has been used as a primary guide book for investigating Barth's Spirit theology. This is the first book (at least in English-speaking countries) which is entirely devoted to Barth's pneumatology with a thorough examination of the Barthian corpus. It has been influential on contemporary Barth scholarship not only because of Rosato's succinct summary, but also because of his bold claim that pneumatology is never superfluous but central in Barth.³⁶ Despite ongoing debate as to whether Rosato rightly conceived of Barth's intention, this book is still widely circulated and quoted by many scholars.

Rosato began his study by introducing Barth's essay "Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher" published in 1968. In this essay, surprisingly, Barth stated that "what I have already intimated here and there...would be the possibility of a

³⁶ Philip J. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 3.

theology of the third article, in other words, a theology predominantly and decisively of the Holy Spirit.”³⁷ Confronting this tantalizing and promising statement, Rosato pulled out his main question from this short, ambiguous and unscientific essay – ‘Is Karl Barth a pneumatic theologian?’ Rosato’s answer is that pneumatology is a recurring theme in Barth’s major works through the years, and “it becomes more explicit... in his publications dating from the year 1947.”³⁸ In his *Dogmatics in Outline*, *The Heidelberg Catechism for Today* and *Protestant Theology in the 19th Century*, all appearing in 1947, Barth’s references to the Spirit increased, and his interest in pneumatology was intensified.³⁹ As he worked on these books, argued Rosato, Barth sharpened his conviction that the problems of 19th century liberalism, Christian existentialism, and Catholic theology could be all traced back to improper conceptions of the Spirit. Instead of focusing on the concrete work of the Spirit, they stressed the Spirit’s abstract and universal presence in human existence and the church.

According to Rosato, Barth wished to give priority to the mediating role of the Spirit and sought to construct a biblical-pneumatic concept of mediation. In Rosato’s view, Barth sought to fulfil these two tasks in and through a critical dialogue with Schleiermacher. Although Schleiermacher began his theology with anthropology, he attempted to produce a genuine theology of the Spirit. Nonetheless, for Rosato, Schleiermacher’s theology ended with the human person, and thus he put human beings’ faith at the heart of theology. Rosato argued that Barth extended his criticism of

³⁷ Karl Barth, “Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher,” trans. George Hunsinger, in *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen, Winter Semester of 1923/24*, ed. Dietrich Ritschl, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Michigan, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1982), 278. Hereafter *TS* will refer to *Theology of Schleiermacher*.

³⁸ Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 3.

³⁹ At this point, in my view, Rosato overstated the importance of 1947. For instance, Barth’s *Protestant Theology in the 19th Century* is based on his lecture manuscripts written in 1920s rather than his new work.

Schleiermacher to Christian existentialism and Roman Catholicism as well. Rosato wrote:

Whereas Schleiermacher places man's consciousness as the center, Existentialism does so with the individual's apprehension of the Word of God, and Catholicism with the creature's participation in God's own being. Thus, Barth's expressly pneumatological reinterpretation of these theologies leads him to conclude that the validity of their latent intention is irreparably compromised by their particular anthropological blurring of God's Spirit and man's spirit: such an identity causes their anthropology to absorb Christology into itself.⁴⁰

In contrast to Schleiermacher's near equation of human faith with the content of theology, for Rosato, Barth's Spirit theology can be described as an ellipse with two foci – Christ and the Christian.⁴¹ In order to prevent anthropology from absorbing Christology, Barth distanced the pole of Christ from the pole of the Christian, and endowed the Spirit with the function of holding the two in tension. Because of these two poles, Barth could save both the importance of Christology and that of Christians' faith at the same time.⁴² This elliptical model of pneumatology functions as a main hermeneutical principle in Rosato's exposition of Barth's pneumatology from the first edition of *Romans* to the last volume of *CD*.

In contrast to his positive interpretation of Barth's pneumatology, surprisingly, the last two chapters suddenly expose Rosato's dissatisfaction with Barth. Like other critics, or even more severely, Rosato claimed that Barth's Spirit theology is underdeveloped and unbalanced in the sense that it lacks eschatological insights,⁴³ fails to see the free interaction between the divine Spirit and the human spirit,⁴⁴ and

⁴⁰ Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 15.

⁴¹ Here one may find Rosato's uncritical reading of Barth. In fact, Barth claimed that Schleiermacher's theology also has two poles. The problem is not about whether there are two poles, but about how the distance between them is conceived. See *PT*, 444, 457.

⁴² Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 16.

⁴³ Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 134-141.

⁴⁴ Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 141-148.

improperly downplays the element of natural theology.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Rosato's preference for Spirit Christology led him to "improvise"⁴⁶ Barth's theology by revitalizing pneumatic Christology instead of Logos Christology,⁴⁷ although he mentioned that Barth's basic christological stance leaves little room for developing a Spirit Christology.

In short, Rosato's elliptical model has offered a valid hermeneutical principle for understanding Barth's Spirit theology. In addition, he attempted to 'improvise' Barth's pneumatology by opening both possibilities of a refreshing interpretation and of conversing with other traditions, including Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, to which Rosato was more sympathetic. However, this is one of the reasons why Barth's own pupil, John Thompson, felt the necessity of writing a book on Barth's pneumatology which would remain more faithful to Barth's 'original' intention.

1. 2. The Spirit as Christ's *Alter Ego*: Thompson's Return to Christocentrism

Distancing from Rosato's interpretation, John Thompson's *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth* articulates what he saw as the secondary, but not superfluous, significance of pneumatology in Barth. Thompson declared: "Pneumatology is a very important aspect of theology but not the whole of it. It is integrated into and integral to the whole content of *Church Dogmatics* but is never its primary thrust."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 148-155.

⁴⁶ Rosato intentionally utilized the term 'improvisation,' because this word resembles the word 'improvement' on the one hand, and it connotes an impromptu, extemporaneous 'variation' of the main melody, on the other. See Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 132.

⁴⁷ See Philip J. Rosato, "Spirit Christology: Ambiguity and Promise," *Theological Studies* 38, no. 3 (1977): 423-449; "Spirit-Christology as Access to Trinitarian Theology," in *God's Life in Trinity*, ed. Miroslav Volf (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006).

⁴⁸ John Thompson, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Allison Park, Pa: Pickwick Publications, 1991), 8.

Thompson's belief that Rosato failed properly to understand Barth is a main motive for him to undertake his own investigation,⁴⁹ but he also aimed to rebut other critics who even regard Barth's theology as christomonism.⁵⁰ What Thomson had to say is that in Barth the Spirit theology is always secondary after Christology (against Rosato), but that the Spirit's role is never superfluous but essential both in the economy of the Trinity and in the intra-divine relationship (against common criticisms of Barth).⁵¹ Moreover, for Thompson, Barth demonstrated against liberalism, existentialism and Catholicism that the Spirit is the Lord, qualitatively different from the human spirit. It follows that Barth's theology is fundamentally trinitarian, christological, and pneumatic at the same time, but the centre is undoubtedly Christ. Thompson wrote:

[W]hile it is true that Barth's theology represents an unparalleled christological concentration, it is for that very reason also primarily and essentially Trinitarian. This can be seen in the way the Trinity reemerges at particular points in the discussion and especially as it conditions the whole of the *Church Dogmatics*. It is also for the same reason pneumatological, since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Yet, as is clearly seen in Barth's treatment of all doctrines (including the Trinity), it is from the center in Christ – and the cross and resurrection in particular – that he begins and continues. The convergence and integration of Trinity, christology and pneumatology is clearly seen in another aspect of Barth's view of our knowledge of God.⁵²

As the above quotation shows, Thompson saw it as a strength of Barth's theology that his doctrines of the Trinity, Christ, and the Spirit are not presented separately, but beautifully interwoven with each other, focusing on Christ's cross and resurrection. Correspondingly, Thompson's exposition of Barth's Spirit theology is always related to other essential doctrines, and the book has chapters devoted to the Spirit and revelation,

⁴⁹ Thompson, *Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth*, vii.

⁵⁰ Thompson, *Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 6, 11.

⁵¹ Thompson, *Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 11.

⁵² Thompson, *Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 3.

incarnation, Scripture, reconciliation, resurrection, the Church, baptism, creation, ethics, and eschatology. Instead of the chronological approach that Rosato took, Thompson approached Barth thematically and tried to reiterate Barth's own voice.

Mostly expository, however, this book rarely demonstrates innovative hermeneutical principles or refreshing insights. A well-rounded argument, it offers less sophisticated and thorough arguments, compared to his previous monograph on Barth's Christology, in which he explicated central themes of Barth's theology in the light of Christ's reconciliation. The latter book firmly contended that Christology is the centre of Barth's thought, and that this is a non-negotiable starting point: "The present work [on Christology]... is an attempt to let Barth be heard on a central (indeed *the* central) theme of his theology – the name and reality of the loving Lord Jesus Christ....

Therefore, theology must deal at every point with Jesus Christ in perspective, i.e. in relation to God, the universe, and man."⁵³ Thompson's book on Barth's Spirit theology is a sequel to his book on Christology, in the sense that his christo-centric interpretation has been repeated in a new clothing of pneumatology. In Thompson's reading of Barth, the Spirit is important, but Christ is dominant.

Although Thompson was well aware of the Spirit's *noetic* function in Barth, he also underlined that the overemphasis upon the *noetic* function risks interpreting Barth's pneumatology in an exclusively subjective way. Thompson sought to protect the objective dimension of the Spirit's redemptive act by arguing that in Barth the Spirit not only unites the Father and the Son 'ontically' in eternity, but also binds all humanity to Jesus Christ through whom God's eternal salvific bond is established. Moreover, Thompson intentionally placed Christ's reconciliation before Christ's resurrection to

⁵³ John Thompson, *Christ in Perspective: Christological Perspectives in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, 1978), vii.

emphasize the fact that the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead in history had already worked with Christ in his 'objective' reconciliatory work in eternity.⁵⁴ As a logical result, Thompson could argue that the Spirit always engaged in and constantly accompanied Christ's objective work. He boldly united the Spirit's work with Christ's objective work as follows:

It is clear from Barth's writings as a whole that Christ and Spirit are distinguished though one as divine in the eternal, triune being of God.... In this instance the Spirit is almost identical with Christ. This is an emphasis largely neglected in traditional pneumatology which tended to see the Spirit merely as the subjective side of God's revelation, the one by whom Christ is known. Here the Spirit is almost Christ's *Alter Ego*, his other self. The Spirit comes in Christ's absence or rather as Christ's new presence. The presence of the Spirit is the presence of Christ and each is that of the living presence of God with men and women.⁵⁵

What Thompson showed in the above quotation is that Barth ultimately protected the objectivity of the Spirit by closely identifying the Spirit with Christ. If Thomson rightly recapitulated Barth's own intention, however, he was also coming close to conceding the critic's main point: Barth had no proper pneumatology.

In short, what remains unclarified in Thompson's account of Barth's christocentrism is the sense in which Barth could successfully secure a place for pneumatology in his theology. It is also unclear in Thompson whether Barth was really able to speak of the relationship between God and believers as a relationship of genuinely free subjects in the Spirit. Considering Thompson's presupposition, it is no wonder that the book concludes as follows: "Barth gives less place to human mediation than traditional Reformation thought and at times leaves the impression that mediation of others is almost set aside."⁵⁶ One may say here that, despite Thompson's effort to defend Barth,

⁵⁴ Thompson, *Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 72-77.

⁵⁵ Thompson, *Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 189.

⁵⁶ Thompson, *Christ in Perspective*, 210.

his strong reaction to Rosato ironically led him to leave almost no possibility for reflecting the distinctive work of the Spirit in Barth, as Rosato eventually did in his final assessment of Barth.

1.3. Towards an Alternative Reading of Barth's Spirit Theology

Despite Rosato's and Thompson's extensive statements of Barth and their different presuppositions, they seem to reach simple agreement that Barth's pneumatology is subordinated to Christology and that he left almost no room to discuss human freedom, thereby turning our discussion once again to the following starting point: Did Barth really fail to develop a rich pneumatology? Conclusively speaking, in my view, they improperly represented Barth's pneumatology despite their monographs' indispensable and valuable influence. Despite their obvious differences, Rosato and Thompson both misread Barth, and there are at least four features common to both their treatments that cause this.

First, both Rosato and Thompson were well aware of the fact that Barth did not write the fifth volume of *CD*, which would have been about the Spirit's redemption, but neither of them explored whether Barth had left significant pneumatological material on the basis of which secondary interpreters might guess at how the doctrine of redemption would have looked.⁵⁷

Second, whereas Thompson paid little attention to the development of Barth's thought, Rosato utilized his chronological method in an uncritical manner. Accordingly, they could not do justice to Barth's subtle, sophisticated and dynamic accounts of the

⁵⁷ For example, Oh and Biggar have presented a constructive interpretation of Barth's view of redemption mainly based on Barth's posthumous work. See Peter S. Oh, *Karl Barth's Trinitarian Theology: A Study in Karl Barth's Analogical Use of the Trinitarian Relation* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006); Nigel Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

Spirit. In particular, Rosato's claim that Barth's pneumatological turn took place in 1947 cannot sufficiently explain his increasing christocentric vision as it emerged with his doctrine of election in 1940s. Moreover, Rosato's suggestion cannot account for the enduring importance of Barth's pneumatology during his Münster period (1925-1930). In Thompson's case, he rarely referred to Barth's earlier writings in his research, failing to conceive of how the young Barth's pneumatologies play a vital role in constituting his mature theology.

In addition to these, Rosato's book was published in 1981, and Thompson's in 1991, so they could not engage in the critical debate about the dis/continuity in English-speaking Barth scholarship that was especially provoked by the appearance of McCormack's *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology* in 1995. Von Balthasar's well-known study on Barth in 1951 provides a succinct and insightful overview of the development of Barth's thought to the effect that his theology moved from 'dialectic' to 'analogical' after his engagement with Anselm.⁵⁸ McCormack critically questioned this paradigm, which had nearly dominated Barth scholarship for over 40 years, arguing that Barth's (supposedly) decisive turn to analogy was not as radical as his ex-Jesuit friend suggested and that his dialectical motif was more complex and exerted longer influence than widely assumed.⁵⁹ Although not every scholar agrees with McCormack's thesis, he has certainly invited any reader of Barth to critically think

⁵⁸ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans. Edward T. Oakes, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992).

⁵⁹ Some theologians critiqued McCormack's thesis because of his failure to grasp von Balthasar's nuanced comparison between the young and the mature Barth. They even claimed that von Balthasar was also aware of the continuity in Barth's theology. See Stephen Wigley, "The von Balthasar Thesis: A Re-examination of von Balthasar's Study of Barth in the light of Bruce McCormack," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56, no. 3 (2003): 345-359; Reinhard Hütter, "Barth between McCormack and von Balthasar: A Dialectic," *Pro Ecclesia* 8, no. 1 (1999): 105-109.

about ‘how Barth changed his mind’ though the years.⁶⁰ However, Thompson’s claim that Barth was a thoroughly christocentric theologian throughout his life risks overlooking the developmental process of Barth’s pneumatological thought, whereas Rosato merely repeated and expanded von Balthasar’s thesis.⁶¹ Accordingly, their uncritical and less nuanced interpretations resulted in their equally ambiguous and unqualified view of the relationship between Christ and Spirit and of the place of the Spirit within the doctrine of the Trinity.

Third, their lack of insight into Barth’s ontology caused them to overlook crucial theological implications embedded within his pneumatology. Although Barth was a well-known critic of metaphysics, recent scholars demonstrate that he did not abolish the place of ontology, but sought to present a properly and distinctively theological ontology in the light of trinitarianism and of the biblical concept of covenant.⁶² In particular, they claim that his ontology serves as a crucial hermeneutical principle for evaluating the fruitful God-human relationship and as a foundation for the Christian life.⁶³ However, it seems that Thompson had no interest in Barth’s ontology. Although Rosato named Barth’s idea of the ‘being’ of ecclesial life as a “metaphysics of faith,”⁶⁴ he could not fully conceive of its deeper meaning to the effect that it serves as the basis

⁶⁰ Barth briefly summarized the development of his theology, albeit incompletely in Barth, *How I Changed My Mind*. The radicalness of McCormack’s proposal lies in his claim that Barth was not a good interpreter of his own theology, and thus McCormack tried to say more explicitly what Barth implicitly proposed.

⁶¹ Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 15.

⁶² See, for examples, Robert W. Jenson, *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 140; Fergus Kerr, *Immortal Longings: Versions of Transcending Humanity* (London: SPCK, 1997), 44; Eberhard Jüngel, *God’s Being Is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. John B. Webster, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2001), 76; Bruce L. McCormack, “Grace and Being: The Role of God’s Gracious Election in Karl Barth’s Theological Ontology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John B. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 92; Paul T. Nimmo, *Being in Action: The Theological Shape of Barth’s Ethical Vision* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 10; Timothy Stanley, *Protestant Metaphysics After Karl Barth and Martin Heidegger* (London: SCM, 2010), 93–235.

⁶³ Webster, *Barth’s Ethics of Reconciliation*, 1–2.

⁶⁴ Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 125.

for constituting free, responsible and historical human agency. Moreover, in my view, Rosato's term 'metaphysics of faith' risks misrepresenting Barth's own intention, because it gives a misleading impression that the subjective faith of humanity is the basis of theological ontology. It should be noted that the early Barth claimed that "[the doctrine of the Spirit] becomes understood in the category of an ontological thinking."⁶⁵ Without sufficient reflection on this statement one risks narrowing down the scope of the Spirit's redemptive work in Barth's theology.

Fourth, and finally, Barth repeatedly claimed that a proper Spirit theology should be an exegesis of biblical pneumatologies. One may rightly say that Barth's whole theology takes the Bible seriously, and that his other doctrines are also heavily dependent on his creative interpretation of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, Barth strongly emphasized the importance of biblical exegesis in his pneumatology with special attention to the meaning of eschatological redemption presented in the New Testament.⁶⁶ In particular, throughout his career, he did indeed take Romans 8 as the heart of the biblical view of redemption and used this text, along with other biblical sources, as a basis for his pneumatological reflections. He once told his students that "'Redemption' means more than 'reconciliation,' and it has to do with the work of the Spirit. See Romans 8!"⁶⁷ However, both Rosato and Thompson did not seriously engage in Barth's interpretation of the Bible in general and Romans in particular, and this remains a poignant weakness in their assessment.

In contrast to Rosato and Thompson, my research on Barth's Spirit theology includes often-neglected texts on the Spirit's redemptive work, presupposes the dis/continuity issue in recent Barth scholarship, highlights the ontological dimension of

⁶⁵ *HC*, 72.

⁶⁶ See *CD I/1*, 467

⁶⁷ Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, 53.

his Spirit theology, and pays special attention to his exegeses of the Bible. In order to express Barth's concern for the Spirit's redemptive work, especially, I will coin the new terms, 'pneumatic prayer' and 'prayerful pneumatology,' which derive from and denote Barth's repeated linking of the Spirit's intercession with the significance of prayer, as beautifully presented in Romans 8.

2. The Doctrine of Redemption and Pneumatic Prayer

This section will examine Barth's doctrine of the Spirit within the wider context of his view of redemption. To explore this comprehensive topic without marginalizing the trinitarian dimension of his thought, I will first assess Barth's view on the nature and boundary of a proper Spirit theology. I will then turn to his doctrine of eschatological redemption, according to which the Father and humanity are united in Christ precisely through the Spirit's mediation. The final section will explore the deeper logic and implication of Barth's pneumatology by investigating how he conceived of the Spirit's intercessory prayer as the heart of the doctrine of redemption. These surveys will lead us to investigate the constitution of praying agency in the next section.

2.1. The Spirit *as* the Lord: Pneumatology within the Limit of the Word?

Barth did not start his pneumatological reasoning from a vacuum; rather, he clearly saw it as a problem of 19th-century pneumatology that it marginalized the deity of the Spirit and improperly overlooked the biblical accounts of the Spirit's concrete work.⁶⁸

Because of Neo-Protestantism's "desire... to enforce the problem of man in his relation

⁶⁸ See Barth's study of the development of pneumatology in *CD I/2*, 250-257.

to God,”⁶⁹ argued Barth, the Spirit was conceived mostly in terms of the idealization of the human spirit, the infinite’s abstract presence in the finite, the medium for God’s identification with creation and the principle for actualizing the divine will in and through the state. In addition, the Spirit’s *ad extra* act risked becoming a general process of God’s movement in history, and thus the divine freedom was arguably understood in terms of necessity, as remarkably shown by Hegel.⁷⁰ Although Barth resisted these pneumatological suggestions, he was not naïve enough to claim uncritically that we should return to the pre-modern milieu, or simply to ignore the modern discovery of the human spirit in terms of free and ethical subjectivity. In this sense, his pneumatology should be investigated in the light of his endeavour to rehabilitate a proper theology of *the Spirit of God* on the one hand, and to facilitate human freedom within the Spirit’s concrete work on the other.

As discussed above, shortly before his death in 1968, Barth speculated that his own previous approach to Schleiermacher had rather undermined the possibility of a theology of the Spirit.⁷¹ What is less well known is that he had been exploring such ideas since the Göttingen period. His lectures on Calvin (1922) and Schleiermacher (1923/1924), for example, demonstrate his attempt to rediscover a right relationship between the Word and the Spirit and its implications for the Christian life.⁷² Barth later mentioned that both Calvin and Schleiermacher showed him that Christian theology is not concerned with one single exclusive centre, but deals with the two, God and humanity, in their unity-in-difference.⁷³ These studies certainly allowed Barth to clarify

⁶⁹ *CD* I/2, 208.

⁷⁰ See Barth’s criticism of Hegel’s view of freedom in. *PT*, 206.

⁷¹ Barth, “Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher,” 278.

⁷² Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), 77–78, 158. Hereafter *TC*. See also *TS*, 13–48.

⁷³ *PT*, 444.

his trinitarian thinking and sharpen his idea on pneumatology before his first dogmatics cycle in 1924/1925, in which the Spirit is conceived as follows:

God himself is not one spirit among others, something spiritually finite, as he obviously would be if there were intermingling or marriage or even identification between him and our spirits.... God's relation to us is not accidental. It is necessarily contained and grounded in God's being. All that the Father does and the Son does, the Spirit does with them.... We have stressed again and again that the outward works are not divided, and here again, in the third article, this principle is important. The turning to us is not something subsequent, something episodic. God himself, the Creator and Redeemer, stands or falls with what takes place as the divine Yes to us in the outpouring and reception of the Holy Spirit in time.⁷⁴

Here one may see Barth's basic pneumatological assumptions. First, the Spirit can neither be identified with the human spirit in history, nor submerged under the Father or the Son within the Trinity. Second, although the Spirit is the distinctive divine identity, *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*. Third, the Spirit's act is inseparably linked to our capacity for experiencing God's gracious 'Yes' in history. Fourth, this work of the Spirit *pro nobis* is not accidental or supplementary, but the reality ontologically rooted in the Trinity's *ad intra* and *ad extra* operations. It follows that, for Barth, the Word and the Spirit are not exclusive of, antithetical to, or competitive with one another. Insofar as their mutual involvement and presupposition are properly addressed, a theology of the Holy Spirit is not only possible, but also as necessary as a theology of the Word. This tantalizing insight eventually resulted in Barth's deeply suggestive vision of the trinitarian nature of theology, as it appeared in his Münster lecture on nineteenth century Protestantism (1926).⁷⁵ In his critical appropriation of Schleiermacher, especially, Barth suggested:

⁷⁴ *GD*, 127-128.

⁷⁵ Webster highly praised this passage, because it can counter against criticisms, as mostly raised by social trinitarian thinkers, that Barth failed to do justice to the threeness of God. See John Webster, *Barth's Earlier Theology: Four Studies* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 115.

Trinitarian thinking compels theology... to be completely in earnest about the thought of God in at least two places: first, at the point where it is a question of God's action in regard to man, and, secondly, at the point where it is a question of man's action in regard to God.... *It cannot seek to have merely one center, one subject, just because its subject is God.* To the extent that it sought to resolve itself into a mere teaching of God's action in regard to man, into a pure teaching of the Word, it would become metaphysics. And to the extent that it sought to resolve itself into a teaching of man's action in regard to God, into a pure teaching of the Spirit, it would become mysticism. The one, however, would be just as little a pure teaching of the Word of God, as the other would be a pure teaching of the Spirit of God. *A pure teaching of the Word will take into the account of Holy Spirit as the divine reality in which the Word is heard, just as a pure teaching of the Spirit of the Son will take into account of the Word of God as the divine reality in which the Word is given to us.* It was with this thought in mind that the Reformers propagated the teaching of the Word in its correlation with faith as the work of the Holy Spirit in man.⁷⁶

Because what the Bible attests is a God who establishes, enters into and glorifies the relationship with humanity, the centre of theology cannot be pinpointed exclusively either on God or on humanity. Furthermore, because Christianity is not merely a kind of monotheism but trinitarian, the framework of theology should be comprehensible and flexible enough to witness God's speaking to us in the Word and our hearing of it in the Spirit alike. Accordingly, the work of the Spirit should not be surveyed in isolation from the Word, and vice versa. Just as a theology of the Word inevitably involves a place for pneumatology, so a theology of the Spirit is correlated with Christology. As Busch pointed out, what is presented here is the proper guideline of a theology of the Word and that of the Spirit alike,⁷⁷ but Barth eventually opted for the former in the light of the Reformers' emphasis upon the Word.⁷⁸

During his Münster lectures on Protestant theology, Barth claimed that the Reformers "powerfully confronted the Word of God with the human correlate of faith, even though this correlate had its basis entirely in the Word of God and was created and

⁷⁶ *PT*, 444-445 (emphasis added).

⁷⁷ Eberhard Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, ed. Darrell L. Guder and Judith J. Guder, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 220.

⁷⁸ See *TC*, 158; *PT*, 445; *CD II/2*, 252.

sustained by the Word of God.”⁷⁹ Their theology of the Word could do justice to the twofold centre of theology by keeping the distance between the objective revelation and the subjective appropriation of it. By contrast, although Schleiermacher made a sophisticated distinction between the Spirit and human consciousness, “The Word is not so assured here in its independence in respect to faith as should be the case if this theology of faith were a true theology of the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁰ In contrast with the criticisms often made of Barth later, here Barth is arguing that pneumatology, far from collapsing into a mere subjectivization of revelation or faith, actively preserves the necessary difference.⁸¹

The other crucial lesson Barth learned from the Reformers is the unity of faith and life, and dogmatics and ethics, although he acknowledged that, unlike Calvin, Luther hesitated to make the explicit link between them. In this respect, the Reformed tradition encouraged Barth to think that “by the Holy Spirit the work of God in Christ is the origin and goal of the Christian life.”⁸² Due to his strong reaction to Neo-Protestantism’s ethicization of theology, however, Barth wished to differentiate Calvin’s moralistic tendency from that of liberal theologians.⁸³ As Webster has rightly suggested, in Barth’s eyes, the eschatological character of Calvin’s theology was what prevented Calvin’s ethical concerns from overriding the priority of the Word.⁸⁴ In addition, I propose, Barth saw that Calvin’s pneumatology plays a key role in doing justice both to the centrality of the Word and to the importance of Christians’ moral

⁷⁹ *PT*, 457.

⁸⁰ *PT*, 457.

⁸¹ *CD* II/2, 252; *PT*, 457. This is a main reason Barth defended the Western *filioque* because of its clear conception of the third person of the Trinity as the Spirit of the Son.

⁸² *TC*, 77.

⁸³ See *TC*, 121-122, 386.

⁸⁴ John Webster, *Barth’s Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth’s Thought* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 33. About Barth’s reading of Calvin’s theology as eschatological, see *TC*, 154.

action. For Barth, Calvin always linked the Spirit with the Word, illustrating that the Spirit not only interprets the Word for human beings, but also enlightens them, and convinces them to live according to it.⁸⁵ Although the present reality is still not completely structured by the Word, the Spirit convinces us that “the truth of God is so certain for us that it is totally impossible that what his holy Word promises should not be fulfilled.”⁸⁶ Thus the Spirit’s work of eschatological redemption and the Spirit’s relationship to the Word intersect; the Spirit generates zeal for the fulfilment of God’s promise and brings hope into the Christian life. As I will discuss soon, this eschatologically coloured and pneumatologically oriented vision of the Christian life is a central motif in Barth’s doctrine of redemption.

Barth’s pneumatology is too complicated and extensive to be surveyed from a single perspective. Nevertheless, Barth’s writing on the Spirit proceeds from a conviction that the Spirit is properly divine, rather than from any liberal equation of the divine Spirit with the human spirit, and that leads us into constructing a pneumatology. In addition, for him, pneumatology’s fundamental relation to, and unique distinction from, Christology can be properly addressed only in the wider context of trinitarianism. In this respect, the next subsection will explore Barth’s vision of the Spirit’s redemption in relation to the Father’s creation and the Son’s reconciliation.

2.2. Being and Becoming God’s Child: The Spirit’s Eschatological Redemption

The deity of the Spirit is the nonnegotiable starting point of any decent pneumatology in Barth, but this does not explain what the role of this divine reality is. In light of the trinitarian formula *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*, Barth always treated the three

⁸⁵ TC, 158.

⁸⁶ TC, 277.

modes of being in the Godhead in their unity and warns that one should not develop an independent doctrine of the Spirit. At the same time, he also underlined the distinctiveness of the Spirit's redemption, which cannot be assimilated to Father's creation or the Son's reconciliation. The *Creator Spiritus* brings about a new form of God-human relationship by creating human freedom for God. Barth wrote "the fact that there are Christians, men who have this freedom, is no lesser miracle than the birth of Jesus Christ of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, or than the creation of the world out of nothing."⁸⁷

Against Barth's vision of the Spirit's redemption, however, one may question how Jesus Christ's reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) can be differentiated from the Spirit's redemption (*Erlösung*), because the term redemption has been mainly attributed to Christ's salvific work since Paul.⁸⁸ While working on the doctrine of reconciliation, Barth seemed to acknowledge the limit of the term redemption.⁸⁹ In the mid 1950s, for example, he explained it to his students as follows: "Our situation as reconciled men is like that of a man in prison who has received the good news that he is free. The door is open, but he has not yet gone out of prison. Perhaps the word '*Vollendung*' (consummation) would have been better than '*Erlösung*' (redemption). We now have

⁸⁷ Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: SCM, 1949), 139. Hereafter *DO*.

⁸⁸ See, for example, Ephesians 1:1-3:29. About the Christian understanding of Christ's redemption and its pneumatological implication, see Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 97-110.

⁸⁹ In this respect, Biggar proposed in his critical evaluation of Barth's ethics that "I prefer to call the final act 'sanctification,' since that title expresses the nature of the act, namely, the growing of spiritually fitting and morally virtuous character on the basis of God's gracious offer of forgiveness-as-compassion and of its penitent acceptance by sinners. By contrast, 'redemption': etymologically connotes a moment - the payment of ransom - rather than a development." I fundamentally agree with Biggar that Barth's vision of the Spirit's act can be more appropriately understood in terms of process and perfection. Nevertheless, I hesitate to accept Biggar's suggestion because Barth utilized the latter in concrete relation to the elevation of humanity caused by Jesus Christ's reconciliation. In this respect, for Barth, the 'redemptive' work of the Spirit is more comprehensive and inclusive than sanctification. See Biggar, "Barth's Ethics Revisited," 32.

freedom, but we are not in it!”⁹⁰ Barth could not explore this vision of redemption in detail as a separate topic in his magisterial *CD*, so his doctrine of redemption remains incomplete.

Barth’s earlier work, nevertheless, offers us valid hints as to what his mature doctrine of redemption would look like. Indeed, his initial engagement with dogmatic theology in Göttingen (1921-1925) allowed him to develop his own trinitarian structure of theology, and his Münster theology (1925-1930) utilized this triadic form of the creator Father, the reconciler Son and the redeemer Spirit in a more extensive and creative manner. In particular, we may find key pneumatological motifs in his Münster writings, including “Church and Culture (1926),” *Prolegomena to Christian Dogmatics* (1927), *The Ethics* (1928/1929), and *The Holy Ghost and the Christian Life* (1929). Barth carried over these themes as he constructed, albeit fragmentarily, his mature vision of redemption.

The main content of the doctrine of redemption, for Barth, is “the eschatological reality of man.”⁹¹ It is to explore the God-human relation from the perspective of God’s perfection of creation and reconciliation. Despite his severe criticism of liberal theology’s near equation of the divine Spirit with human consciousness, Barth argued nevertheless that redemption surprisingly discloses “His true continuity with the human spirit.”⁹² This statement certainly presupposes a unique ontological dimension of humanity, whose structure is radically open to the interruption of God’s coming.⁹³ This eschatological reality is not still yet our own, but we can taste it and wait in hope for

⁹⁰ Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, 53.

⁹¹ Karl Barth, *Ethics*, ed. Dietrich Braun, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 461. Hereafter, *Ethics*.

⁹² *HC*, 72.

⁹³ *HC*, 72; *Ethics*, 464-465.

God's completion of redemption. In this respect, Barth called the Redeemer the Spirit of *Promise*. He wrote:

How should it be otherwise? In the fact that His Word has been spoken, spoken in the Incarnation and the Resurrection of His dear Son, God creates fellowship between Himself and us; such fellowship as exists between a father and his child. Revelation of God would not be revelation if it should not give us a share in God's own nature, however that be understood. With the words, Creation, Reconciliation, this, as yet, has not been said as it is. In those words we are, as yet, not the children of God. We are told that we are His creatures, but in those words we are not told that His grace is victorious over our sins. But God cannot be revealed as our Creator and Reconciliator, unless, at the same time, we are thereby named as being His children, whom he begets as His children, and is thus our redeemer.⁹⁴

This quote shows that the twofold content of redemption is our transition from creatures and sinners into God's beloved children and our future destiny as a partaker of the divine glory. These two are not separate because they mirror from different perspectives the Spirit's redemptive act of perfecting humanity. Although the true meaning of creation and reconciliation is still veiled to human beings, the Spirit unveils in the penultimate our becoming God's children and inheriting the divine glory. Barth argued, "Redemption is creation, but without the possibility of sin and death. Thus far, it is more than creation. Redemption is also more than reconciliation.... Redemption is reconciliation without qualification, without the 'not yet' which we must here and now combine with the 'in Christ,' to indicate faith and sacrament."⁹⁵ Accordingly, redemption is not only the goal of humanity but also the *telos* of creation and reconciliation.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ *HC*, 76.

⁹⁵ Karl Barth, "Church and Culture," in *Theology and Church: Shorter Writings, 1920-1928*, trans. L. P. Smith (London: SCM, 1962), 348.

⁹⁶ Barth's *Ethics* maintains that the ultimate goal of his theology is not limited to creation or reconciliation; rather, his thought culminates in God's redemption and humanity's eschatologically oriented life. *Ethics*, 403, 466.

Barth further explores the Spirit's redemption by turning his attention to the way in which this future reality structures our present existence and is experienced in everyday life. This is the future which is given to and present with us *as* the promise of the Spirit. This reality *as* God's children is its presence not *in* the future but *as* the future.⁹⁷ It means that our relationship with the divine futurity is only indirect, although it is real.⁹⁸ This dialectical motif, in fact, allows us to encounter "finality and futurity from the Beyond of our existence,"⁹⁹ and thus to look "beyond the present, also beyond the dialectical paradox of 'always sinner and always righteous,' to the coming kingdom of His father."¹⁰⁰ Insofar as we live in this penultimate world, the veil is still drawn between the present reality and the promised future.¹⁰¹ This means, for Barth, our redemption is not "a quantitative or qualitative extension or development of human beings..., or a new anthropology which directly follows it."¹⁰² Nevertheless, it can never cancel the fact that *the Spirit of the Promise* touches our reality, transforming us as God's children and drawing the present into the very future of God. The Spirit's redemption, thus, surpasses the mere distinction between being and becoming. It discloses that the structure of our present being is fundamentally in the process of becoming by God's redemptive grace. If my reading is right, this interaction between being and becoming within the broader framework of God's salvific act towards the creature is the place where possibility of newness within our daily existence arises.

⁹⁷ *Ethics*, 465.

⁹⁸ *HC*, 73-74; *Ethics*, 464, 466.

⁹⁹ *HC*, 73.

¹⁰⁰ *HC*, 81.

¹⁰¹ *HC*, 77.

¹⁰² Karl Barth, *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf, 1. Band: Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes, Prolegomena zur christlichen Dogmatik*, 1927 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1982), 276 (my translation). Hereafter *ChD*.

Barth's eschatological doctrine of redemption results in the vision of the Christian life as acting-with-the-Spirit. This life has been originally created by the Father and given to us in the Word who is "the divine womb, in which we are conceived, gestated, grow, brought forth in birth."¹⁰³ In the Spirit, we are free to respond and live in accordance with the Word, thereby participating the reality which is not our own. God's constant coming to us in this redemptive manner is the basis for our openness to the future. In this respect, the Christian life as act-with-the-Spirit is fundamentally forward looking. In a similar manner to Moltmann or Pannenberg's eschatology, claimed Barth, "How can we seriously present what God wants of us without recalling what God finally wants *with* us? Is what he wants of us not really affected and co-determined by this...? We are still forced to admit that something is left out, something future."¹⁰⁴ Historical contingencies with which we live are provisional, ambiguous, entangled and even in opposition to the divine promise, but God's future will make sense of them in the end. Furthermore, God's coming to us reveals here and now their deeper and newer meaning, albeit fragmentarily. Accordingly, we should not only continuously reflect on and revise their meaning during the course of history, but also look beyond "the inescapable dialectic of everything that belongs to the temporal order."¹⁰⁵

Barth's proposal for this radical openness results in two distinctive natures of the Christian life. First, the Christian life as human beings' actual living in the Spirit is defined in terms of hope.¹⁰⁶ Fulfilling the divine promise is God's exclusive and inclusive act alike. Exclusive, because God's future does not presuppose human co-operation to actualize it. Inclusive, in the sense that God's coming to us always invokes

¹⁰³ *HC*, 75, n.1.

¹⁰⁴ *Ethics*, 462.

¹⁰⁵ *HC*, 78.

¹⁰⁶ *Ethics*, 512; *HC*, 80; "Church and Culture," 354.

our corollary participatory conduct. Christians confront the present reality and live in secular society with this unique hope for *Maranatha* and *Immanuel*. In this light, the Christian life is characterized by our *waiting* for God's redemption and *hastening* towards it in the Spirit.

Second, since our existence is vulnerable, enigmatic and implicated, the Spirit endows us with the *gift of release and relaxation* in order to live in this world without utter seriousness, despair or illusion. For Barth, the Spirit's redemption (*Erlösung*) involves loosening (*Lösung*), but the latter does not guarantee the former.¹⁰⁷ Loosening is a critical concept for the Christian life or "in growing up to be the child of God that I am,"¹⁰⁸ because it enables us to deal with varied happenings in everyday life joyfully and voluntarily. A person can be truly free when his/her thinking and acting are not forced by the other but arise from himself/herself. For Barth, this basic assumption of autonomy is also a proper way to establish the relation between God's command and human freedom, but it needs a theological reinterpretation. God's command encourages Christians to live and work on behalf of the good, but the Spirit allows it not by force but by loosening. As a result, they can be faithful and obedient to God's command gladly, willingly, actively and thankfully. In this spiritually relaxed mode, thus, free and responsible ethical agency can be constituted in its truest sense. Therefore, claimed Barth, "the process of grateful action [is] a *liberated* action."¹⁰⁹ Thanks to the Spirit-given ability of loosening, we are liberated from the *either-or* fallacy between heteronomy and autonomy.

¹⁰⁷ *Ethics*, 502.

¹⁰⁸ *Ethics*, 503; "Church and Culture," 349.

¹⁰⁹ *Ethics*, 501.

Excursus: What Does the Doctrine of Redemption Look Like in Barth's Mature Theology?

During the Münster period, as discussed above, Barth undoubtedly offers a deeply suggestive and tantalizing view of redemption in relation to the Spirit's eschatological act. By bringing eschatological hope right into the heart of Christian life, as Biggar aptly described, "[W]e do not despise the fragments of secular achievement, and yet we do not rest easy with them. In a nutshell: we wait upon God, but within our waiting we hasten."¹¹⁰ The remaining issue which needs to be discussed is whether Barth maintained these basic ideas on redemption throughout his theological career and whether he might have been able to develop them further in *CD V*.

As it is, we can only speculate about this latter possibility. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to find that the Father-children relationship is utilized throughout his work as an enduring key pneumatological theme with some modifications and different emphases.¹¹¹ What is further clarified by the mature Barth is the mutual relationship between Father, Son and Spirit in an analogous way to the *Filioque*. For example, his short dogmatics lectures at Bonn (1946) show that "God is God in such a way that He is the Father, the Father of His Son.... Man as such is not God's child, but God's creature... It is God's free work, His condescension and mercy, that we may be His children... *We are children in His Son and through the Holy Spirit.*"¹¹² What Barth showed here is that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Son, through whom human beings can participate in the Son and inherit the Son's glory. By being drawn by the Spirit into this trinitarian relation, they can become the Father's adopted children. This christologically clarified statement on redemption keeps occurring and intensifies in

¹¹⁰ Biggar, "Karl Barth's Ethics Revisited," 46.

¹¹¹ For examples, *CD I/1*, 457; *CD I/2*, 203; *CD II/1*, 158; *CD II/2*, 592-593; *CD III/4*, 25.

¹¹² *DO*, 44-45.

Barth's later work with the help of his renewed analogical thinking. The relation between God and the human Jesus is analogous to the relation between the human Jesus and human beings. Through the *perichoretic* life of the Trinity and its *ad extra* overflowing, Jesus' sonship is analogically extended into human sonship.¹¹³ This theme especially culminates in his lecture fragments on the ethics of reconciliation (*CL*), which arguably reflects the most mature stage of his thought.¹¹⁴

Concerning the issue of how the doctrine of redemption would constitute the last volume of *CD* (V), we perhaps need to say more than what Barth actually did. Some scholars have explored this possibility, while advising us not to expect too much from this constructive imagination and not to overlook the critical distance between his earlier and his more mature theology. For example, McCormack and Webster not only impressively discovered continuity between Barth's Münster writing and mature ones, but also emphasized the importance of his earlier view of redemption as hinting towards its later development.¹¹⁵

It is Biggar's book *Hastening That Waits* which treats the doctrine of redemption with more explicit constructive intention. He carefully compared the leading themes of the Münster lecture with those of Barth's ethics within *CD*. As a result, he could broadly outline the fragmentary ethics of reconciliation and the uncommenced ethics of redemption. Of particular significance is his comparison between the Münster ethics and the ethics of reconciliation (*CL*).¹¹⁶ For Biggar, both lectures centre on "the

¹¹³ In this respect, Oh claimed that the theme of redemption plays a crucial role in shaping the ontological dimension of redemption. See Oh, *Karl Barth's Trinitarian Theology*, 58–61.

¹¹⁴ *CD* IV/4, 76–77; *CL*, 51–52.

¹¹⁵ Bruce L. McCormack, "Review of Karl Barth's *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life*," in *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008), 310; Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology*, 57.

¹¹⁶ It should be clarified that *CL* refers in my discussion to *The Christian Life* which was published posthumously as Part 4 of the ethics of reconciliation. *CD* IV/4 means Barth's lecture fragments on baptism published one year before his death.

relationship of human beings to God as children to their Father; and the character of obedient action as a restless waiting for, and subversive hastening towards God's future."¹¹⁷ He also pointed out the subtle but crucial difference: whereas the theme of God's child was discussed under the rubric of redemption in the earlier lecture, it was explored as part of the ethics of reconciliation in the later lecture (§76 The Children and Their Father).¹¹⁸ He suspected that this transference resulted in, and/or came from, Barth's renewed stress on the *presence* of the future, while the futurity of God (and humanity as future heir of eternal life) was perhaps reserved for the final volume of *CD* (V). Nevertheless, Biggar rightly underlined that it is the realm of 'guess' to decide whether and why Barth made this "last-minute decision."¹¹⁹

What I suggest, as a compliment to Biggar's view, is that Barth's slow progress in the ethics of reconciliation and hesitation to embark on the redemption part of *CD* probably persuaded him to incorporate the *telos* of creation and redemption – the eschatological fulfilment of the Father-child relation – into his final lectures (*CL*).¹²⁰ In addition, his intensive and lengthy pneumatologies throughout the doctrine of reconciliation (*CD* IV/1-3) may suggest a robust relation and interaction between Jesus' reconciliation and the Spirit's redemption. Finally, and more importantly, his serious study on 'baptism with the Holy Spirit as the foundation of the Christian life' (*CD* IV/4)

¹¹⁷ Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits*, 85.

¹¹⁸ According to Biggar, Barth still conceived of humanity as the pardoned sinner in relation to God's reconciliation in his ethics of creation published in 1951 (*CD* III/4, 25-26). Barth's 1959/1960 ethics of reconciliation, however, identifies humanity as God's child (*CL*, 6-7). See Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits*, 85.

¹¹⁹ Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits*, 87.

¹²⁰ About Barth's uncommenced *CD* V and unfinished *CD* IV/4, see Barth, *How I Changed My Mind*, 86; Busch, *Karl Barth*, 443–445; Eberhard Jüngel and Hans-Anton Drewes, "Preface," in *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV,4. Lecture Fragments*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1981), ix–xv.

resulted in the radical re-evaluation of his idea of reconciliation and ethics alike.¹²¹ In fact, Barth delivered the initial lecture on the ethics of reconciliation in the 1959/1960 winter semester. However, he thoroughly revised materials while and after giving the lecture on baptism (*CD IV/4*) in the 1960 summer semester. Consequently, the Lord's Prayer was presented as a basic structure through which the Christian life is surveyed, and the invocation of the Father had become the heart of this new version (*CL*). As the editors of the *Christian Life* aptly captured, Barth's self-corrections "[brought] out more sharply the eschatological orientation of the doctrine of reconciliation than do the corresponding discussion in IV/3"¹²² in which his most extensive doctrine of eschatology was presented under the rubric of hope.

In this respect, I propose, Barth's treatment of the Father-child relationship within the ethics of reconciliation is still deeply eschatological and pneumatological. Thus, it vividly illustrates the Spirit's redemptive act. This allows me to tentatively assume that Barth tried to juxtapose reconciliation and redemption, within the wider context of our participation in the very life of the Trinity, in his last years. Thus, he incorporated the redemptive motif into the ethics of reconciliation without diluting the difference between them, but with an integrative intention; not based on clear logical thinking, but through painstaking re-reading of the biblical vision of salvation; not with a mathematically well-divided trinitarian framework, but with the zeal of facilitating the Christian life. Barth's final vision of redemption would perhaps have more emphasis

¹²¹ The impact of this self-correction is even compared to Barth's complete revision of his commentary on Romans or his replacement of *Prolegomena to Christian Dogmatics* with *Church Dogmatics*. See Jüngel and Drewes, "Preface," x.

¹²² Jüngel and Drewes, "Preface," xi.

upon the future manifestation of eternal life,¹²³ but it would not necessarily exclude profound reflections upon the theme of God's child within this eschatological structure.

In short, Barth himself noted one year before his death that, instead of waiting for a new book on eschatology, his ideas of redemption "may be gathered indirectly, and sometimes directly, from the earlier volumes."¹²⁴ This subsection was an attempt to look at Barth's eschatological work of the redeemer Spirit by consulting Barth's earlier work, as suggested by Barth himself. To further explore the issue of how he could intensify the tone of eschatology and re-establish the relation of God's future with the present life is beyond my speculation, capacity and reconstructive passion. Instead, I will turn to the next section where the deeper structure of redemption is surveyed with special attention to Barth's exegesis of his favourite biblical pneumatology.

2. 3. *Veni Creator Spiritus*: Pneumatic Prayer as the Heart of Redemption

At least after his break with liberalism, Barth intended to offer a thoroughly eschatological theology. God's redemptive act in the Spirit, in this sense, may be better understood not as a self-standing doctrine, but as an enduring key leitmotif which determines the overall nature of his theology. This subsection will especially survey the way in which Barth's discovery of the 'sigh' in Romans 8 plays a crucial role in making sense of his eschatological view of the Spirit's redemptive act. I will utilize the term 'pneumatic prayer' to grasp in a more comprehensive way the complexity and richness of his argument concerning the Spirit's groaning and prayer for human pray-ers.

¹²³ Busch in his biography of Barth offered a very brief sketch of Barth's uncommenced doctrine of last things, and Busch's reconstruction has much in common with what I have argued in this chapter. See Busch, *Barth*, 488.

¹²⁴ *CD IV/4*, 7.

Barth's reflection upon the Pauline 'sighs' had differentiated him from 19th century bourgeois spirituality since his earlier writing. In 1922, for example, Barth was asked to explain his theology to a group of ministers as his reputation began to grow after the publication of *Romans* I. He first hesitated to do so, perhaps because it risked offering one single abstract principle, but he eventually captured the thrust of his thought into one word – 'sigh.' He claimed that "According to Romans 8, there is more hope when one sighs *Veni Creator Spiritus*, than when he exults as if the spirit were already his. You have been introduced to my theology when you heard this sigh."¹²⁵ In this Pauline text, interestingly, the human sigh as being uttered in the form of prayer is grasped and upheld by God in the Spirit's own groaning and prayer. This praying divine agency is revealed as the Spirit of sonship, who transforms the inept human pray-er into God's child. This link between sigh and invocation, prayer and participation, appears throughout his work,¹²⁶ and its influence upon his thinking seems only to have increased in importance as his vision of redemption had become sharper and more concrete.¹²⁷

For Barth, the Spirit's redemptive act results in and responds to human prayer alike. In this respect, what Scripture attests is that the Spirit is a "spirit of real prayer."¹²⁸ Barth even associated the Spirit of prayer with the prayer *Veni Creator Spiritus*, which circumscribes all human prayers into the Spirit's act *pro nobis*.¹²⁹ This integrative power of invocation is remarkably demonstrated in the creaturely realm by the human pray-er's sigh, a humble expression of one's inability to speak to God.

¹²⁵ Karl Barth, "The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching," in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (New York: Harper, 1978), 134.

¹²⁶ Despite his careful distinction of the four developmental stages of Barth's theology, McCormack claimed that the theme of the sigh endured until Barth concluded his teaching career. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 32.

¹²⁷ See, for example, the mature Barth's invocation of the *Creator Spiritus* and quotation of Romans 8 in *CD* IV/4, 76-77; *ET*, 58; *CL*, 51-52.

¹²⁸ Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen, *God's Search for Man: Sermons*, trans. George W. Richards, Karl J. Ernst and Elmer G. Homrighausen (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1935), 137.

¹²⁹ *Ethics*, 478.

However, this human sigh does not exhaust the mystery of prayer; rather, for Barth, “The wonder of prayer- and this is a thing quite different from the ‘infused grace’ of ability to pray aright – is the incoming of the Holy Ghost to the help of man who is praying. It is His sighing, which, to be sure, is in our mouth.”¹³⁰ The Spirit’s groaning and prayer in and through our sigh allows us to truly converse with God. This sigh also colours the life of a praying person with an eschatological tone. Barth claimed “If there were no God and if the heavenly habitation were not awaiting us, there would be no cause for groaning. But God has begun to trouble us with an anxious restlessness. He is the cause of our groaning; and therefore we must groan.”¹³¹ Barth’s reflection upon ‘sigh’ may well explain what McDowell named as the “ontology of prayer”¹³² in the sense that a new structure of our existence and relation to God is miraculously established by God’s taking of our weakness and ineptness as the Spirit’s own groaning.

It is widely assumed, however, that Barth had an ambiguous attitude towards prayer. Those who are familiar with Barth’s attack on religion would be able to bring numerous examples of his negative view of prayer. Barth did indeed claim that prayer is our futile attempt to reach God and thus our rebellion toward the God of grace.¹³³ Nevertheless, what he learned from the Bible is that God commands God’s people to pray and the Spirit’s redemptive act involves human responsive act of prayer. To resolve these contradictions, he concluded that “[I]n the Holy Ghost prayer is made.... [I]t must be said that it can only be made intelligible *from the point of view of*

¹³⁰ HC, 85.

¹³¹ Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen, *Come Holy Spirit: Sermons*, trans. George W. Richards, Karl J. Ernst and Elmer G. Homrighausen (London: Mowbrays, 1978), 275.

¹³² John C. McDowell, “‘Openness to the World’: Karl Barth’s Evangelical Theology of Christ as the Prayer-er,” *Modern Theology* 25, no. 2 (2009): 263.

¹³³ For example, Barth wrote “If prayer – and prayer particularly – be thought of as a tangible experience and glorified as such, the objection is justified which Feuerbach brought against all religion.” *Romans II*, 316.

eschatology.... The child of God can speak with God, his Father, and he does so speak.”¹³⁴ In other words, Barth obviously rejected prayer as purely human piety, but rooted its ‘impossible possibility’ in the Spirit’s eschatological adoption of the pray-er as God’s own child. In particular, he took the Spirit of sonship in Romans 8 as an integrative theme in which other pneumatological motifs in the New Testament gather and culminate.¹³⁵

What is most striking is that Barth laid the basic structure for his eschatological and prayerful dimension of pneumatology as early as in his *Romans* II, which is filled with his dispute with human piety. His groundbreaking *Romans* I, in which the distinction between history in Adam and history in Christ is clearly made,¹³⁶ also considered the prayer of sigh very seriously. Thus, he defined the human situation in terms of ‘waiting’ in the face of the contrast between God and the world, and between the divine promise and the imperfection of creation.¹³⁷ Hope, nevertheless, can arise from the Spirit’s ‘deep and unbroken’ sigh, and through this hope we are rescued and will be rescued.¹³⁸ Barth wrote, “God understands our sigh better than we do because He hears and understands the language of his Spirit.... Through the [objective] Spirit,

¹³⁴ *HC*, 84 (emphasis added).

¹³⁵ See *ChD*, 272-273.

¹³⁶ Because of this distinction, Barth has often been accused of being a dualist. In his response to Jülicher, however, he did not seem to be ashamed of being called as a dualist insofar as he could advocate God’s objective act over against the subjective consciousness of humanity. Nevertheless, I propose, Barth’s vision is more complex than Jülicher’s appropriation of him, because for Barth God’s eschatological act would eventually overcome this distinction. See also Lowe’s presentation of Barth’s critique of dualism (but, this article mainly consults with *Romans* II). Adolf Jülicher, “A Modern Interpretation of Paul,” in *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968); Karl Barth, “‘The Holy Egoism of the Christian:’ An Answer to Jülicher’s Essay: ‘A Modern Interpreter of Paul,’” in *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*; Walter James Lowe, “Barth as Critic of Dualism: Re-reading the Römerbrief,,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 41 (1988): 377-95.

¹³⁷ In this respect, in my view, Brunner’s comment that pneumatology is central in Barth’s *Romans* I is highly insightful. See Emil Brunner, “The Epistle to the Romans by Karl Barth: An Up-to-Date, Unmodern Paraphrase,” in *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, ed. James M. Robinson, trans. Keith R. Crim and Louis De Grazia (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968), 66.

¹³⁸ *Romans* I, 339-341.

we do speak with God, and we do not speak; rather the Spirit speaks for us.”¹³⁹

However, this redemptive sigh is placed within the cosmic movement of God’s restoration of the original ideal of creation. Despite the attack on the 19th-century’s naïve evolutionary view, the motif of organic growth within his dynamic eschatology is still too philosophical and speculative to be able to incorporate an account of prayer’s redemptive importance. The priority of grace, the objectivity of the Spirit’s act, the language of breakthrough and the dispute with liberalism may hint at how his theology would look like after this revolutionary work. However, his doctrine of the Spirit developed differently from, borrowing von Balthasar’s words, *Romans I*’s theological Hegelianism as overshadowed by Origen’s brand of Platonism and Barth’s unique accents of socialism.¹⁴⁰ It is Barth’s *Romans II* that impressively connects his renewed views of the Spirit and of prayer within the wider context of eschatological redemption.

Barth’s *Romans II* conceived of the God-human relation in terms of the “infinite qualitative difference”¹⁴¹ and thus any kind of human pious act seems to be rejected in an *a priori* manner.¹⁴² However, the wide gap between God and humanity, in fact, functions as the fruitful soil for producing a promising pneumatology and a theology of prayer.¹⁴³ For this, Barth had to deny a conventional understanding of prayer by reflecting upon it from a totally different perspective. Because of human beings’ inability to pray, Barth first surveyed prayer within the context of the salvific act of the Trinity and then expanded his reflection into the human level. It means that

¹³⁹ *Romans I*, 340 (my translation).

¹⁴⁰ von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 67.

¹⁴¹ *Romans II*, 10.

¹⁴² In this respect, von Balthasar critiqued that the Barth’s *Romans II* is super-Christian and thus unchristian. See von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 71.

¹⁴³ This interpretation is in some sense similar to Jenson’s defense of the qualitative difference between God and creation as a proper setting for a robust God-human relationship. See Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology, Vol 1* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 170.

the triune God not only passively hears prayer, but also actively creates its conditions and possibility by becoming the *primary praying agency*. In other words, men and women cannot pray on their own, but the Trinity transforms them into true but as yet secondary praying agency. Here prayer, as human piety, is totally negated and yet restored on the basis of God's own prayer.

It follows that prayer is genuinely possible when human beings sigh as acknowledging their inability and dependence.¹⁴⁴ As Barth suggested in his later interpretation of Romans, the existential struggle of humanity in Romans 7 is an indispensable background for us to conceive of the Spirit's work in Romans 8.¹⁴⁵ The dynamic of Romans 7 and 8, namely, postulates the importance of the act of human pray-ers and the necessity of the Spirit's gift alike. Especially, what is essentially required for them is the *audacity* to shout to the incomprehensible addressee. Barth wrote, "I must still cry unto Him who confronts me only as unknown and undiscoverable, as the enemy who has vanquished me, and as the judge who has sentenced me to death – but nevertheless, crying to Him, *Abba Father*."¹⁴⁶ When human beings idly prattle in their prayer, the Spirit intercedes with *Abba Father* for them, with sighs too deep for words (Rom 8:26). If the groaning of creatures is the expression of a creature's futile eagerness for God's redemption (Rom 8:22-23), the Spirit's groaning, through which the Spirit makes the intercession, must nevertheless be "songs of praise."¹⁴⁷ By becoming the praying agency within the Trinity, the Spirit endows men and women with the possibility of prayer; with the Spirit's gift human beings can pray truly to God by being drawn into the intra-divine prayer.

¹⁴⁴ *Romans* II, 295.

¹⁴⁵ *CD* I/1, 466

¹⁴⁶ *Romans* II, 297-298

¹⁴⁷ *Romans* II, 317.

Here Barth impressively illustrated that prayer takes place not only in the God-human relationship but also in the intra-divine relationship. It may appear that the former logically precedes the latter, but the possibility and legitimacy of the former depends upon the latter. Let me quote Barth's view of the 'justification of prayer' in his commentary on Romans 8:26-27:

The justification of our prayer is not that we have attained some higher eminence on the ladder of prayer; for all ladders of prayer are erected within the sphere of the 'No-God' of this world. The justification of our prayer and the reality of our communion with God are grounded upon the truth that Another, the Eternal, the Second Man from Heaven (I Cor. xv. 47), stands before God pre-eminent in power and – in our place.¹⁴⁸

This text shows a dialectical motif of God's rejection and restoration of prayer, and the dynamic is obviously eschatological. When prayer is justified by God, more surprisingly, it is lifted up to and equated with "the *reality* of our communion with God." Although Barth at this stage did not clearly distinguish the Spirit's work from that of the Son,¹⁴⁹ the justification of prayer constitutes his doctrine of redemption, according to which the Father-child relation is created and given to us by the Spirit in prayer. Here one may see that Barth's seminal doctrine of participation, which later constitutes the heart of his doctrine of salvation, begins to ripen.¹⁵⁰ This view not only leads us to pay more attention to the continuity between the early Barth and the mature Barth, but also invites us to reevaluate the originality of his thought.

¹⁴⁸ *Romans* II, 317.

¹⁴⁹ For example, the young Barth not only invoked the Son as the redeemer, but also called the God of the Bible as creator and redeemer. See, for example, *Romans* II, 69, 114, 156; *GD*, 127-128. In my view, the young Barth adopted the language and logic of Paul's letter, and this caused ambiguity in his discussion.

¹⁵⁰ About the mature Barth's doctrine of participation, see Colin E. Gunton, "Salvation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John B. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Bruce L. McCormack, "Participation in God, Yes; Deification, No: Two Modern Protestant Responses to an Ancient Question," in *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008).

Paul's pneumatology in Romans 8 strongly animated Barth to bring 'pneumatic prayer' into the core of his doctrine of redemption. As a result, Barth could claim that, despite human ineptness and inability, "prayer is not only possible, but necessary."¹⁵¹ This is a strongly theo-centric vision of prayer. In his early theology, thus, Barth did not talk very much about the human side of prayer, although there is enough room for developing the theme of correspondence/analogy in it. Nevertheless, prayer plays a vital role in shaping human agency in light of God's salvific act. In the Münster ethics, for example, Barth wrote:

Prayer, as talking with God..., can be understood only if we humans are more than God's creatures and more than sinners saved by grace. Prayer is the actualization of our eschatological reality that is possible here and now.... [A]s one who prays... I stand in the overarching relation of a child of God as its Father. Perhaps all that needs to be said about our claiming by God from this third standpoint may best be understood if it is seen in the light of prayer.¹⁵²

This eschatological justification of prayer, so crucial to making sense of Barth's vision of redemption, serves as the basis for developing his idea on prayer at least in two directions. First, Barth's trinitarian thinking filled this eschatological structure with the theme of prayer as a human act. Two examples may help to clarify how he reflected upon this issue both christologically and pneumatologically. According to him, the desperate cry of the human pray-er is analogous to Jesus Christ's anxious call to the Father in Gethsemane,¹⁵³ because both Jesus and Christians invoke the Father in their extreme experience of God's absence.¹⁵⁴ Thanks to the Spirit's mediatory role, however,

¹⁵¹ *ChD*, 379.

¹⁵² *Ethics*, 472-473.

¹⁵³ *CD I/1*, 458.

¹⁵⁴ It should be noted that there are subtle differences between Barth's doctrine of the Father in *CD I/1* (1932) and his later understanding since *CD II/2* (1942). The mature Barth called his earlier view "the Lord of our existence" which reflects the remnants of his existentialist thought. In contrast, the mature Barth suggested that the grace of the Father is not "the cold notion of fatherhood but the warm love." See Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, 52; *CL*, 58.

they can now call upon ‘Abba,’ whom Jesus introduced to his disciples in the Lord’s Prayer,¹⁵⁵ and enter into the Father-child relationship. In addition to this, Barth’s later interpretation of Romans 8 utilized the metaphor of circular movement to explain the Spirit’s sanctifying act. In the Spirit’s movement from above to below, pneumatic prayer purifies and cleanses human prayer motivated by anxiety, desire, cupidity and passion. In the upward movement, then, the Spirit takes human prayer into the fellowship of the Trinity.¹⁵⁶ Thus, pneumatic prayer is the basis for examining an analogy between Jesus’ prayer and other men and women’s prayer.

Second, Barth could speak of the unity of God and humanity in a positive sense in the light of prayer, and thus prayer is regarded as the foundation for the Christian life. Barth was still sceptical towards any notion of cooperation when treating the doctrine of salvation. However, he found this notion can be very important when talking about ethical issues from a theological perspective. As demonstrated by Jesus in Gethsemane, for example, unity with God’s will is possible for God’s children in their prayerful attentiveness and seeking.¹⁵⁷ The term cooperation, thus, can be adopted to describe our participation in God’s act, when the primacy is properly given to God, and prayer constitutes the *Sitz im Leben* of this collaboration.¹⁵⁸

In short, Barth himself showed that the Spirit’s intercession constitutes the crux of a biblical understanding of redemption and intended to construct his Spirit theology based on this perspective. This pneumatological proposal deeply enriches and widens the meaning of salvation, pointing *beyond* the conventional reading of justification by

¹⁵⁵ *Prayer*, 25.

¹⁵⁶ *CD III* /4, 100.

¹⁵⁷ *Ethics*, 513.

¹⁵⁸ *Prayer*, 30.

faith alone *to* the way of incorporation into God.¹⁵⁹ In addition to this, Barth's exegesis of Romans 8 offers some critical underpinning for pneumatological motifs of his theology – human participation in God, the mediation between God and humanity in the form of the heavenly intercession, the Spirit's shaping of human agency and prayer as the basis for Christian ethics and others. The following chapters will explore how Barth utilized these pneumatological themes in other theological contexts. Before tackling these other doctrines, the next subsection will briefly survey how 'pneumatic prayer' invokes, sustains and perfects human prayer.

3. From Pneumatic Prayer to Prayerful Pneumatology: The Birth of Praying Agency

Following my investigation of the Spirit's prayer, this section will survey what I named as 'prayerful pneumatology.' Since it is impossible to study thoroughly Barth's extensive materials on prayer in this section, I will selectively focus on three main issues. First, I will briefly summarize how prayer was conceived within the 19th-century post-Kantian trajectory against which Barth developed his own view. I will then turn to Barth's explanation of Christ as *the* pray-er and his relation to the Spirit, which will complement the previous section's pneumatocentric argument. Finally, I will examine why and to what extent petition was regarded as a true prayer by Barth. These investigations will offer crucial insights into the way in which the Spirit shapes men and

¹⁵⁹ It is noteworthy that some recent scholars demonstrate that the notion of participation is more comprehensive and primary than justification in Paul. At least since Schweitzer, the centrality of participation in Paul's theology has been suggested, but it is the New Perspective on Paul that has made popular a question as to whether Paul's soteriology can be properly understood in terms of justification. See Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. William Montgomery (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1931); E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977); Stanley Stowers, "What is Pauline Participation in Christ?," in *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays in Honor of Ed Parish Sanders*, ed. Fabian E. Udoh et al. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

women as praying agents by calling them to live in this world in accordance with the Word.

3.1. Prayer in Kant and Schleiermacher: The Internalization of the Prayer

Experience

As Barth's discussion with Hermann on his doctoral projects in 1910 illustrated, Barth had enormous interest in the far-reaching influence of Kant's philosophy on Protestantism in general and its appropriation by Schleiermacher in particular. In my eyes, Barth's view of the necessity, possibility and promise of prayer was also shaped in relation to his critical response to post-Kantian religious thought. In fact, he mostly engaged with Schleiermacher's doctrine of prayer, rather than that of Kant, but it is important to first explore Kant in order to properly understand both Schleiermacher's and Barth's stance.

Kant on Prayer: Either Fetish-Making or Moral Disposition

It is commonly assumed that Kant's own bad experience of being forced to pray during his school days increased his aversion to prayer,¹⁶⁰ and his later philosophical argument for moral religion made him cast a more suspicious eye on it. Let me introduce Kant's view of prayer, which has been widely quoted.

Praying, thought of as an inner *formal* service of God and hence as a means of grace, is a superstitious illusion (a fetish-making); for it is no more than a stated wish directed to a Being who needs no such information regarding the inner disposition of the wisher; therefore nothing is accomplished by it, and it discharges none of the duties to which, as commands of God, we are obligated; hence God is not really served. A heart-felt wish to be well-pleasing to God in our every act and abstention, or

¹⁶⁰ See Stephen R. Palmquist, "Kant's Critical Hermeneutic of Prayer," *The Journal of Religion* 77, no. 4 (1997): 598; Clement Webb, *Kant's Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 20–24; Pamela Sue Anderson and Jordan Bell, *Kant and Theology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2010), 4.

in other words, the disposition, accompanying all our actions, to perform these as though they were being executed in the service of God, is the spirit of prayer which can, and should, be present in us ‘without ceasing.’¹⁶¹

The superficial analysis of this text has often suggested that Kant distrusted prayer as harmful, demoralizing and self-illusory, thus categorically denying its legitimacy and validity. However, by investigating the deeper logic of his dispute, we may be able to draw some promising proposals. On the one hand, prayer is obviously a mere ‘stated wish’ and thus ‘superstitious illusion’ if it remains as a verbal expression and/or egoistic projection of one’s desire. This sort of prayer should be rejected because it seriously prohibits the fulfilment of one’s moral duties. On the other hand, there is also ‘a heart-felt wish’ which accompanies one’s every act, and Kant called this ‘the spirit of prayer.’ This spirit can affect nearly the entire life of the praying person, thus contributing to enhancing one’s moral awareness in its constant practice. What is critical in Kant’s proposal here is that these two kinds of prayer are related to the operation of one’s *wish*. The demarcation line between them, namely, lies in the question as to whether and to what extent prayer centres on the inner soul rather than its external/verbal expression. However, the weakness of humanity inevitably requires the latter type of prayer,¹⁶² so Kant left room for this experiential level of prayer insofar as it is complementary to prayer’s moral dimension. The importance of and the dependence on verbal prayer, however, will decrease as the pray-er becomes morally mature and autonomous.

Here one may see that, nearly two and half centuries after Luther attempted to justify prayer on the basis of *God’s* command and hearing of it,¹⁶³ this German Lutheran

¹⁶¹ Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore Meyer Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 194–195.

¹⁶² Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 173.

¹⁶³ See, for example, Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, trans. Wilhelm Pauck (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 240–243.

philosopher proposed that prayer should be *rationally* justified on the basis of its *moral* intention. It follows that prayer is not mainly concerned about God's will but about the mind of a praying person, and its transformative power is not exerted towards the outward circumstances, but related to the pray-er's wish.¹⁶⁴ Because God's hearing and answer are assigned only secondary importance, petition and invocation finds nearly no constitutive role within Kant's system. In this respect, Palmquist insightfully contended that "Kant is making an essentially *hermeneutic* point: the value of prayer depends on how the devotee *interprets* his or her actions."¹⁶⁵ As Kant's Copernican revolution in philosophy was extended into the realm of religious practice, he laid the modern anthropological basis for prayer.

Before we turn to Schleiermacher's appropriation of the Kantian view, one crucial issue needs to be discussed. After rationally justifying prayer, Kant had to guide people how to pray according to his innovative proposal. The answer is that, although Christ's heavenly intercession would not make much sense any longer, Jesus' prayer still sets *the* paradigm for a true prayer. According to Kant, Jesus expressed the spirit of prayer completely, especially in his Lord's Prayer.¹⁶⁶ Because Jesus was well aware of moral duties and human weakness alike, the Lord's Prayer's ethical orientation is harmoniously clothed with a series of petitions. Its perfect orientation towards the Kingdom of God enables a person not to ask what God does not want; rather, just as Jesus is the moral person as well-pleasing to God, so his Lord's prayer directs a person's wish towards the real object of prayer – to become a person morally well-pleasing to God. Here, for Kant, the Lord's Prayer is presented as *a* salvific way through which people are drawn into the ideal of a moral person.

¹⁶⁴ Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 196.

¹⁶⁵ Palmquist, "Kant's Critical Hermeneutic of Prayer," 588.

¹⁶⁶ See Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 183–184.

In summary, in contrast to a reductionist reading of Kant's view of prayer, I have briefly shown that Kant did not reject prayer *per se*, but reinterpreted its source, validity and effect in relation to his moral religion. In addition to this, Jesus' prayer was adopted by Kant not merely as an exemplary prayer, but also as a medium through which his salvific significance is somehow communicated with others. The centrality of the human Jesus' prayer and the disposition of one's inner soul announce a new paradigm for modern spirituality, which has been adopted by many other modern thinkers, especially by Schleiermacher.¹⁶⁷

Schleiermacher on Prayer: Address to the Whence of Human Existence

Schleiermacher's theology of prayer is scattered throughout his writings, from his earlier pietistic sermons to his magisterial treatise on theology, *The Christian Faith*.¹⁶⁸ The mature Schleiermacher treated prayer systematically within his extensive ecclesiology, conceiving of it as one of the six marks of the church.¹⁶⁹ It resulted in his emphasis upon the communal dimension of prayer,¹⁷⁰ which he himself severely criticized in his early days on the basis of his pietistic emphasis on personal prayer.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Some scholars have argued with some insight that Schleiermacher radicalized Kant's critique of prayer. See Robert Ellis, *Answering God: Towards a Theology of Intercession* (Bletchley: Paternoster, 2005), 54; Timothy Bradshaw, *Praying as Believing: The Lord's Prayer and the Christian Doctrine of God* (Oxford: Regent's Park College; Macon, Ga., 1998), 56. In my view, however, considering Kant's twofold argument on prayer and Schleiermacher's reinterpretation of prayer within this framework, it would be more proper to say that Schleiermacher added theological tone to Kant rather than radicalized him.

¹⁶⁸ I extensively investigated this topic, with special attention to similarities and dissimilarities between Schleiermacher's pietistic sermon and his mature theology, in JinHyok Kim, "Prayer for the Kingdom of God and for Spiritual Calmness: A Constructive Study on Friedrich Schleiermacher's Theology of Prayer," *Korean Journal of Systematic Theology* 31 (2011): 101-128. My discussion of Schleiermacher in this chapter is largely dependent upon this essay.

¹⁶⁹ The six marks of the church include Holy Scriptures, the ministry of the Word, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the power of the keys, and prayer in the name of Jesus. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 586-590.

¹⁷⁰ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 590.

¹⁷¹ See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Selected Sermons of Schleiermacher*, trans. Mary F. Wilson (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1890), 39-40, 173, 392; Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Servant of the Word: Selected Sermons of Friedrich Schleiermacher*, trans. Dawn De Vries (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 173.

From his earlier sermon to his more mature theology, nevertheless, Schleiermacher thoroughly reinterpreted this central practice of the Christian faith in a similar manner to Kant, which will be treated here under three rubrics.

(1) Impersonal Addressee of Prayer: In his earlier sermon “The Power of Prayer in Relation to Outward Circumstances” (1800) Schleiermacher rejected the anthropomorphic images of God, describing the addressee of prayer as the “*Unchangeable*,” as the “*Unsearchable*,” as the “*Only Wise*,” and as the “*Kind*.”¹⁷² The Schleiermacher of *The Christian Faith* radicalized his earlier impersonal view by coining the term the *whence of human existence*. The God-human relationship is not comparable to other relationships in the sense that God’s influence is so overwhelming that one has no feeling except that one’s whole existence and the world is entirely dependent on it. He called this state the *feeling of absolute dependence*, as pointing to the *whence of human existence*.¹⁷³ By stripping away anthropological elements, he eventually described God as purely impersonal and transcendental. This innovative conception demands us to radically modify our conventional view of prayer to the extent that we should assume that God does not listen to human prayer.

(2) Prayer in the Name of Jesus: The impersonal view of God is followed by Schleiermacher’s reinterpretation of the traditional teaching of prayer in the name of Jesus. For him, it does not refer to the Son’s intercession between God and human pray-ers, but “praying about the concerns of Jesus or praying in His sense and spirit.”¹⁷⁴ In other words, prayer in Jesus’ name means the conforming of a praying person’s will to

Tice dated these sermons as Schleiermacher’s earlier work before or right after the publication of the first edition of *Rede* (1799). See Terrence N. Tice, *Schleiermacher’s Sermons: A Chronological Listing and Account* (Lewiston, N.Y.; Lampeter: Mellen, 1997), 156.

¹⁷² Schleiermacher, *Selected Sermons*, 44-45.

¹⁷³ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 16.

¹⁷⁴ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 672. See also *Servant of the Word*, 172-174.

divine world-government and engagement in the historicizing process of God's kingdom, as Jesus taught and demonstrated through his own prayer.

(3) Purifying Effect of Prayer: Just as Kant made the re-ordering of *the pray-er's wish* a critical concept, so Schleiermacher took the *purifying of the soul* as a main motif. When one's desire does not correspond to divine causality, prayer helps a person purify his/her improper desire and wish. It is, in fact, Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane that perfectly illustrates this function. Schleiermacher observed that Jesus prayed three times and analyzed the development of Jesus' mind through these prayers.¹⁷⁵ First, Jesus attempted to evade suffering and death, so his prayer was filled with anxiety and concern. In his second prayer, Jesus sought to reconcile his will with the divine will, placing his own wish under God's eternal plan. When Jesus prayed finally, he completely overcame agitation and went with a 'calm spirit' and 'holy firmness' to Judas and the soldiers.¹⁷⁶

Here one may find striking structural and material similarities between Kant and Schleiermacher's view of prayer.¹⁷⁷ They focus on the pray-er's inner experience and utilized the human Jesus' prayer as a way to deliver their vision of the ideal prayer. In addition, like Kant, *petition* is relegated to a secondary importance by Schleiermacher, because it is the combination of the God-consciousness with our feelings and emotions.¹⁷⁸ For Schleiermacher, nonetheless, it would always co-exist with true prayer, because men and women cannot be completely free from their feelings and emotions.

¹⁷⁵ Schleiermacher, *Selected Sermons*, 43-44.

¹⁷⁶ Schleiermacher even highlighted Jesus' spiritual calmness and gentleness when analyzing Jesus' last sayings on the cross. See Schleiermacher, *Selected Sermons*, 386.

¹⁷⁷ In a similar vein to Kant, moreover, earlier Schleiermacher even contended that moral perfection is the most important effect and goal of prayer. Because prayer increases our knowledge of good, a higher moral standard can be conceived through prayer. See Schleiermacher, *Servant of the Word*, 176-180.

¹⁷⁸ Schleiermacher, *Selected Sermons*, 48.

Barth responded poignantly to challenges posed by the post-Kantian tradition by seriously studying Schleiermacher's theology of prayer. He attempted to find the justification of prayer from *God's* command,¹⁷⁹ to rehabilitate the addressee of prayer as the *Father*¹⁸⁰ and to situate *petition* at the centre of his discourse.¹⁸¹ In addition, Barth's *Christian Life* explicitly critiqued Schleiermacher's de-personalization of the addressee of prayer. Although Schleiermacher rightly captured the pray-er's attitude towards God in terms of absolute dependence, the concept of God as the *whence of human existence* is not specific and concrete enough,¹⁸² and thus risks making the source of prayer as a neutral being or something.¹⁸³ This impersonal conception makes invocation into a monologue for purifying one's soul, and thus it may turn prayer into a higher degree of self-help.¹⁸⁴ In this respect, one may cautiously argue that Barth's theology of prayer is anti-Kant and anti-Schleiermacher, but this view is only partially true.

Barth on the 19th-Century's Theology of Prayer: Beyond the Dialectic of Prayer

Despite his stark opposition to Kant and Schleiermacher's view of prayer, Barth had keen insights to see that something important was suggested by the previous centuries' thinkers. Barth agreed with Kant and Schleiermacher that prayer can play a vital role in circumscribing theory and practice into the Christian faith. He also observed in them

¹⁷⁹ *CD* III/4, 91; *Prayer*, 18; *CL*, 44.

¹⁸⁰ *CD* III/3, 265; *Prayer*, 22; *CL*, 50-69.

¹⁸¹ *CD* III/3, 267-288; *CD* III/4, 97-113; *Prayer*, 22-31; *CL*, 85-109.

¹⁸² McDowell demonstrated that prayer not only allows us to conceive of God as personal, but also to point beyond a general concept of God to the particular divine personhood. See John C. McDowell, "Prayer, Particularity, and the Subject of Divine Personhood: Who Are Brümmer and Barth Invoking When They Pray?," in *Trinitarian Theology After Barth*, ed. Myk Habets and Phillip Tolliday (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2011).

¹⁸³ *CL*, 57.

¹⁸⁴ *CL*, 103.

that Jesus' prayer is not merely a paradigmatic prayer, but also serves as a crucial hermeneutical framework for interlocking prayer with the Christian life.¹⁸⁵

It should be noted at this point that Barth paid special attention to what he called "the dialectic of prayer" in Schleiermacher. In his Göttingen lectures on Schleiermacher (1923/1924), Barth reflected the relationship between prayer and the Christian life presented in the mature Schleiermacher's Sunday sermons.¹⁸⁶ Barth seemed to first read these sermons in 1910 – one year after he left Marburg to take the assistant pastor position in Geneva. Barth's continued emphasis on Schleiermacher's mature work attests his increasing disagreement with his liberal teacher, Hermann, who thought Schleiermacher's earlier addresses on religion (*Reden*) are the most important writing since the canonization of the New Testament.¹⁸⁷ One year before his Göttingen lectures on Schleiermacher, furthermore, Barth criticized the de-ethicization of Schleiermacher by his former Marburg colleagues. In the letter to Bultmann (1922) Barth seriously asked "whether the attack of your group on Schleiermacher is not due to the fact that you have all read the *Reden* in the edition of Otto with its, in my view, totally misleading notes. I myself put Schleiermacher in the sequence from Jeremiah to Kierkegaard."¹⁸⁸ According to Barth, the mature Schleiermacher's sermons showed his prophetic, and even nearly socialist, concerns on moral issues.¹⁸⁹ More strikingly,

¹⁸⁵ *TS*, 34.

¹⁸⁶ Barth boastfully claimed, "As far as I know, no one either before or since has attempted to interpret Schleiermacher in the light of his sermons." Barth, "Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher," 266.

¹⁸⁷ Busch, *Karl Barth*, 44. Moreover, Barth's 1923/1924 lectures started with his analysis of Schleiermacher's later sermons and ended with the young Schleiermacher's *Rede*.

¹⁸⁸ Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, *Karl Barth-Rudolf Bultmann Letters 1922-1966*, ed. Bernd Jaspert, trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982), 6.

¹⁸⁹ According to Barth, four concepts play vital roles in constituting Schleiermacher's doctrine of the Christian life – progress, activity/calling, order and social equality. Accordingly, Barth assumed that there are some similarities between Schleiermacher's mature thought and the rising socialist movement in the 19th century. See *TS*, 35-37. Barth mentioned that his additional study of Schleiermacher's letters and

argued Barth, “we must now investigate in detail...Schleiermacher's doctrine of the Christian life.... I believe I shall *understand him best* and *with the greatest justice* at this point if I begin with what he says about *prayer*.”¹⁹⁰

Barth's lectures did not investigate Schleiermacher's doctrine of prayer *per se*, but paid more attention to its ethical dimension. Barth discovered two levels of discourse on prayer in this brilliant Berlin theologian. On the one hand, it is the natural expression of one's yearning for the eternal, which is separated from other functions of life.¹⁹¹ On the other hand, prayer also concerns itself with real issues in the world, thus being attached to our actual living. Both types of prayer arise from a person's act of looking for God. At this point, Barth shared with Schleiermacher a critical prayerful motif – human ineptness and dependence upon grace as the source of prayer.¹⁹² For Barth, Schleiermacher insightfully showed that this prayerful entering into and maintaining fellowship with God seeks for its fulfilment in the cultural and social realm. In other words, human pray-ers need to be away from everyday chores to truly and personally communicate with God, but their prayer should eventually move beyond this starting point to their real life. In this respect, these two types of prayer are not exclusive of each other, but *dialectically* complementary. Barth wrote:

What we have in them is Schleiermacher's ideal of the Christian life in a nutshell. This life is a circular movement which begins with man's concentration before God, or in himself, as this is demanded by the centripetal multiplicity of the active life, which then carries with it an increasing awareness that this concentration cannot be an act that is done for its own sake alone, but because it relates to God, or to the point of perfection that is given within man himself, can be meant only as a spiritualizing concentration of the whole of life, and which descends from this high point to clarified and increasingly to-be-clarified activity, then returning to a new concentration and interiorizing as a separate thing that takes place for itself. The impression that

moral theology confirmed this initial interpretation. Barth, “Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher,” 263.

¹⁹⁰ *TS*, 31 (emphasis added).

¹⁹¹ *TS*, 31-32.

¹⁹² *TS*, 26; *CL*, 57.

Schleiermacher's depiction leaves, however, is not that of the necessity of this return from activity to concentration but of the necessity of the movement from concentration to activity. Schleiermacher's basic orientation is *ethical*.¹⁹³

In Barth's eyes, Schleiermacher's vision of prayer points beyond the antithesis of receptivity and activity, meditative fellowship with God and activity for the Kingdom of God, the Christian faith and social actions.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, argued Barth, Schleiermacher's "dialectic of prayer constantly calls the individual to stillness but then directs him to the active life, so Christianity as a whole has to be something distinctive in the world but then at once it must seek out and permeate the world."¹⁹⁵ These themes of the integrative power of prayer and the distinctive nature of the Christian life are what Barth adopted in his theology without hesitation. His task was to be faithful to his predecessors' emphasis upon the ethical orientation of prayer, but he decided not to start his reflection from the human inner soul but from God's address to humanity.

This innovative interpretation leads us to resist a reductionist reading of Schleiermacher as the one who exclusively centred on the internal religious consciousness and improperly reduced Christianity into a bourgeois spirituality. By contrast, for Barth, Schleiermacher's thought is geared towards ethics, an ethics seen against the background of prayer's dialectic. It may be strange, however, that Barth was not explicitly critical of controversial issues imbedded in Schleiermacher's near equation of cultural process with the manifestation of the Christian life. Indeed, it is hard to find Barth's negative comments on Schleiermacher's doctrine of prayer in these lectures, despite his critical question as to whether Schleiermacher's proposal can be

¹⁹³ *TS*, 32.

¹⁹⁴ *TS*, 34.

¹⁹⁵ *TS*, 47.

reconciled with the Reformed faith.¹⁹⁶ Although the overall tone of Barth was critical of Schleiermacher in the early 1920s,¹⁹⁷ Barth's lectures on Schleiermacher in fact enabled him to appreciate Schleiermacher in a more nuanced and balanced way.¹⁹⁸ Accordingly, Barth could still respect this Berlin theologian, as shown in his critical review of Brunner's one-sided rejection of Schleiermacher.¹⁹⁹ In addition, Barth's Schleiermacher lectures, offered one year after the publication of *Romans II*, perhaps reflect the development of his positive thinking on culture and human agency during the Göttingen period.

Barth's other writings, however, clearly show that his theology of prayer is an attempt to overcome Schleiermacher's shortcomings by rediscovering the trinitarian dimension of prayer. The next subsection, thus, will discuss how Barth situated prayer within his unique view of the Trinity's salvific act. It will also explore how Barth maintained the importance of Jesus' prayer and of the ethical dimension of prayer without repeating Schleiermacher's anthropological starting-point.

3.2. Prayer as God's Gift for Humanity: We Pray through the Mouth of Jesus

Although the importance of prayer had been emphasized since Barth's early theological career, he began to offer extensive treatment of prayer as *a human act* after the mid

¹⁹⁶ *TS*, 259-260.

¹⁹⁷ See, for example, Karl Barth, "To Thurneysen: 4 March 1924," in Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen, *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925*, trans. James Dick Smart (London: Epworth Press, 1964), 175; Karl Barth, "Feuerbach (1922)," in *Theology and Church: Shorter Writings, 1920-1928*, trans. L. P. Smith (London: SCM, 1962); *TS*, 259-260.

¹⁹⁸ About the impact of Barth's lectures on Schleiermacher upon his thought, see Busch, *Karl Barth*, 151-152.

¹⁹⁹ See Brunner's study on Schleiermacher and Barth's critique of Brunner's monograph, both of which appeared in 1924. Emil Brunner, *Die Mystik und das Wort: der Gegensatz zwischen moderner Religionsauffassung und christlichem Glauben dargestellt an der Theologie Schleiermachers* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1924); Karl Barth, "Brunners Schleiermacher-bush," *Zwischen den Zeiten* 8 (1924): 49-64.

1940s.²⁰⁰ In contrast to a post-Kantian reading of prayer, he first placed it within the doctrine of the Trinity and then reflected upon its nature, possibility and effect on the human level. His complex argument is remarkably similar to a simpler but equally rich statement of a British Thomist, McCabe, who said that: “Prayer is not our attempt to gain the Father’s attention, prayer is not in fact primarily a human activity.... [It is] the work of grace in us, the expression of our trinitarian life.... [It] is offered in virtue of our identification with Christ, our sharing in the sonship of God.... In prayer we become the locus of the divine dialogue between Father and Son, we are in Spirit and truth.”²⁰¹ In this light, I will discuss the way in which Barth conceived of Jesus as *the* pray-er and the Lord’s Prayer within a wider context of his trinitarian theology.

In an analogous manner to his earlier view on pneumatic prayer, Barth’s mature reflection on prayer begins with human weakness and inability, but he now offered a more christocentric elucidation. Confronting the impossible possibility of prayer, suggested Barth, “we must begin with the end, that is, we must first consider the answer to prayer.”²⁰² Prayer is given to human beings as the gift of grace and the answer to their cry before they actually pray.²⁰³ Thanks to God’s election of Jesus as the God-Man, he is God’s gift and answer, and in his presence through the Spirit the gift and answer are really present for and with human beings.²⁰⁴ Moreover, as a true human, Jesus represents humankind’s asking before God, and thus creaturely ineptness, anxiety and desire are all accepted by God in him. In this sense, for Barth, “Christian payer is

²⁰⁰ See Barth’s French lectures on prayer (1947/1949), *CD III/3* (1950), *CD III/4* (1951), *ET* (1962) and the posthumously published lecture fragments, *CL*.

²⁰¹ Herbert McCabe, *God Matters* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), 221.

²⁰² *Prayer*, 13. See also *CD III/4*, 106.

²⁰³ *CD III/3*, 255; *Prayer*, 11. In this sense, Hardon claimed that the underlining logic of Barth’s doctrine of prayer is the Reformed doctrine of predestination. In fact, in my view, Barth’s renewed interest in prayer after mid 1940s reflect both his engagement with the Reformed tradition and his own innovative conception of God’s gracious election. See John A. Hardon, “Karl Barth on Prayer,” *Theological Studies* 14 (1953): 444.

²⁰⁴ *CD III/3*, 271-272.

participation in Jesus Christ.... Christian prayer is life in and with the community of Jesus Christ; life primarily and basically out of and in the fullness of the Spirit.”²⁰⁵ It means that true prayer is a trinitarian event by its nature. As the incarnated Son of God, Jesus Christ is the true mediator of prayer. As the Spirit of the Son, the Holy Spirit is also the true mediator in the act of uniting pray-ers with Christ. The distinctiveness of prayer, compared to other acts of faith, can be found at this point: its essence lies in “the great surprise... in the situation in which he finds himself placed by the Word of God and in which he can be a Christian.”²⁰⁶ Unlike other acts which deal with the object in a more or less active mode, in prayer one presents oneself before God and hears the Word. This is a main reason Barth often presented prayer as the start of any theological reflection.

Barth, then, turned his attention to how Jesus’ and human prayer are analogously related. He offered a striking suggestion that the existence of the Son is both petition and intercession at the same time.²⁰⁷ It follows that the Lord’s Prayer is not a mere instruction of how to pray. It opens a gate for a praying person to participate in Jesus Christ through the Spirit.²⁰⁸ Because of the mediator’s own petitions, human prayer becomes no other than a *repetition* of his petitions.²⁰⁹ In this respect, argued Barth, the word ‘we’ of the petitions in the Lord’s Prayer refers to a praying person’s being placed within the communion of the ‘we.’ It is not a merely homiletic expression, but an ontological statement which mirrors the union of God with humanity through Jesus Christ.²¹⁰ This does not mean that any arbitrary prayer or wish whispering can be

²⁰⁵ CD III/3, 282.

²⁰⁶ CD III/3, 266.

²⁰⁷ CD III/3, 277.

²⁰⁸ CD III/3, 280.

²⁰⁹ CD III/3, 277.

²¹⁰ CD III/4, 102.

immediately equated with Jesus' prayer. "It is the Spirit of God," claimed Barth, "that incites us and enables us to pray in a fitting manner."²¹¹ The Spirit is not only a teacher of true prayer, but also the intercessor through whom a human pray-er is drawn into the *prayer* of Jesus Christ. Barth did not see here any conflict between the Lord's Prayer in the Gospels and pneumatic prayer in Romans 8, because both witness to the fact that Jesus Christ and the Spirit are the true mediator, intercessor and foundation of prayer.²¹² In the gift of the Spirit, we are permitted to pray with the Son, thereby participating in the very life of God and in Christ's mission towards the world alike. This is a reason the mature Barth liked to use Calvin's statement "we pray as it were by [Christ's] mouth" to refer to prayer's christological and pneumatological implications.²¹³

What the Lord's Prayer reveals to us is that our invocation and petitions are deeply connected to our actual living in this world. In this respect, as shown in his engagement with Schleiermacher's dialectic of prayer, Barth also sought to establish the link between prayer and ethics. He accomplished this synthesis not from an anthropological perspective, but in the light of Christ's lordship and the Spirit's redemptive act. He claimed that the target of the Son's incarnation is the world (John 3:16), and thus the Lord of the faith community is also the Lord of world-occurrences.²¹⁴ Accordingly, Christians can never engage "exclusively in either the one or the other."²¹⁵ They are supposed to act towards the world as being bound to Christ by the Spirit. Although all forms of participation through the Spirit are indirect by nature, Christians' participation in Christ qualitatively differs from their participation in the world, and their engagement with the world is also qualitatively different from that of

²¹¹ *Prayer*, 16.

²¹² *CD III/4*, 94.

²¹³ Calvin quoted in *CL*, 105; *Prayer*, 14.

²¹⁴ *CD III/3*, 256, 276.

²¹⁵ *CD III/3*, 257.

secular people.²¹⁶ They participate in Christ by the power of the Spirit, but their engagement with God's world-governance is mediated again through Christ by the Spirit. In other words, every person participates in the world as being thrown to live there, but Christians *indirectly* confront it as the body of Christ. This twofold participation in Christ (in a more direct manner) and in the world (in a more indirect manner) constitutes the dynamic basis for prayerful actions towards society,²¹⁷ and it arguably replaces Schleiermacher's dialectic of prayer.

Barth observed that an indirect nature of participation in the world causes a dilemma that, unlike their relation to Christ in the church, "[A human pray-er] will not encounter the Spirit in the Word of God. He will not encounter any absolutely binding directions.... In this respect, he will never find solid background in that sphere."²¹⁸ This means that Christians' life in secular society is ambiguous, fragile and provisional by nature. Nevertheless, because Christians' existence in the world is still a participation through the Spirit, that existence is defined in terms of prayerful attentiveness. For Barth, it is only from the Holy Spirit that a Christian "can learn to understand situations, to recognize opportunities, to choose possibilities and to distinguish them from impossibilities." Barth continued:

The situations and opportunities and possibilities and impossibilities of the world-process with which [the Christian] is called upon to wrestle do not as such contain within themselves or proclaim any divine and infallible Word. In the midst of them he can direct his path only with a provisional certainty.... It is only the Holy Spirit who can bind him to his path that he is really bound, and so liberate him that he can tread this path in real freedom. It is only the Holy Spirit who can give him the light for right decisions and the power to make them.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ CD III/3, 255-256.

²¹⁷ It should be noted here that Barth discussed this twofold structure within a broader context of the unity of faith, obedience and prayer. See CD III/3, 247-286.

²¹⁸ CD III/3, 257-258.

²¹⁹ CD III/3, 258.

This suggestive view makes the prayerful discernment of the Spirit into a basic Christian act in and for this world. All other works in faith and obedience, it follows, lie behind and derive from prayer.²²⁰ In the Spirit's redemptive act of perfecting, a pray-er can *cooperate* with Jesus Christ in the service to which the church is commissioned. "To be sure, it is a co-operation here below," argued Barth, "But none the less it is a real co-operation."²²¹

This insightful link between prayer and the Christian life, however, has drawn criticisms that he reduced prayer to "a grammar on faith"²²² or conceived it as "spirituality of openness."²²³ It is right that, for Barth, prayer constitutes a crucial structure of faith and openness towards God's grace, but these represent only a certain aspect of his theology of prayer. These critics' rather obscure readings risk improperly marginalizing the fact that Barth always underlined the concrete practice of prayer and belief in God's hearing of it.²²⁴ In addition, he not only took the particularity of Jesus' prayer at the heart of his discourse, but also praised "the most active workers and thinkers and fighters in the divine service in this world" who were "the most active in prayer" and did not regard "this activity as a waste of time."²²⁵ What Barth sought to do here, I propose, is not to abstract prayer from its real practice or to reduce it to a kind of general life philosophy or theological principle; rather, he made the concept and

²²⁰ CD III/3, 264.

²²¹ CD III/3, 286. Jüngel aptly claimed that the motif of analogy dominates in Barth's ethical vision of prayer. In his study of *CL*, Jüngel showed that prayer, especially invocation, is the fundamental analogy which constitutes the human person as an agent. Eberhard Jüngel, "Invocation of God as the Ethical Ground of Christian Action," in *Theological Essays I*, trans. J. B. Webster (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 162.

²²² Chul-Ha Han, "Belief and Unbelief in Prayer: A Comparison between Calvin and Karl Barth," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 9, no. 4 (1985): 348.

²²³ John Kelsay, "Prayer and Ethics: Reflections on Calvin and Barth," *The Harvard Theological Review* 82, no. 2 (1989): 181.

²²⁴ CD III/3, 281.

²²⁵ CD III/3, 264.

practice of prayer inclusive and flexible enough to embrace varied human activities and bring them under the illuminating and empowering light of the Spirit.

3.3. Prayer as a Human Act: We Ask of the Father with Son in the Holy Spirit

When turning to the human side of prayer, Barth claimed that a basis of prayer is the freedom to ask,²²⁶ demonstrated by Jesus Christ and given to each pray-er by the Spirit. It results in his conviction that, as for the Reformers, prayer is first and foremost petition.²²⁷ At this point, we need to clarify two issues. Can Barth's view defend the legitimacy of petition from a Feuerbachian criticism (or at least from Kantian reinterpretation)? Does his concentration on petition suggest a new reductionist reading of prayer?

First, it has been argued for a long time that petition is a mere projection or expression of personal desire and thought. In contrast, for Barth, because God has already addressed humanity before being asked, hearing precedes asking. In this respect, true petition is none other than to receive God's prevenient self-giving in Jesus Christ.²²⁸ Because God's speaking and presence justify our asking in an *a priori* manner, as McCabe rightly argued, to reject petition only because it is one's need and desire is a "pre-Christian notion of prayer."²²⁹ Second, however, some critics further heard in Barth's view of the precedence of herein-made-petition a mere expression of humility and a resigned thanksgiving to what God has already accomplished.²³⁰ To these critics, Barth's emphasis also results in his impoverished idea of other forms of prayer, which are all relegated to a general attitude towards God's predestined answer.

²²⁶ CD III/4, 91, 93; *Prayer*, 20.

²²⁷ CD III/3, 268; CD III/4, 91-101.

²²⁸ CD III/3, 270.

²²⁹ McCabe, *God Matters*, 221.

²³⁰ See Han, "Belief and Unbelief in Prayer," 355; Kelsay, "Prayer and Ethics," 178.

In the face of these challenges, Barth's theology of prayer needs to be more carefully and analytically examined. Although he attempted to rehabilitate the importance of petition according to the Reformation faith,²³¹ he contended that the real centre of prayer is not petition *per se* but the great *amazement* or *surprise*, which arises from the discovery of the fact that we are already placed in the God-child relationship.²³² This wonder of prayer, which obviously depends on the intercession of Christ and the Spirit, is the true source for prayer as a human act. In addition, Barth himself *provisionally* outlined the sequence of prayers as follows: "praise and thanksgiving, confession and penitence, petition and intercession, and again praise and thanksgiving."²³³ However, the more significant issue than this division and practical order, for Barth, is that all these prayers point to the centre, the great surprise before God. As a result, the distinction between each prayer becomes less important. Critics may still argue that because Barth blurred the distinctiveness of each prayer, he eventually made prayer a kind of general life attitude. This criticism may partly show what Barth intended to do. Instead of fitting the wonder of God's grace within sharply divided categories, he preferred to restructure human activities, including prayer, by constantly starting anew from this great surprise and returning to it.²³⁴ A shrewd reader may have already noticed that he described the relation of various prayers in terms of a prayerful *movement* around the great surprise. This dynamic allows Barth to conceive of prayer as encompassing and nourishing the Christian life.²³⁵ Because of prayer's special

²³¹ The original title of Barth famous French lectures on prayer is *Prayer According to the Catechisms of the Reformation*, which signaled his renewed interest in petition.

²³² *CD* III/3, 252.

²³³ *CD* III/3, 266.

²³⁴ This re-creative power of wonder, which flows from the content, is a recurring theme in Barth's theology. This topic is insightfully and extensively discussed in *ET*, 63-73

²³⁵ The Barth of *CL* showed special interest in the cluster of thanksgiving, praise and petition, which are integrated into our invocation. This illustrates that invocation has become a central prayerful motif in his last years. One of the mature Barth's prison sermons, entitled "Call Me," also conceives of invocation as

relation to this unique centre, it always – but not exclusively – concerns itself with the particular form of human existence as a pray-er, who is created, reconciled and redeemed by God. In this light, the particularity of prayer is not secured by prayer *per se*, but by the particular God who desires to communicate with humanity in God's own specific manner.

At this point, we need to investigate Barth's own remarks on the uniqueness of petition. The importance of petition lies in the fact that it results in the humble awareness of one's lack of ability and radical dependence upon God's grace. Although other prayers also take place within the limit of humanity, petition reveals *ongoing* dependence on God's free gift.²³⁶ In this respect, what constitutes true petition is the Spirit's eternal intercession for our weakness, as shown in Romans 8.²³⁷ In addition, because of this dependency on grace, petition is none other than the invocation of the Father and corollary participation into the reality of the divine child, as shown in the Lord's Prayer.²³⁸ True petition, thus, is a matter of receiving God's self-giving and of entering into a right relationship with God, which has *already* established by Jesus Christ and brought to us in the Spirit.²³⁹ It makes the wonder of prayer concrete in everyday life, thereby opening a praying person towards God's ever-renewing coming.

The other crucial function of petition is that it reveals true humanity and true divinity. First, petition enables pray-ers to discover who *God* is. Otherwise expressed, petition means to *turn to* God who has already been near to them, thereby

encompassing varied human acts in response to God's coming to them. See *CL*, 86-89; Karl Barth, *Call for God: New Sermons from Basel Prison*, trans. A. T. MacKay (London: S.C.M. Press, 1967), 31-36.

²³⁶ *CL*, 88.

²³⁷ *CD* III/4, 98.

²³⁸ *CD* III/3, 268; *CD* III/4, 103-105.

²³⁹ *CD* III/3, 270, 274.

demythologizing the abstract concept of God's otherness.²⁴⁰ Second, petition defines *humanity* in terms of *hope* without ignoring the vulnerability of creaturely existence. Barth wrote, "We do not yet know that we are under a veil. It must be removed. When we pray, our human condition is unveiled to us, and we know then that we are in this distress and also in that hope."²⁴¹ Although this tension between distress and hope will not be resolved while one lives in this world, petition does not allow the former to override the latter because it is grounded on God's preceding answer and one's belief in this promise. Third, petition discloses the *relationship* between God and humanity in its truest sense. In the act of praying, a person shares Jesus Christ's sonship in the Spirit, thus encountering God as the gracious Father who likes to hear the child's asking. Because of Jesus' command to pray *like* his prayer, petition also encourages pray-ers to realize that they have already received the *audacity* to speak to God as God's child.²⁴² Finally, petition leads Christians to discover the Spirit's gift of *freedom*, thus enabling them to live like God's children in a corresponding manner to Jesus Christ. Seeing the Word in light of this freedom, the heart of God's command is to open oneself to be loved by God and to love God in return. God's command is now heard not in the form of 'you shall' but 'you may.'²⁴³ The Christian life, therefore, is none other than a pray-er's acting-with-the Spirit in joy, praise and gratitude.²⁴⁴ In this sense, petition liberates pray-ers from the antithesis between autonomy and heteronomy.

²⁴⁰ CD III/3, 269.

²⁴¹ *Prayer*, 18.

²⁴² Despite his insightful comparison between Calvin and Barth and succinct summary of key issues in their theologies of prayer, Kelsay failed to do justice to the dialectical motif in Barth. Accordingly, he improperly concluded that Barth conceived of prayer in a non-teleological manner and understood petition as humiliation without audacity. See Kelsay, "Prayer and Ethics," 176-178.

²⁴³ Barth, *Call for God*, 20-23.

²⁴⁴ Boulton claimed that this motif of freedom by the Spirit constitutes a new theological definition of the human spirit. Matthew Boulton, "'We Pray by His Mouth': Karl Barth, Erving Goffman, and a Theology of Invocation," *Modern Theology* 17, no. 1 (2001): 74.

In sum, Barth intended to show the true meaning of petition by arguing that it is more than a mere human act. It is primarily the act of the Trinity for human beings by giving God-self to and dwelling with them before they ask. Praying Christians, then, participate in this salvific event through the process of conforming their petitions to God's will under the direction of the Spirit. However, we cannot simply blind ourselves to the fact that, as recent psychoanalytic theories illustrate, petition is a projection of the subjectivity of pray-er to some extent, because it is an undeniable expression of their need, desire and thought. One of the strengths of trinitarian reflection at this point is that it can make complex and flexible a simple structure of projection theory to embrace other crucial elements of prayer. For example, McCabe claimed "a projection depends not only on the film itself but on the state of the screen. In our case, the screen is human history."²⁴⁵ Barth showed that this screen is not simply *human* history but history assumed *by God* in God's eternal decision to elect humanity in Jesus Christ.²⁴⁶ What is reflected in this screen, accordingly, is not the magnified image of human subjectivity, but God's communion with humanity, albeit fragmentarily. In this theo-dramatic theory of projection, moreover, not only human yearning but also *the divine desire* to be known, touched and loved by God's own creation plays a vital role. In this sense, petition can be conceived as one of the key moments in the Spirit's redemption in Barth, because it refers to the eschatological reality of the Father and of God's children on the one hand, and to God's longing to perfect the loving relationship with them on the other.

4. Conclusion

²⁴⁵ Herbert McCabe, *God Still Matters*, ed. Brian Davies (London: Continuum, 2002), 61.

²⁴⁶ This brief expression summarizes Barth's mature doctrine of history, as presented in the doctrine of election (*CD* II/2). I will discuss Barth's theology of history in the chapter five.

This chapter aimed to examine the previous research on Barth's pneumatology, focusing on Rosato and Thompson's monographs, on the one hand, and to explicate my own proposal for assessing it, with special attention to his unfinished doctrine of redemption, on the other hand. Hunsinger aptly summarized my lengthy treatment on this topic as follows: "Everything about the Spirit as seen less directly from the standpoints of revelation and reconciliation was, from the standpoint of redemption, to have been placed centre stage, redescribed teleologically as a whole, and thereby amplified and enriched.... Whereas from the standpoint of reconciliation, the work of the Spirit served the work of Christ; from the standpoint of redemption, the work of Christ served the work of the Spirit."²⁴⁷ In addition to this, I further contended that the Spirit's intercession and our eschatological prayer can be the main sources informing any assessment of his doctrine of redemption and pneumatology alike. I also illustrated that in his exegesis of Romans 8 Barth beautifully described the Spirit's intercession as the Spirit's 'song of praise' to the Father, creatively securing the distinctiveness of the Spirit's work and the freedom of human agency.²⁴⁸

The pneumatological themes I discussed here – including the mediation between God and humanity, the importance of prayer for defining of the God-human relationship, the shaping of a free and responsible and prayerful human agent, humanity's participation into the very life of the Trinity, and the interlocking of theology with ethics – play indispensable roles in constituting the overall structure of and in making sense of Barth's theology, although they are treated less explicitly in other doctrines.

²⁴⁷ Hunsinger, "The Mediator of Communion," 178.

²⁴⁸ Eugene Rogers Jr. cautiously said that Barth seemed to rediscover the patristic theme of the rhythmical interval within the intra-divine relationship. My chapter on beauty (IV) will show that Barth left a possibility of conceiving the movement of the Spirit through the metaphor of music, but it is highly likely that this metaphor came from his love of Mozart rather than from the patristic sources. See Rogers, "The Eclipse of the Spirit in Karl Barth," 184–188.

The following three sections will examine these motifs with special attention to three fields – revelation, beauty and history – in and through which God comes to creation in Christ through the Spirit and draws them into the overflowing glory, joy and love of the divine fellowship.

III. The Spirit and the Revelation of the Word of God

“If I understand what I am trying to do in the *Church Dogmatics*, it is to listen to what Scripture is saying and tell you what I hear.”²⁴⁹ This simple sentence was Barth’s response to his students’ hours of heated and sophisticated debate about their teacher’s theological method. This short answer involves central issues of his theology in general and his doctrine of revelation in particular. In other words, he attempted to hear God’s Word through the Bible and to witness this subject-matter through his writing and sermons. By what right, then, did he claim that he heard something (or someone) from scriptures? To restate the welter of his complex theological argument in the simplest terms possible, it is the Spirit who allows, persuades and convinces humanity in a gift of faith to receive God’s revelation in Jesus Christ through scripture and proclamation.

The purpose of this chapter is to explicate Barth’s doctrine of revelation with special attention to its pneumatological implications. More specifically, it will demonstrate that the Spirit’s mediation is particularly significant for enabling human beings to experience and to talk about God. Barth often posed a simple but pregnant question: when human beings read the Bible, or hear proclamations, how dare they regard human words as God’s Word? Barth claimed: “This means that I come up against a barrier. I do not hear God himself speak. I only hear from God and about God. His own Word comes to me only in this broken form.”²⁵⁰ The fragmentary character of revelation, nevertheless, cannot cancel God’s togetherness with humankind. This unique relationship, Barth proposed, should be conceived by a particular ‘logic of revelation,’ and the investigation of this specific logic is a main task of the doctrine of revelation. In

²⁴⁹ Barth quoted in David Ford, “Barth’s Interpretation of the Bible,” in *Karl Barth: Studies of His Theological Method*, ed. Stephen Sykes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 55.

²⁵⁰ *GD*, 230. When I make reference to the original German [*Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1985)], I use the notation *UCR*.

this logic, the difference between God's Word and human words is not simple opposition. It is christologically structured in God's act of coming to the world in Christ. The hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Christ is the place where the encounter between the divine Word and human words can be properly observed. It follows that the Spirit, who unites Christ's divinity and humanity, also plays a vital role in revelation by mediating between divine and human language. My study suggests, therefore, that his christocentric approach leaves room for reflecting the Spirit's work.

Each section of this chapter will investigate crucial pneumatological themes in Barth's doctrine of revelation. The first section will examine the way in which the Spirit mediates between divine and human logic. The second section will be devoted to the transition from the past revelatory event in Christ to the reality of revelation here and now in the Spirit. The third section will study Barth's attempt to rehabilitate a proper theology of experience by invoking the Spirit as the Lord of experience. The fourth section, finally, will analyze Barth's deeply pneumatological doctrine of spiritual-corporeal perception of God. These sections will also show that, instead of general cognitive capacity, prayer is presented as the basis for integrating human acknowledgment of God's revelation with active response to it in everyday life.

1. The Spirit's Mediation between Divine-Logic and Human-Logic

This section will demonstrate that one of the main roles of the Spirit in Barth is as the mediator between God and humanity in the event of revelation.²⁵¹ The pneumatological

²⁵¹ For further study of the Spirit's various mediatory roles, see Hunsinger, "The Mediator of Communion: Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit."

dimension of revelation in Barth will be examined in each subsection with slightly different perspectives and emphases. First, I will analyze the way Barth diagnosed and reacted to the problem of a theology of the Word in the post-Kantian theological trajectories. Second, I will explicate how Barth's notion of primary and secondary objectivity subverted the modern epistemological framework of subject and object. Third, I will show the way in which Barth's emphasis upon the mystery of God's Word results in his unique vision of the Christian life under the Spirit. Fourth, and finally, I will investigate the relationship between pneumatology and theological language in Barth. It should be noted here, as significant research has already demonstrated, that the doctrine of revelation is particularly central to Barth in the 1920s and in the 1930s.²⁵² My study also mainly focuses on Barth's writings in these periods.

1.1. Revelation and Reason: The Doctrine of Revelation in the Shadow of Kant

It is not hard to find substantial previous research on Barth's doctrine of revelation. As Asprey's nuanced study illustrates, however, few scholars have observed that Barth's doctrine of revelation is not merely about theological epistemology, but mainly about God's interaction with humanity.²⁵³ This subsection will show that Barth's view of revelation was shaped in and through his reaction to the 19th-century's conception of revelation. Barth pointed out that "The time of Schleiermacher and his followers is all too strongly related to our own time; their problems, questions and answers reach all too openly into our own."²⁵⁴ Nevertheless, I will begin with Barth's appropriation of Kant,

²⁵² See McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*; Christopher Asprey, *Eschatological Presence in Karl Barth's Göttingen Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁵³ Asprey, *Eschatological Presence in Karl Barth's Göttingen Theology*, 56-59.

²⁵⁴ *PT*, 4.

not Schleiermacher, because in Barth's view, Schleiermacher's achievement emerged from Kant's introduction of the Copernican worldview in philosophy and theology.²⁵⁵

It may be fair to say that Barth's reading of Kant was influenced, and thus somewhat misled, by his theological concerns. Nevertheless, his serious struggle with Kant allowed him to see what Kantian scholars might easily overlook. For example, Heinz Cassirer, a well-known translator and interpreter of Kant, once said, "Why is it that this Swiss theologian understands Kant far better than any philosopher I have come across?"²⁵⁶ What made Cassirer prize Barth's reading of Kant? One may discover that the notion of *limit* lies at the heart of Barth's interpretation of Kant. Barth defined the eighteenth century not as the age of reason, a conventional label for this period, but as the age of absolutism, which reduced nearly every discipline, including anthropology, politics, economics and aesthetics, to an absolute form, or to mathematical relations, in the interests of controlling the outer world.²⁵⁷ Absolutism even incorporated God into the realm of human self-awareness, thereby leading Christianity to seek anthropological foundations to speak about its subject-matter.

In Barth's eyes, however, there were two great figures in this age who rediscovered the significance of limit – Mozart and Kant. Barth observed parallels between them as follows: "In Kant's philosophy, as in the music of Mozart, there is something of calm and majesty of death which seems suddenly to loom up from afar to oppose the eighteenth-century spirit."²⁵⁸ Just as Mozart showed this limit by describing the inherent sadness and horror of humanity in his music, so Kant demonstrated it through the critique of human reason. In this regard, McCormack even commented that

²⁵⁵ *PT*, 445.

²⁵⁶ Cassirer's words reported by Ronald Weitzman in Gunton, "Introduction" in *PT*, xvi.

²⁵⁷ *PT*, 22, 41.

²⁵⁸ *PT*, 255.

“Kant’s reflections on epistemology (as it turns out) were never more than a secular parable of what Barth wanted finally to say.”²⁵⁹ Though it is beyond the purpose and scope of this section to properly introduce Kant, I will briefly mention a few crucial points with which Barth sharpened his idea of revelation.²⁶⁰

To put it in a simple and crude way, Kant’s philosophy is his attack on a rational metaphysics and the Enlightenment’s confidence in the human ability to know. In his famous Preface to *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argued that “I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith,”²⁶¹ contrasting between empirical knowledge and belief. The synthetic function of the mind’s *a priori* categories serves as a universal structure of all possible experience in space and time, thereby producing rationally justified universal and necessary knowledge about the phenomenon. Such objective knowledge, however, cannot be applied to a sphere which transcends empirical perception. It means that metaphysical concepts, such as the soul, the world and God, can neither be proved nor denied by pure reason.²⁶² In Barth’s eyes, this is the boundary Kant tried to draw “with the truly apocalyptic light that it sheds on human knowledge.”²⁶³

Nevertheless, Kant still left room for talking about the soul, the world and God in two distinctive ways. First, pure reason paradoxically requires these transcendental ideas, which are at issue in the transcendental dialectic, since it cannot find completion

²⁵⁹ Bruce L. 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, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008), 159.

²⁶⁰ Barth’s knowledge of Kant was largely from the Marburg Neo-Kantian philosophers. See McCormack, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 218-226; Simon Fisher, *Revelatory Positivism?: Barth’s Earliest Theology and The Marburg School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

²⁶¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1953), 29.

²⁶² Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science*, trans. Paul Carus and James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 1977), 83–84.

²⁶³ *GD*, 350.

in the world of phenomena. The three transcendental ideas, therefore, are employed by Kant to play the unifying and regulating role in the realm of pure reason.²⁶⁴ In particular, the idea of the soul grounds our scientific investigations in psychology, the idea of the world guides physics, and the idea of God points towards the convergence of these two natural sciences.

Second, the necessity of these transcendental ideas can be discovered in the sphere of practical reason. In order to be universal and necessary, morality should not be based on empirical principle, but rather on a purely *a priori* one. Accordingly, moral commands should neither be derived from outside the self, such as the Bible and doctrines, nor from subjective feeling, such as compassion and happiness.²⁶⁵ A moral agent should and can exercise practical reason according to the categorical imperative, by acting “only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law.”²⁶⁶ In this self-legislative use of practical reason, the transcendental ideas are ‘postulated.’ Kant wrote:

The postulate of the possibility of a highest derived good (the best world) is at the same time the postulate of the reality of a highest original good, namely, the existence of God. Now it was our duty to promote the highest good; and it is not merely our privilege but a necessity connected with duty as a requisite to presuppose the possibility of this highest good.... Therefore, it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God.²⁶⁷

In other words, morality demands the reality of the objects of belief, not vice versa. For Kant, rational faith has a moral foundation. Consequently, theology, which had been traditionally a fundamental source of morality, now needed its fundamental beliefs

²⁶⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 532-549; *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, 88.

²⁶⁵ Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 3.

²⁶⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott (London: Longmans, 1873), 38.

²⁶⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason in Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 228.

(couched as dogmas, metaphysics or theoretical reason) to be grounded in practical reason.

Barth's praise of Kant's limit of reason contrasted with his sharp criticism of Kant's view of faith, which opened a way to interpret religion as a necessary phenomenon of reason.²⁶⁸ Nevertheless, one should not interpret Barth's appropriation of Kant in a dualistic way, assuming that he endorsed Kant's critique of pure reason while rejecting that of practical reason. He also had his reservations about Kant's view of pure reason: "there is only a small step from Kant's critique of reason to Schleiermacher's theology of immediacy."²⁶⁹ Barth praised Kant's appeal to morality because, along with other 18th-century thinkers, Kant proposed that "Christianity is not teaching, but life."²⁷⁰ This crucial lesson animated Barth to see the inseparable relationships between dogmatics and ethics, while learning from Kant's view of pure reason the importance of setting the boundaries of reason.

Although Barth's attitude towards Kant is never straightforward, he was certain of the one fact that whatever one does as a theologian after Kant is done in this great philosopher's shadow. Accordingly, Barth categorized three possible ways of doing theology after Kant.²⁷¹ The first possibility is to construct a theology within a Kantian framework, represented by neo-Kantian Ritschlians. The second method is to extend the Kantian framework, and Schleiermacher was a notable example of this approach. The third way is to offer an alternative to the Kantian framework, as shown by Hegel.

²⁶⁸ *GD*, 350; *PT*, 291.

²⁶⁹ *GD*, 364; Along with Barth, Ratzinger has charged that Kant offered a foundation for historicizing revelation in the modern period. See *CD*, 147; Benedict XVI Pope, "Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: On the Question of the Foundations and Approaches of Exegesis Today," in *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church*, ed. Richard Neuhaus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

²⁷⁰ *PT*, 79.

²⁷¹ *PT*, 292-293.

Because of his rejection of the Richtlian theology, Barth paid special attention to the last two models.

First of all, Barth claimed that what dominated the 19th-century theology was, in fact, the voice of Schleiermacher because his theology laid the foundation for seeking “the truth of God in [one’s] own Christian consciousness or in history.”²⁷² As a result, when the 19th-century talked about revelation, it actually talked about humanity.²⁷³ In Barth’s eyes, the psychological side of Schleiermacher found its culmination in Feuerbach’s slogan that “the secret of theology is nothing else than anthropology,”²⁷⁴ and the historical aspect in Strauss’ claim that “the inquiry must first be made whether in fact, and to what extent, the ground on which we stand in the gospel is historical.”²⁷⁵ Though both Feuerbach and Strauss, having studied with both Schleiermacher and Hegel, ultimately identified themselves with Hegel, it is interesting that Barth did not align them with Hegel but Schleiermacher.²⁷⁶

Secondly, unlike his criticism of Schleiermacher’s framework, Barth’s initial response to Hegel is strikingly positive. In contrast to other 19th-century thinkers, Hegel showed that theology should begin with truth, not anthropology, and that truth is not a sort of cognitive information but a self-revealing movement.²⁷⁷ This is the reason Barth categorized Feuerbach and Strauss not under the rubric of Hegel, but under Schleiermacher. Indeed Barth’s theology shares with Hegel’s philosophy the sense that the distance between God and the world is overcome by God’s own movement. They

²⁷² Karl Barth, “The Word in Theology from Schleiermacher to Ritschl,” in *Theology and Church: Shorter Writings, 1920-1928*, trans. L. P. Smith (London: SCM, 1962), 202.

²⁷³ *CD* I/1, 31-40.

²⁷⁴ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (Buffalo, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 1989), 207.

²⁷⁵ David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined: Translated from 4th German Edition*, trans. George Eliot (New York: C. Blanchard, 1860), 4.

²⁷⁶ Barth, “The Word in Theology from Schleiermacher to Ritschl,” 212-214.

²⁷⁷ *PT*, 401-402.

also agreed that God can be known only by God in God's self-revealing act. As Ford suggested, accordingly, "Barth is nearer to Hegel than to Kant"²⁷⁸ in terms of revelation as a self-involving or participatory knowledge.

This does not mean, however, that Barth uncritically endorsed Hegel's method and rejected Schleiermacher's. In Barth's eyes, both of them failed to recognise the qualitative difference between divine Spirit and human spirit.²⁷⁹ Resisting Hegel and Schleiermacher's proposals, surprisingly, Barth revisited Kant to find an alternative possibility of theology "within the framework of an immanent interpretation of Kant."²⁸⁰ He observed that, in the forward to *The Religion within the Limit of Reason Alone*, Kant offered a distinct idea of theology as an alternative to the philosophical theology Kant himself presented. This theology starts with the notion of the Church, whose canon has a primary significance. Here Kant's concept of limit plays a vital role again, saying that "the mischief occurs not through the philosopher's *borrowing* something from Biblical theology... but only so far as he *imports* something into it and thereby seeks to direct it to ends other than those which its own economy sanctions."²⁸¹ Kant's careful distinction between biblical theology and philosophical theology significantly affected the formation of Barth's theological method. Barth learned from Kant that theology does not speak according to the laws of an *a priori* religion of reason, but speaks according to prescriptions for belief contained in a book "particularly called the Bible – that is a code that reveals an old and a new covenant which man

²⁷⁸ David Ford, "Conclusion: Assessing Barth," in *Karl Barth: Studies of His Theological Method*, ed. Stephen Sykes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 196.

²⁷⁹ *PT*, 404, 452, 457. Barth's criticism of Hegel will be discussed in length in the next chapter on beauty.

²⁸⁰ *PT*, 294.

²⁸¹ Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 9.

concluded with God many centuries ago.”²⁸² This statement suggests that theology should start from the particularity of revelation in the Bible, not from a general view of revelation.

Despite Barth’s ambiguous attitude towards Kant, it is certain that Kant offered some basic assumptions which played significant roles in shaping Barth’s doctrine of revelation. Even when Barth attempted to overcome Kant, he eventually returned to Kant to learn from him that theology should primarily cope with “the fact that [God] has spoken in the Bible.”²⁸³ Barth reacted to Kant’s challenge, discovering in the Bible that our knowledge of God is not a mere function of human cognitive capacity but our peace with God in Christ.²⁸⁴ However, whereas Kant distinguished sharply between knowledge and faith, Barth denied such an antithesis: our knowledge of God comes from God’s own speech through the Bible and we receive it in Spirit-given faith. In the following subsection, thus, I will examine how Barth attempted to subvert the modern subject-object framework, mostly set by Kant, in his doctrine of the Trinity in general and in his pneumatology in particular.

1.2. Revelation and the Trinity: Reworking the Subject-Object Structure

Under Kant’s influence, Barth suspected that theology becomes problematic when it starts from the human capacity for knowledge.²⁸⁵ When the attempt is made to reason from human epistemological abilities to the incomprehensible God, one can only sigh and feel anxiety, since one is thereby being tempted to historicize or psychologise the

²⁸² Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 111. Barth himself quoted this sentence during his lectures on Kant. See *PT*, 298.

²⁸³ *PT*, 298.

²⁸⁴ *CD I/2*, 720.

²⁸⁵ *GD*, 326.

concept of revelation.²⁸⁶ To conceive of God as an object is, in fact, to worship God as an idol.²⁸⁷ At this point Barth's analysis of power and knowledge is noteworthy.

Knowledge is always connected to the knower's exercise of power over against that which is known, making it as the object of knowledge. The problem arises, however, when the object of knowledge is God who is beyond our cognitive capacities.²⁸⁸ In this case, the power of the object should make itself apprehensible to the subject, and thus "only revelation... overcomes the dilemma which haunts all religious philosophy, namely, that the object escapes or transcends the subjects."²⁸⁹ In this light, Barth proposed a new starting point of theology – God.

At least after 1915, Barth took the simple statement that "God is God"²⁹⁰ as the starting point of his theology. If God is the Wholly Other, however, how can we know God and thus find a possibility of theology? Barth's answer is that, along with the knowledge of God, we need "courage to speak about God in spite of everything."²⁹¹ Especially, Barth learned from Franz Overbeck that "Theology cannot be re-established except with audacity,"²⁹² and the theme of audacity became central to Barth's thinking.²⁹³ One may still ask, nevertheless, how we can *dare* to talk about the incomprehensible God. Barth's answer is that God desires to be known and thus creates the *possibility* of God's being known. In confronting this 'impossible possibility,'

²⁸⁶ *GD*, 4-6.

²⁸⁷ *GD*, 33.

²⁸⁸ *CD* II/1, 187.

²⁸⁹ *GD*, 61. See also, *CD* II/1, 203-211.

²⁹⁰ See, for example, Barth, "Righteousness of God," in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (New York: Harper, 1957). See also McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 13-135; Paul H. Brazier, *Barth and Dostoevsky: A Study of the Influence of Fyodor Dostoevsky on the Development of Karl Barth (1915/1922)* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 86.

²⁹¹ *GD*, 51.

²⁹² Franz Overbeck quoted in Karl Barth, "Unsettled Questions for Theology Today," in *Theology and Church: Shorter Writings, 1920-1928*, trans. L. P. Smith (London: SCM, 1962), 72.

²⁹³ Jüngel even claimed that "This remark, as Barth used it, clearly marked the end of his previous theological pilgrimage... [and] the turning point in Barth's theological development." in Eberhard Jüngel, *Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy*, trans. Garrett E. Paul (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 55.

human beings can only pray for the Spirit's gracious work. This is the reason the introductory sections of Barth's three dogmatic cycles introduce prayer "as the attitude without which there can be no dogmatics."²⁹⁴ Prayer makes us to overcome the so-called 'false modesty of theology,' which is trapped by the agonistic use of Kant's critique of reason. Thus, on the human side, the possibility of theology comes from the humility and boldness of prayer,²⁹⁵ which in turn is created by the Spirit's intercession in and for us.

Although prayer enables the audacity of God-talk, it does not change the fact that humanity cannot posit God as a mere object. Without the objectivity of God, however, there can be no knowledge of God, and it risks returning to liberal theology's appeal to truth as an immediate presence to the individual.²⁹⁶ At this point, Barth reworked the relation between the objective reality of God and the knowing human subject, which has been a major epistemological issue since Kant.²⁹⁷ Barth argued that we cannot produce knowledge of God as the transcendental object. Rather, in a similar way to Husserl's concept of epoché,²⁹⁸ he seemed to bracket the objectivity of God, suspending judgement regarding this unknowable reality. In Barth's eyes, however, theology does not deal with a mere transcendental reality but God who truly reveals God-self to us, and thus, "[W]e can attach our hope to... the great divine disruption."²⁹⁹ God enters into the horizon of human cognitive capacities by positing God-self as an object of human knowledge. Drawn into this renewed subject-object relationship,

²⁹⁴ *CD* II/1, 23. See also *GD*, 3; *ChD*, 17.

²⁹⁵ *Prayer*, 18.

²⁹⁶ *CD* II/1, 49.

²⁹⁷ See Colin E. Gunton, *Revelation and Reason: Prolegomena to Systematic Theology*, ed. Paul Brazier (London: T. & T. Clark, 2008), 140-141; John Webster, *Barth*, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2004), 77; Asprey, *Eschatological Presence in Karl Barth's Göttingen Theology*, 58.

²⁹⁸ See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1960), 20-21.

²⁹⁹ *GD*, 50.

human beings are shaped as a secondary subject, receiving the reality and the possibility of knowing and speaking about God. To explain this revelatory event, Barth distinguished the primary objectivity of God from the secondary objectivity, “not by a lesser degree of truth, but by its particular form suitable for us, the creature.”³⁰⁰ Unlike a phenomenological distinction between the world of appearance and the super-sensible world, the primary objectivity and the secondary are inseparably connected by the act of God’s gracious self-revealing.³⁰¹

The distinction between the primary and the secondary objectivity, so crucial to making sense of the overall structure of Barth’s doctrine of revelation, cannot be properly conceived without relating it to the doctrine of the Trinity. God remains the subject of revelation even when positing God-self as an object. From this Barth crystallized his fundamental assumption that God is known only through God, arguing that the content of revelation should be identical with the form.³⁰² When we question *how* to know revelation, we in fact enquire *what* its content is. This inquiry is traced back to the question concerning *who* is the God who reveals God-self through God-self.³⁰³ God as the speaking subject reveals God-self in Christ, setting a relationship of reconciliation. Drawn into this fellowship through the Spirit, the human knower can conceive of God. What we have in revelation, therefore, is not a direct knowledge of God but a share of God’s knowledge of God-self as the Trinity, meeting God as the

³⁰⁰ CD II/1, 16.

³⁰¹ CD II/1, 49.

³⁰² GD, 62; CD I/1, 306; CD II/1, 44.

³⁰³ GD, 87-88; CD I/1, 186, 301. Torrance and Molnar rightly argued that the primacy of the ‘who’ question is related to the question of faith. See Paul D. Molnar, “The Role of the Holy Spirit in Knowing the Triune God,” in *Trinitarian Theology After Barth*, ed. Myk Habets and Phillip Tolliday (Eugene, Or: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 11; Alan J. 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), 22 n.32.

Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.³⁰⁴ In this sense, the doctrine of revelation has a trinitarian framework. The early Barth of *GD*, surprisingly, even proposed that the doctrine of revelation needs to be less christocentric and more trinitarian.³⁰⁵

This trinitarian structure of revelation is divided by Barth into the objective side of revelation in Christ and the subjective side in the Spirit.³⁰⁶ This distinction demonstrates that God's relation to us is not accidental but intrinsic to God's being from the very first.³⁰⁷ For Barth, the gracious work of the Spirit denies the *a priori* possibility of the human knowledge of God. Barth's aim is not to argue for the *a priori* human inability, but to show the Spirit's creation of the new being who is *capax Dei*.³⁰⁸ In this respect, Barth's pneumatology, not his anthropology, is a proper setting for examining his rejection of the second source of revelation and natural theology.³⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the Spirit's *noetic* function has often been misunderstood as an epistemological 'addendum' to what Christ already achieved *ontically*. However, as shown in the link between Jesus' resurrection in Acts 1 and the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2,³¹⁰ Barth claimed that the Spirit who creates the reality of subjective revelation is none other than the Spirit of the risen Christ. In this respect, Barth's division between the objective side

³⁰⁴ *CD* II/1, 49.

³⁰⁵ *GD*, 91.

³⁰⁶ There are differences in Barth's *GD* and *CD* on the way he ordered the possibility and the reality of revelation. In *GD*, Barth initially focused on the objective possibility of revelation in Christ and the subjective possibility in the Spirit, although he presupposed the reality of these possibilities. In contrast, the Barth of *CD* clarified that the possibility comes from the reality, not vice versa. Compare *GD*, 131, 168 with *CD* I/2, 1, 203.

³⁰⁷ *GD*, 128.

³⁰⁸ This point is succinctly elaborated in Herbert Hartwell, *The Theology of Karl Barth: An Introduction* (London: Duckworth, 1964), 84.

³⁰⁹ *CD* II/1 172-178. See also Karl Barth, "No! Answer to Emil Brunner," in *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace": with Introduction by John Baillie*, trans. Pierre Fraenkel (London: Geoffrey Bles, The Centenary Press, 1946); "The First Command as an Axiom of Theology," in *The Way of Theology in Karl Barth: Essays and Comments*, ed. Martin Rumscheidt (Allison Park, Pa: Pickwick, 1986).

³¹⁰ *CD* I/2, 222.

and the subjective is a didactic one to explain how human beings can share the reality of revelation in their life.³¹¹

In short, in the shadow of Kantian philosophy, Barth reworked the subject-object structure of epistemology to make room for revelation. The incomprehensible God reveals God-self in the world of sensible objects by wearing “the garment of creaturely reality.”³¹² The identity between the primary objectivity of God and the secondary objectivity invites us to understand God as the Trinity, whose self-revelation in Christ already presupposes our hearing in the Spirit. It is noteworthy that Barth’s emphasis upon the Trinity makes room for prayer in the doctrine of revelation. If the human knower acknowledges that he/she can have knowledge of God by being drawn into the christologically structured subject-object relation, what he/she can do is to ask for the Spirit’s mediation. Therefore, the invocation of the Spirit is the act of shaping the human agent as a secondary subject. Barth explained it as follows:

Those who stand before God in the Spirit can only pray. They do not think they already are or have or do or possess anything. To pray is not to have.... We must stay with the petition: *Come*, Creator Spirit. We cannot make it into an indicative or a perfect as though the Spirit *had* come. Here again we have a perpetual operation. This is how we stand before God, how we receive revelation, how we are the Lord’s [Rom 14:8], in this way and no other.³¹³

This humble attitude of prayer brackets our desire to domesticate God as the object of our knowledge, and its audacity animates us to seek and attend to the self-revealing God in daily life. As I will show in the next subsection, therefore, Barth’s renewed understanding of revelation eventually results in a new vision of the spiritual life.

³¹¹ CD I/2, 1-44. See also Hartwell, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 72.

³¹² CD I/1, 166.

³¹³ GD, 127.

1.3. Revelation and Mystery: Towards a Sacramental Theology of Revelation

The previous subsection investigated Barth's question concerning how to attribute the term 'object' to God as the self-revealing 'subject.' I will now examine how Barth's distinction between the primary and the secondary objectivity leads us to see revelation as an indirect knowledge. As Gunton rightly observed, the Enlightenment's appeal to immediacy marginalized the place of truth being mediated.³¹⁴ It followed that truth was understood as an immediate presence to the individual, prioritizing human reason or feeling over revelation. Influenced by Polanyi's concept of indwelling knowledge,³¹⁵ Gunton argued that a human agent understands the world in and through one's engagement with it, integrating experiences and intuitions about life into this knowledge.³¹⁶ Indwelling in the body and in the world, one participates in the realm of secondary objects rather than immediately perceiving the outer world in one's consciousness.

In a similar manner, Barth argued that our knowledge of God is always mediated and indirect because it deals with God "clothed under the sign and veil of other objects different from Himself."³¹⁷ In Barth's eyes, thus, a theology of immediacy not only resulted in an improper understanding of revelation as something directly given to the human consciousness, but also marginalized the Spirit's mediatory role.³¹⁸ In this regard, Barth's emphasis upon the indirect nature of revelation offers us a possibility of rehabilitating both a proper doctrine of mediation and a robust pneumatology. This

³¹⁴ Colin E. Gunton, *A Brief Theology of Revelation: The 1993 Warfield Lectures* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 1-7.

³¹⁵ See Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, Rev. ed. 1st Torchbook ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1964); *The Tacit Dimension: Terry Lectures* 1962 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967).

³¹⁶ See Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983), 143-150; Gunton, *A Brief Theology of Revelation*, 34; Gunton, *Revelation and Reason*, 50, 54.

³¹⁷ *CD* II/1, 16.

³¹⁸ See Barth's criticism towards a modern theology of immediacy in *PT*, 444-452; *GD*, 61, 336.

crucial theme will be discussed here with regard to Barth's sacramental view of revelation and to his reflection upon the mystery of God.

First, in order that God reveals God-self in an intelligible manner, revelation inevitably requires creaturely media. God can be known to humanity when God "meets humanity in the garment of creaturely reality"³¹⁹ by intruding into the realm of human cognition. Barth's concern here is not to promote a general epistemological theory of mediation, but to offer a Christian doctrine of revelation centred on the Word of God. Barth claimed that there are three forms of the Word, respectively connected to different creaturely media.³²⁰ (1) Jesus Christ is the Word of God revealed. This is the prior reality in which God is the only speaker, and on which the other two forms depend. The humanity of Jesus serves as the primary sign pointing to God.³²¹ (2) The Bible is the Word of God written. It is a second address in which the Word is witnessed by specific people (the prophets and apostles). It mediates the Word through the history of Israel, poetry, saga, wisdom, law and other literary forms of the Bible. (3) Preaching is the Word of God proclaimed. It is a third address in which numerous human agents engage. It witnesses the Word through the medium of human speech, rhetoric, narrative and voice.³²² It follows that God speaks to humanity through a mediated addressing and hearing, and we conceive of and speak about God by participating in this world of secondary objectivity.

At this point, for Barth, the Spirit's mediatory role is particularly significant. On the one hand, the Spirit mediates the threefold form of the Word with their media. The Spirit holds together Jesus' divinity and humanity in the event of incarnation; the Spirit

³¹⁹ *CD* I/1, 166.

³²⁰ *GD*, 14-18; *CD* I/1, 88.

³²¹ *CD* II/1, 54.

³²² *CD* I/1, 165.

inspired the prophets and apostles when the Bible was written; the Spirit makes the past event of God's revelation real and effective for Christians here and now when the Word is preached. On the other hand, the Spirit mediates between any one form of the Word and the other two forms. Despite the diversity of media, it is God who reveals God-self in the unity of the Word. Accordingly, each form of the Word is *indirectly* identified with the other forms in God's act of self-revealing. Because the crucified and risen Christ has spoken and continues to speak in and through them in the Spirit, argued Barth, "the direct Word of God meets us only in this twofold mediacy."³²³ Therefore, the creaturely media for incarnation, Scripture and kerygma constitute together the sign-world used by God.

Barth's focus on the Word does not imply a denial that God may speak in other ways.³²⁴ His supposedly exclusive view is, in fact, a sacramental inclusivism viewed from the perspective of the Word. Analogous to the Spirit's procession from the Father and the Son, preaching comes from the incarnation and the Bible.³²⁵ Just as God is present in history through the Spirit, so the Word is present in the world through proclamation. Drawing parallels between the Spirit and preaching, Barth offered a sacramental doctrine of revelation. Although he rejected the idea that creation mediates God independently of the Word, he did not deny a possibility that the Word can be perceived within and outside the church.³²⁶ He wrote, "[I]n, with, and under Christian preaching, revelation and scripture are present too, but not otherwise. In this regard we

³²³ *CD I/1*, 121. See also *GD*, 15.

³²⁴ See *CD I/1*, 55.

³²⁵ For further study of Barth's defense of *filioque* and his analogous structuring of the threefold form of the Word, see *GD*, 16, 129-130; *CD I/1*, 120-124, 477-487; David Guretzki, "The Genesis and Systematic Function of the Filioque in Karl Barth's 'Church Dogmatics': A Dissertation" (Montreal: McGill University, 2006); Myk Habets, "Filioque? Nein: A Proposal for Coherent Coinherence," in *Trinitarian Theology after Barth*, ed. Myk Habets and Phillip Tolliday (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2011).

³²⁶ In a similar manner, Jüngel demonstrated Barth's view of God's being-as-sacramental-reality, mainly analyzing *CD II/1*. See Jüngel, *God's Being Is in Becoming*, 60-69.

are not restricting the term ‘Christian preaching’ to sermons from the pulpit..., but including in it whatever we all ‘preach’ to ourselves in the quiet of our own rooms.”³²⁷ This radical and inclusive definition of proclamation by the early Barth of *GD* may come from his still undeveloped ecclesiology.³²⁸ Nevertheless, the above quote shows that he already had begun to understand revelation as a sacramental event, utilizing the Lutheran circumlocution of sacramental union – in, with and under (*in, mit und unter*).³²⁹

In *CD*, Barth clarified in a more christological manner how the secularity of revelation results in a sacramental view. He straightforwardly said that “[r]evelation means the giving of signs. We can say quite simply that revelation means sacrament.”³³⁰ God has spoken and continues to speak to humanity indirectly by taking up creaturely media.³³¹ The event of revelation is, therefore, not only God’s presence in the world, but also the honouring of the creature in God’s sacramental conscription. However, not every revelatory sign has the same sacramental significance. The plurality of sacramental signs is limited and ordered by the sacramental priority of Jesus Christ as “the first, original and controlling signs of all signs.”³³² Barth wrote:

The fact that God... is known by man does not happen at a stroke and once and for all, in the way that it did of course at a stroke and once and for all in the unity of the eternal Word with the man Jesus at the heart of time. It happens in the whole circumference of this centre, in the whole circumference of sacramental reality, in a succession of attestations and cognitions, which all expect and indicate each other, which all determine and are determined by each other.³³³

³²⁷ *GD*, 16.

³²⁸ The mature Barth admitted that it is complicated to establish the relationship of the Word to the words of secular culture by moving beyond the words of scripture and church proclamation. He proposed to conceive of the words of secular as the secular parables of the kingdom, still distancing himself from those who advocate natural theology. See *CD* IV/3, 113-114.

³²⁹ *UCR* I, 20.

³³⁰ *CD* II/1, 52.

³³¹ *CD* II/1, 17.

³³² *CD* II/1, 199. Barth further developed this christocentric view in his doctrine of reconciliation to the extent that the incarnation is the one and only sacrament. See *CD* IV/2, 55.

³³³ *CD* II/1, 61-62.

This quotation demonstrates that in the world of secondary objectivity there are many signs, pointing to the revelation of Jesus Christ. The humanity of Jesus Christ objectively structures the world of the sacramental reality, and the outpouring of the Spirit enables the human knower to conceive of revelation by engaging in this christologically structured chain of signs.

Second, Barth's emphasis upon the sacramental nature of revelation animated him to reflect deeply upon the meaning of God's incomprehensibility. It is widely known that Barth severely criticized negative theology as a sort of human disobedience to the self-revealing God, because of its risk of equating the living God with a transcendent concept of the Supreme Being.³³⁴ However, as Wissink persuasively demonstrated, there is also another form of negative theology, which distinguishes between the false hiddenness of God discovered by humanity and the true hiddenness of God known by revelation.³³⁵ Barth obviously developed the latter version of negative theology, arguing that God cannot be known without a creaturely veil, but God takes this veil to conceal God-self in revelation.

In light of the dialectic of veiling and unveiling, God is both *knowable* and *incomprehensible*. As illustrated by God's revelation of the name YHWH, God is *knowable* because God gives knowability to us. In the marginal note of *GD*, Barth mentioned in a trinitarian manner that "[i]n Christ God encounters us. Believing and obeying, we stand before God. True and adequate knowledge of God takes place under

³³⁴ *Romans* II, 317.

³³⁵ Jozef Wissink, "Two Forms of Negative Theology Explained Using Thomas Aquinas," in *Flight of the Gods: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Theology*, ed. Ilse Nina Bulhof and Laurens ten Kate (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 103-104.

this condition insofar as the Spirit is thus given to us.”³³⁶ Nevertheless, God is *incomprehensible* in the fact that our knowledge has to do with a medium that imparts the knowledge of God to us. The human subject apprehends God by means of a creaturely object chosen by God, but in this other objectivity the acts of distinguishing and uniting take place between the knower and the object.³³⁷ It follows that the mystery of God is not merely about our epistemological inability but about the nature of God’s revelation.³³⁸ Every medium, even the life of Jesus, remains an enigma and mystery in revelation. Thus, Barth eventually distanced himself both from so-called mystical thinking and from Kant’s restriction of reason. Men and women are tempted to talk about the general human difficulty in speaking about God, but it is God’s revelation which determines both human ability and inability to know God.³³⁹ The dialectic of veiling and unveiling, nevertheless, is not mathematically symmetric but teleologically ordered in the sense that veiling is structured towards unveiling as its goal.³⁴⁰

Barth’s discussion of the hiddenness of God culminates in his emphasis upon the inseparable relationship between the mystery of God and spirituality. As Sykes properly pointed out, it is essential to appreciate Barth’s spirituality in order to understand him,³⁴¹ but this theme has been improperly ignored. Barth related spirituality not primarily with human experience, but with revelation, especially with the mystery of the Word. He wrote, “God’s Word is a mystery in the sense that it truly strikes us spiritually, i.e., in all circumstances only through the Holy Spirit, in all its indirectness

³³⁶ *GD*, 331, n. 4.

³³⁷ *CD II/1*, 17.

³³⁸ *CD II/1*, 40.

³³⁹ *GD*, 360.

³⁴⁰ *CD II/1*, 236.

³⁴¹ Stephen Sykes, “Barth’s Achievement and Spirituality,” *The Expository Times* 93, no. 56 (1981): 57.

only directly from God.”³⁴² In this regard, Barth’s spirituality is not *Spiritualität* but *Geistlichkeit*. One may perceive *this* mystery as an object of experience, but one cannot describe this unique object with the same clarity and certainty with which one talks about and makes sense of other objects. Rather, to perceive the mystery of God is comparable to paint a bird in flight, inevitably fossilizing the vividness of this living creature.³⁴³ Due to the dynamic and mysterious nature of revelation, one must stand before the hiddenness of God, “letting oneself be continually led, always making a step, always being in movement from the experience felt at one time or the thought grasped at one time to the opposite experience and thought.”³⁴⁴ In this regard, revelation also unveils something veiled on the human side³⁴⁵ – away from the illusion of the autonomous self and the affirmation of the human person as a pilgrim moving towards home. Barth wrote:

God’s revealing of himself to man, his making himself known out of his hiddenness, presupposes that man is separated from God.... Alone, away from God, man is in a far country.... This man is not at home in the houses in and between which he comes and goes. His home is with God, but he is alone, not with God. Hence this pilgrim man presupposed by revelation cannot be identical with the man who is at home with God, who does not have to desire God.³⁴⁶

This passage shows that Barth’s spirituality is that of pilgrimage, his theology is a theology of pilgrimage and his church is a community of pilgrimage.³⁴⁷ To encounter the mystery of God means to take a spiritual journey by the direction of the Spirit, hearing God’s Word in faith and obedience. This act of hearing is impossible for us, so

³⁴² *CD* I/1, 183.

³⁴³ Barth, “The Christian’s Place in Society,” 282.

³⁴⁴ *CD* I/1, 207.

³⁴⁵ Karl Barth, “The Christian Understanding of Revelation,” in *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings, 1946-52*, ed. R.G. Smith, trans. E.M. Delacour and S. Godman (London: SCM, 1954), 235.

³⁴⁶ *GD*, 73.

³⁴⁷ See *CD* III/2, 640; *CD* IV/2, 836; *ET*, 127.

we should pray for the miracle of grace by the Spirit.³⁴⁸ Unlike criticisms that Barth's Spirit theology leaves no room for an active human role, his pneumatologically oriented spirituality proposes a new vision of the Christian life, which is hidden to those who do not receive a gift of faith, but in which "everything [comes] about in a perfectly human way."³⁴⁹ It is 'human' in the sense that one accepts revelation and conducts one's life by virtue of one's own reasoning, decision and action. It is 'perfect' because one can actualize one's genuine humanity, liberated from blindness and bondage to sin, in the Spirit's consummation.

In short, Barth's view of the indirect nature of revelation results in his sacramental doctrine of revelation. God unveils God-self through the creaturely media, which also veils God-self at the same time. Barth's doctrine of the incomprehensible God is presented as the place for examining his unique spirituality, which shows that we are invited by revelation to live a Christian life in our particular situation under the Spirit's guidance. Moreover, it results in an open-ended character to his theology,³⁵⁰ which prohibits the human knower from constructing a self-contained system in which the freedom of God cannot have its proper place. At this point, however, one may ask how human language can refer to the self-revealing God, who also unveils God-self. By what right did Barth write all six million words of the *CD* to tell what he heard from the Bible? The next subsection, therefore, will deal with Barth's view of theological language.

1.4. Revelation and Language: The Spirit's Restoration of Theological Language

³⁴⁸ *CD* I/1, 185.

³⁴⁹ Karl Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God According to the Teaching of the Reformation: Recalling the Scottish Confession of 1560, Gifford Lectures 1937-38*, trans. J. L. M. Haire and Ian Henderson, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), 108.

³⁵⁰ See William Stacy Johnson, *The Mystery of God: Karl Barth and the Postmodern Foundations* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 29-30.

The crisis of theological language in modernity was a serious threat to theology in general and to the doctrine of revelation in particular. The challenge of Kant's critical philosophy, especially, questioned both the possibility of revelation and the legitimacy of theological language. For Kant, knowledge begins with experience, and thus reason can never produce the knowledge of transcendental ideas – soul, world and God.³⁵¹ This results in his rejection of what he called 'dogmatic anthropomorphism,' which had been a popular mode of talking about God's nature, and in his approval of 'symbolic anthropomorphism,' which focuses on God's *relationship* to the world.³⁵² One may observe here that Kant's critique of reason results in his restriction of the referential power of theological language. Influenced by Kant, Schleiermacher argued that finite understanding, which is exercised to conceive of the objects in the world, cannot make sense of God, and that language does not have capacity for describing God, who has no objective properties.³⁵³ Schleiermacher attempted to go beyond this impasse by appealing to the realm of feeling where he sought to find the possibilities of dogmatic statements.³⁵⁴ He defined God as the 'whence' of the feeling of absolute dependence, and understood that the function of theological language is to refer to and communicate this feeling. It is beyond doubt that Schleiermacher sought to make room for theological language, but his proposal undermined any claim that dogmatic terms could be attributed to objective reality. The notion of 'reference' itself became problematic in the twentieth century, as 'non-realism' became a distinctive philosophical and theological trend.³⁵⁵ It questioned how and to what extent language represents or corresponds to

³⁵¹ Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, 88.

³⁵² Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, 91.

³⁵³ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 18, 25-26.

³⁵⁴ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 5-12.

³⁵⁵ For a brief review of realism and non-realism, see Rowan Williams, "Foreword," in *God and Reality: Essays on Christian Non-Realism*, ed. Colin Crowder (London: Mowbray, 1997), v-ix; Graham Ward,

reality.³⁵⁶ Biblical and dogmatic statements, thus, risked being understood mainly as mere expressions of human subjectivity rather than representing the reality of God.

Barth's doctrine of revelation was, in some sense, his answer to the crisis of theological language and the challenge of non-realism.³⁵⁷ At some points he appeared to agree with non-realists, in that he was critical of the naïve correspondence view of language in modern philosophy and theology.³⁵⁸ Nevertheless, his theology cannot be aligned with non-realism because he attempted to rehabilitate the referential power of theological language and to reorganize the framework of realism. In particular, his study of Anselm's ontological proof of God showed him where and how to fulfil these aims:

For the truth of thinking or speaking stands or falls by the relations of its sign language to what exists independently of its sign. Thinking of the *vox significans rem* could only be true as an integrating element in any thinking of the *res significata*. The thinking of the *vox significans rem* in itself, in abstraction from the thought of something that really exists, or set over against it as something different, would have to be described as false.³⁵⁹

This quotation shows that language cannot properly refer to content when it seeks its referential power from the nature of language itself. Insofar as the method of referring arises from and follows the content, the word can acquire capacity for describing the reality. It means that theology should begin from the content of reference, not vice

"Barth, Modernity, and Postmodernity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 284-287; Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 118-141.

³⁵⁶ On the issue of representation, see Graham Ward, "Theology and the Crisis of Representation," in *Literature and Theology at Century's End*, ed. Gregory Salyer and Robert Detweiler (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 131-158; Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 19-50.

³⁵⁷ In this regard, Hans Frei rightly claimed that Barth's attempt to rehabilitate theological language animated him to create his unique literary style. See Hans Frei, "Eberhard Busch's Biography of Karl Barth," in *Karl Barth in Re-View: Posthumous Works Reviewed and Assessed*, ed. Martin Rumscheidt (Pittsburgh, Pa: Pickwick Press, 1981), 110-113.

³⁵⁸ Barth, *CD III/1*, 345. It is noteworthy that Graham Ward argued that *CD II/1* is, in fact, Barth's explicit critique of the correspondence view of language. However, Ward's depiction of Barth as a non-realist should be balanced by Barth's effort to rediscover theological realism. See Ward, "Barth, Modernity, and Postmodernity," 285.

³⁵⁹ Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum: Anselm's Proof of the Existence of God in the Context of his Theological Scheme*, trans. I. W. Robertson (London: SCM, 1960), 164.

versa.³⁶⁰ This methodological determination penetrates Barth's mature realism and tells in favour of the referential power of language.

The Barth of *CD* offered a more christologically oriented view of language: God's self-disclosure in the event of revelation constitutes the basis for theological realism both ontologically and epistemologically. God establishes God-self as true reality in the creaturely realm by manifesting God-self in Jesus Christ. This self-revealing reality is not an abstract principle, but the triune God who creates, reconciles and redeems the world, thereby becoming the ontological basis for all other realities.³⁶¹ The possibility of speaking about God in language comes from this self-established reality. Barth wrote:

We have said something positive by the reference, of course, only to the extent that it was a reference, i.e., a reference to the event of the real knowledge of the Word of God. *The power of this reference does not lie in itself; it lies in that to which it refers.* That to which it refers, that event, the factual priority of the certainty of God over all self-certainty, the fact of the knowledge of God's Word that does not presuppose its possibility in man, but, *coming to man, brings the possibility with it* – all this is something we can "presuppose" only as man can "presuppose" God.³⁶²

This paragraph shows that Barth's doctrine of language is rooted, not in a general linguistic theory, but in a distinctively Christian doctrine of God. Barth was well aware of the inadequacy of biblical and theological language, saying that "the language of ecclesiastical dogma and that of the Bible is not exempt from [the crisis of the hiddenness of God]."³⁶³ This radical acknowledgement of the limitation of language has often led scholars to draw parallels between Barth's theology and Derrida's appeal to

³⁶⁰ *CD* I/1, 367.

³⁶¹ In this regard, for Webster, Barth's ontological exclusivism is in fact an inclusivism. See Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*, 28-9. For insightful studies on God's relation to other realities in Barth's theology, see Ingolf U. Dalferth, "Karl Barth's Eschatological Realism," in *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*, ed. Stephen Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 17-19; George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 70-75.

³⁶² *CD* I/1, 197 (emphasis added).

³⁶³ *CD* II/1, 195.

linguistic unsuitability.³⁶⁴ However, unlike Derrida, Barth's view is rather more teleological, aiming to demonstrate God's being with humanity in revelation.³⁶⁵ He affirmed the teleological dialectic of veiling and unveiling by exegeting John 1:14: "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." This christological statement demonstrates that there is an intra-trinitarian basis for our knowledge and talk of God.³⁶⁶ He linked this inapprehensible basis within the Godhead to actual God-talk by invoking the Spirit as the Lord of language.³⁶⁷ The referential function of language is only an indirect and derivative one, which is dependent upon the linguistic mediation of Scriptures and proclamations in the Spirit.³⁶⁸ Language is still inadequate for describing God even in God's act of unveiling, but the givenness of the referential possibility is never cancelled out even in the act of veiling. This dialectic of veiling and unveiling makes the role of the free human agent particularly significant in the fact that one can neither freeze one's own attentiveness to revelation, nor be satisfied with the already addressed dogmatic language. In one's prayer and openness to the Spirit, the human agent constantly hastens to hear and speak about the Word in one's own particular condition and specific manner.

In light of this miracle of grace, two crucial aspects of theological language need to be mentioned in relation to the act of human linguistic agency. First, for Barth,

³⁶⁴ See Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Johnson, *The Mystery of God*; Geoff Thompson, "'Our Lines and Concepts Continually Break Apart': Language, Mystery and God in Barth," in *Karl Barth: A Future for Postmodern Theology?*, ed. Christiaan Mostert and Geoff Thompson (Hindmarsh: Australian Theological Forum, 2000); Walter James Lowe, *Theology and Difference: The Wound of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Isolde Andrews, *Deconstructing Barth: A Study of the Complementary Methods in Karl Barth and Jacques Derrida* (New York: Peter Lang Pub Inc, 1996).

³⁶⁵ CD II/1, 197, 215. See also Thompson, "Our Lines And Concepts Continually Break Apart," 197; Webster, *Barth*, 82; Stephanus F Du Toit, "Revelation or Reveilation?: Barth and Postmodernism," *The Heythrop Journal* 40, no. 1 (1999): 1-18.

³⁶⁶ CD I/1, 119.

³⁶⁷ See CD I/1, 182, 208; CD II/2, 158.

³⁶⁸ Barth called this methodological decision "a thinking after of the fact that God has revealed himself." *GD*, 151.

theological words cannot make sense of the object by themselves, and thus they should be conceived through the associations and connection within the linguistic sign-world in which they are used. The meaning of theological language, accordingly, is never fixed, nor effectively determined by the human agency's intention.³⁶⁹ This does not merely mean that, as structural linguistics suggests, a language is a social structure which has always been developed before our use of it, so that meaning is produced and reproduced within the web of interconnected linguistic units. Barth's doctrine of language might have some affinities with this view, but the legitimacy and the possibility of theological language is not based on a pre-existing linguistic structure but on God's free act of self-revealing. Barth argued, therefore, "Like the subject-matter of Christianity, Church proclamation must also remain free in the last resort, free to receive the command which it must always receive afresh from that free life of the subject-matter of Christianity."³⁷⁰ This freedom allows us to enrich the meaning of and to expand the scope of theological language, actively coping with the development of human linguistic capabilities and the diversity of meanings caused by the practice of language in daily life.³⁷¹

Second, the mature Barth further reflected upon the role of linguistic agency with reference to the secular nature of theological language. Just as God assumes the creaturely medium of language to speak to humanity, so Christians adopt the language of the secular world to communicate with others.³⁷² Christians are totally dependent upon their secular surroundings, because God establishes the church *in the word*. They

³⁶⁹ CD I/1, 77-78. See also Torrance, *Persons in Communion*, 28-30; Fergus Kerr, *Theology After Wittgenstein* (London: SPCK, 1997), 152.

³⁷⁰ CD I/1, 87.

³⁷¹ See Hunsinger's instructive study of Barth's realism in relation to his use of analogical language in George Hunsinger, "Beyond Literalism and Expressivism: Karl Barth's Hermeneutical Realism," in *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2000).

³⁷² CD IV/3, 735.

are also free from it, because *God* establishes the church in the world. This twofold determination of the Christian community endorses its borrowing of language from the world on the one hand, and resists identifying the language of the church with general human speech on the other. As a part of its environment, the church does not have its own vocabulary, grammar, syntax and style by which the Word of God is expressed. When secular terms are adopted, God sanctifies them adding a new function and capability for proclaiming the Word.³⁷³ Drawn into God's revelatory act, worldly language is stretched to fit a new object, bearing the marks of God's coming to the world in revelation.³⁷⁴ The language of the church, however, inevitably conceals divine revelation even in the event of disclosure. In the act of borrowing and utilizing worldly terms, therefore, Christians "should keep silence again, enjoying their Sabbath and leaving it to the Word of God to speak for itself"³⁷⁵

In short, for Barth, revelation means God's entry into the world of conceptuality. In God's revelatory movement, theological language is taken up by the grace of God and determined to participation in the veracity of revelation by the *Spiritus Creator*.³⁷⁶ Because the basis for theological language is not human linguistic capabilities but the work of the Spirit, human words "are not alienated from their original object [God]... but restored to it."³⁷⁷ This gift of grace and faith constitutes us as the linguistic agent who participates in God's act by hearing from and speaking about God in daily life with

³⁷³ CD IV/3, 737.

³⁷⁴ Barth's view of human linguistic event is similar to what contemporary theologians talk about the metaphorical nature of religious language, although he did not articulated this theme explicitly. See following studies on metaphor and religious language: Eberhard Jüngel, "Metaphorical Truth: Reflections on Theological Metaphor as a Contribution to a Hermeneutics of Narrative Theology," in *Theological Essays I*, trans. J. B. Webster (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989); Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*; Paul Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 45-69; Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (London: SCM, 1983), 1-66.

³⁷⁵ CD IV/3, 739.

³⁷⁶ CD II/1, 213.

³⁷⁷ CD II/1, 229.

grateful response, prayerful acknowledgement, accompanying joy and wondering awe.³⁷⁸

2. Contemporaneity of Revelation in the Spirit

Barth's discussion of the doctrine of revelation leads us to question how the past event of Christ's revelation can be conceived through the Bible and proclamation here and now. This section will examine Barth's concept of contemporaneity, another underpinning theme in his doctrine of revelation. I will first discuss Lessing's distinction between the truth of reason and the truth of historical fact, which greatly influenced Barth's understanding of historical contingency. I will then turn to Barth's doctrine of contemporaneity, with special attention to the nature of God's Word, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the interpretation of the Bible.

2.1. Lessing and Revelation: Either Eternity or Contingency

Christianity's emphasis upon the revelation of God in Christ inevitably results in the problem of how to connect the past event of Christ with present life. As Paul Fiddes rightly put it, Christian theology "affirms this extraordinary significance of one *particular* event" on the one hand, and studies "the nature of this *link* between present salvation and past event" on the other.³⁷⁹ Barth paid serious attention to this issue when basing his theological reasoning primarily on the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Christ. In this regard, it is not at all surprising that Barth often reflected

³⁷⁸ CD II/1, 216-220.

³⁷⁹ Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1989), 3-4.

on the meaning of Lessing's concept of the ugly broad ditch between "the accidental truths from history" and "the necessary truths of reason."³⁸⁰

Lessing's "On the Proof of the Spirit and of the Power" questions whether the historical testimony of miracles and fulfilled prophecy can prove the certainty of Christian truth. In his eyes, the class of historical truths consists of second-hand reports, as distinct from direct experience, and thus cannot reliably demonstrate the central truth of Christianity, which he understood as endowed with the necessary truth of reason. He further argued that only the truth of reason is absolutely certain, whereas the truth of historical fact is contingent, accidental and thus dubitable. Lessing wrote:

That the Christ, against whose resurrection I can raise no important historical objection, therefore declared himself to be the Son of God; that his disciples therefore believed him to be such; this I gladly believe from my heart.... But to jump with that historical truth to a quite different class of truths, and to demand of me that I should form all my metaphysical and moral ideas accordingly.... That, then, is the ugly, broad ditch which I cannot get across, however often and however earnestly I have tried to make the leap. If anyone can help me over it, let him do it, I beg him, I adjure him. He will deserve a divine reward from me.³⁸¹

For Lessing, therefore, any attempt to argue for the truth of Christianity on the basis of historical testimony is from the outset futile and improper. Unlike the contingent truth of history, the necessary truth of reason is real for us to the extent that it can be felt and experienced by ourselves.

Those who take the eighteenth-century's discovery of historical consciousness seriously, and especially those who conceive of the importance of Lessing's challenge, will have to cope with this ugly wide ditch between the contingent truth of history and the necessary truth of reason. In light of Lessing's distinction, for example, Kierkegaard suspected that the truth of Christianity cannot be acquired in a purely objective way; an

³⁸⁰ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Lessing's Theological Writings: Selections in Translation*, trans. Henry Chadwick (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1956), 53.

³⁸¹ Lessing, *Lessing's Theological Writings*, 54-55.

objective fact does nothing for us until we subjectively appropriate it. Historical facts, therefore, should not be confused with the truth of faith, which is fundamentally subjective.³⁸² Against the backdrop of Lessing's concept of the ugly ditch, Kierkegaard claimed that the transition whereby eternal truth is built upon historical reports is the 'leap.'³⁸³ In a similar manner, in his *Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard radicalized Lessing's distinction saying that a contemporary follower of Christ had no advantage over a follower at second hand. Although the former may be called an historical eyewitness, historical knowledge cannot make him/her a disciple. One can be an original disciple by subjectively relating oneself to the content of faith, whose condition is endowed only by God.³⁸⁴ This leap of faith is a true and necessary prerequisite for being a disciple, or a real contemporary of Jesus, regardless of when and where one exists. In short, just as the eternal truth of reason is opposed to the contingency of history for Lessing, so the subjective 'how' of faith is opposed to the objective 'what' of faith for Kierkegaard. By re-defining 'contemporaneity' in an existential way, Kierkegaard proposed a solution to Lessing's distinction between the contingent truth of history and the eternal truth of reason.

Along with Kierkegaard, Barth responded to Lessing's challenge by reflecting on the meaning of 'contemporaneity.' On the one hand, Barth highly prized Lessing's deep interest in the nature of divine revelation and its relationship to historical events. For in pursuing this interest, Lessing ironically demonstrated that revelation is not a reality which can be fully explained by historical proofs. On the other hand, this Enlightenment writer sought to interpret revealed truth as the truth of reason, thereby

³⁸² Søren Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, ed. Walter Lowrie, trans. David F. Swenson (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 23-24; *Philosophical Fragments; Johannes Climacus*, trans. Edna H. Hong and Howard V. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 1.

³⁸³ Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 90-92.

³⁸⁴ Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 64-65.

finally making revelation as something that can be ‘educated.’³⁸⁵ At this point, Barth raised two fundamental objections: first, despite Lessing’s discovery of the category of contingent history in the doctrine of revelation, he did not consider how the biblical view of God as the Lord of history can affect our conception of history in a strikingly different way.³⁸⁶ Second, in this light, Lessing failed to see that the truth of Christianity revealed in the history of Jesus can be defined in terms of the accidental truth of history.³⁸⁷ Against the backdrop of Lessing’s challenges, Barth offered his unique doctrine of contemporaneity, in which the Spirit makes the past event real and effective to the life of present believers.

2.2. The Nature of the Word and Contemporaneity

Barth’s fundamental assumption is that, if revelation can be contemporaneous to everyone, its possibility should not be found within human epistemological capacity, but based on the Word of God *per se*. In his *CD* I/1, especially, Barth developed the concept of ‘contingent contemporaneity’ (*kontingente Gleichzeitigkeit*). Seeing from human eyes, there is a wide ditch between the original event of revelation in Christ and our hearing of it. From the perspective of the dynamic act of God, however, the Word always relates itself to the creation, breaks into the world always in a new way, and brings salvation to us by overcoming the temporal gap between the past event and our present existence. Barth argued, accordingly, that “The fact that God’s Word is God’s act means first its contingent contemporaneity.”³⁸⁸

³⁸⁵ *PT*, 248-249.

³⁸⁶ *PT*, 249.

³⁸⁷ *DO*, 109.

³⁸⁸ *CD* I/1, 145.

It is noteworthy that Barth made Lessing's dualistic view of the two classes of truth more complex by distinguishing three different temporal horizons. Analogous to his concept of the threefold form of the divine Word, he claimed that there are the times of God's original speech, of its witness in the prophets and apostles, and in the church.³⁸⁹ There are distinctive orders and differences between them, but all of them are at the same time a saying of God to humanity.³⁹⁰ This radical identity comes from the fact that the Word of God itself is God's act for and in the world, through which the hearer is grasped by God and put in God's presence. The theme of contemporaneity, therefore, cannot be properly understood in terms of the general problem of historical understanding, in which Lessing could only see the ugly wide ditch. It is the biblical witnesses that would inform us how to understand an accidental truth of history in reference to divine revelation. The Old and New Testaments do not perceive the eternal nature of revelation abstractly, but see it within the concrete context of God's act in history. God does not speak to general humanity but particular people, through specific proclamations according to particular biblical texts, which in turn attest to the concreteness of divine revelation in Jesus of Nazareth.³⁹¹

In this light Barth held that "[t]he Incarnation of the Word is an extremely concrete event.... God was not ashamed to exist in this accidental state."³⁹² Barth's emphasis upon the particularity of revelation eventually results in his objecting to Lessing's distinction between contingency and eternity. In place of this distinction, Barth offered a twofold contingency – a contingent *illic et tunc* from the standpoint of the speaking God and a contingent *hic et nunc* from the standpoint of hearer of the

³⁸⁹ CD I/1, 145. See also Karl Barth, *God in Action: Theological Addresses*, trans. Elmer George Homrighausen and Karl Julius Ernst (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 16.

³⁹⁰ CD I/1, 145.

³⁹¹ CD I/1, 147-148; *God in Action*, 11-12.

³⁹² DO, 109.

Word.³⁹³ There is no such thing as a necessary truth of reason which can be sought apart from the concrete act of God in history, and the eternal truth of Christianity cannot be defined in terms of timelessness. Seeing from the nature of the divine Word, which surpasses the distinction between eternal truth and accidental truth, revelation always takes place, and is perceived, in and through contingent historical events.

In short, Barth responded to Lessing's challenge by conceiving of revelation as God's act in history, thereby concluding that revelation itself is God's contemporaneous act: God's revelation in Jesus Christ can be attested to a follower at second hand, as it is disclosed to the apostles and disciples, through the witnesses of Scripture and the proclamations of the church, all of which are dependent upon the work of the Spirit. One may find, however, that Barth did not say clearly how humanity can subjectively appropriate divine revelation. He explained in *CD I/1* how humanity can experience the Word of God³⁹⁴ and argued in *CD I/2* that the Spirit is the subjective possibility of revelation.³⁹⁵ He needed, nevertheless, also to clarify the way and condition in which this transition takes place. Barth paid special attention to the theme of transition, treating the event of resurrection as the point in which divine eternity and contingent history meet.

2.3. The Spirit of the Resurrection and Contemporaneity

Barth's earlier attempt to base the temporal continuity of revelation upon the nature of God's Word as divine act immediately raises a question as to whether revelation is not

³⁹³ *CD I/1*, 149.

³⁹⁴ *CD I/1*, 198.

³⁹⁵ *CD I/2*, 203.

an existing reality but in a continuous state of becoming.³⁹⁶ Barth's doctrine of time, I propose, is an answer to this question. This section will be devoted to the study of contemporaneity in reference to the true nature of time disclosed in the resurrection.³⁹⁷

In the preface to *Romans* II (1922) Barth announced that "[I]f I have a system, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between time and eternity."³⁹⁸ In this temporal structure, God's time is defined, in stark contrast to human time, as the intrusion of the eternal Now into history.³⁹⁹ Shortly after this commentary, however, Barth transformed his radical time-eternity dialectic into a more positive relation between eternity and time. In his theological exegesis of 1 Corinthians, *The Resurrection of the Dead* (1924), Barth explained:

The knowledge that it is God's eternity which sets a limit to the endlessness of the world, of time, of things, of men, must be made fruitful.... Whoever clearly grasps this is removed from the temptation... to confuse eternity with a great annihilation, and to make of the end-of-history an annihilation of history. That would, in fact, not be real eternity, not even the eternity of God, which dissolves time into infinity, instead of marking it... as infinite.⁴⁰⁰

Seeing eternity in light of the forty days of Easter, God's time is not a mere negation of human time; rather divine time is extended into human time and embraces it.⁴⁰¹ The re-creative power of the resurrection alters the human condition completely by drawing us

³⁹⁶ For example, Hamer critiqued that Barth's actualism eventually results in his occasionalism. See Jean Jérôme Hamer, *Karl Barth*, trans. Dominic M. Maruca (London: Sands, 1962), 34.

³⁹⁷ Barth offered his doctrine of time and eternity in various places in *CD*. See, *CD* I/2, §14, 45-121; *CD* II/1, §31.3, 608-677; *CD* III/2, §47, 437-640; *CD* IV/1, §59.3, 283-357; *CD* IV/3, §69.4, 274-367.

³⁹⁸ *Romans* II, 10.

³⁹⁹ See *Romans* II, 103-104; 116; 497.

⁴⁰⁰ Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, trans. H.J. Stenning (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1933), 112-123.

⁴⁰¹ On Barth's doctrine of time in relation to the resurrection, see Webster, *Barth's Earlier Theology*, 82-88; Richard H. Roberts, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of Time: Its Nature and Implications," in *A Theology on Its Way?: Essays on Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 48-55; Kerr, *Immortal Longings*, 31-33.

to live with this temporal reality, which is not yet our own.⁴⁰² This is a new theological paradigm of temporality, in which time is touched and included by eternity.

The mature Barth also linked his doctrine of time with Christ's resurrection. Time constitutes the creaturely existence of humanity in the sense that "Man lives as he has time and is in his time."⁴⁰³ The human Jesus is also a being-in-time, but the content of his life affects and embraces all people. Barth observed, accordingly, that "His time acquires in relation to their times the character of God's time, of eternity, in which present, past and future are simultaneous."⁴⁰⁴ Barth sought to explain the mystery of this contemporaneity by arguing that Jesus has another dimension of time, the forty days of Easter. The resurrection certainly took place in history, and to deny this is a "docetic attitude to Jesus' time."⁴⁰⁵ During the forty days, Jesus was manifested in the mode of God. Barth wrote:

The event of Easter is as it were their prism through which the apostles and their communities saw the man Jesus in every aspect of His relation to them – as the One who "was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4:8). But this prism itself is not just a timeless idea, a kind of *a priori*, hovering as it were above the relations between Jesus and His followers, above their memory of His life and death, above His presence in their midst or their expectation of His second coming and the final consummation. No, it happened "once upon a time" that He was among them as the Resurrected.⁴⁰⁶

If the historicity of the resurrection is the starting point of reflecting Jesus Christ's presence, how can people subjectively experience this man, regardless of their varied temporal distances to him? This theme is near ubiquitous in Barth's writings, but of particular note here is his emphasis upon the altered human situation achieved by the resurrection. In *CD IV/1*, Barth made it clear again that Lessing's problem of the

⁴⁰² Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, 114-115.

⁴⁰³ *CD III/2*, 438.

⁴⁰⁴ *CD III/2*, 440.

⁴⁰⁵ *CD III/2*, 463.

⁴⁰⁶ *CD III/2*, 442.

consciousness of historical distance has already solved by Jesus' resurrection, which "is the removing of the barrier between His life in His time and their life in their times, the initiation of His lordship as the Lord of all time."⁴⁰⁷ In his eyes, however, there is the other uglier and wider spiritual ditch:

[W]e are in exactly the same position as Peter in the boat and the women at the empty tomb and the shepherds of Bethlehem, that we can only tremble as on the day of the Lord which has dawned for us, that we can only be afraid and terrified. We find ourselves in a relatively sheltered corner where we can dream that we are still in some way existing *ante Christum* since He is not there for us.... We need the consciousness of historical distance, the neutralizing historical consideration.⁴⁰⁸

Although the resurrection objectively makes people contemporaneous to Jesus Christ, they tend to avoid confronting Jesus, hiding behind the consciousness of historical distance. Thus, the resurrection is God's answer both to the temporal and to the spiritual distance.

Barth explained the way in which the resurrection enables believers to overcome historical and spiritual remoteness by focusing on the theme of the verdict of God. For him, the resurrection is "the true, original, typical form of the revelation of God in [Jesus Christ],"⁴⁰⁹ which took place in the past but exerts a continued living influence *upon us*. Mangina aptly summarized this theme as follows: "[T]he resurrection is the divine commentary on the cross and its effective application in our own sphere."⁴¹⁰ The resurrection not only signified God's justification of the crucified Jesus, which is the source of our own justification,⁴¹¹ but also disclosed the nature of real time, i.e., God's

⁴⁰⁷ CD IV/1, 316.

⁴⁰⁸ CD IV/1, 292.

⁴⁰⁹ CD IV/1, 301.

⁴¹⁰ Joseph L. Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life: The Practical Knowledge of God* (New York; Oxford: P. Lang, 2001), 60.

⁴¹¹ CD IV/1, 306.

time for us. In the installation of a new temporal paradigm, our being-in-time is radically transformed into a being-in-and-with Jesus Christ.

To explain the process of this transition, Barth claimed that the verdict of the Father is, in fact, “the verdict of the Holy Spirit.”⁴¹² Whereas it is the Father who judged Jesus Christ on Good Friday and raised him on Easter, it is the Spirit who effectuates and announces the Father’s verdict *pro nobis*. Barth stated that due to the verdict of the Spirit “the immeasurable alteration in our situation”⁴¹³ takes place. Bromiley’s English translation, however, omitted the following important sentences concerning this change: “With the eyes, ears and hearts opened by the forty days, all things were now understood in what was not comprehended before. In reality, thus, they were not written, held and transferred as a mere history (*Historie*) of [Jesus].”⁴¹⁴ This quotation shows that the resurrection endows people with the renewed spiritual capacity for perceiving revelation. In the Spirit of the resurrection, human beings recognize that their time is not a mere temporal continuation from the past, but is the time marked by God in Jesus Christ. It is a time between the times – Easter and the future *parousia*,⁴¹⁵ so their existence as a being-in-time is conceived as eschatological.⁴¹⁶ Due to the verdict of the Spirit, they encounter Jesus here and now by remembering the resurrection and by foretasting the fullness of divine glory. This eschatological view, therefore, constitutes the nature of present as a time of gratitude and joy.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹² CD IV/1, 319-320. I agree with Johnson at this point that the section entitled “the Verdict of the Father” is, in fact, a pneumatology in the doctrine of reconciliation. See Johnson, *The Mystery of God*, 115.

⁴¹³ CD IV/1, 289.

⁴¹⁴ KD IV/1, 353 (my translation).

⁴¹⁵ CD IV/1, 323.

⁴¹⁶ In this respect, Barth’s doctrine of the resurrection is also his criticism against Bultmann’s de-mythologization. See CD III/2, 443-447. CD IV/1, 287.

⁴¹⁷ CD IV/1, 328.

It is noteworthy that Barth's link of the resurrection with the alteration of human situation makes room for the classical Reformed doctrine of Christ's intercession in the doctrine of contemporaneity. Barth wrote, "[T]he *intercessio Christi* is not simply the origin and the lasting basis of our righteousness and hope, but its continual turning point, the way which is always open to God and the sharp corner around which it leads us."⁴¹⁸ The intercession of Christ is God's contemporaneous act for us, and it invokes our prayerful response. When we pray in the name of Jesus, we can hear that "God has loved and loves and will love the one who offers [prayer] as a lost sinner in Jesus."⁴¹⁹ In this prayer Jesus came, comes and will come as the intercessor between God and us, and this is the divine act of atonement for believers throughout the ages.

In short, against criticisms leveled towards his 'actualistic' view of revelation, Barth constructed a theological structure of time, in which God's time and human time constantly intersect each other. This new paradigm is revealed by the resurrection, which overcomes the temporal and spiritual ditch between Christ and us. Barth's attempt to base the possibility of subjective appropriation upon the event of resurrection will clearly not satisfy existentialist philosophers. What Barth sought to do here, however, is not to abolish subjectivity but to make room for reflecting on it within the triune God's salvific act for us. This new approach not only explains how the past event of revelation in Christ exerts a continued living influence to us in the Spirit, but it also involves the resurrected Jesus' intercessory prayer as a crucial form of God's contemporaneous act which invites us to pray in Jesus' name to conceive of his spiritual presence in our life.

⁴¹⁸ CD IV/1, 316.

⁴¹⁹ CD IV/1, 315.

2.4. Biblical Interpretation and Contemporaneity

The remaining issue that needs to be investigated is how God's revelation in Christ can be heard by particular people in their specific situations. For Barth, the Bible is the medium through which one can encounter God's revelation here and now in the form of personal reading or in listening to sermons. This section, thus, aims to study the theme of contemporaneity in relation to scriptural interpretation. Barth's view of the indirect identity of the Bible with God's Word, according to which the former becomes the latter,⁴²⁰ constitutes the heart of his doctrine of the Bible, but it would be beyond the scope of this section to engage in this much-debated topic. Instead, I will focus on the way this radical view triggered the development of his biblical hermeneutics.

For Barth, the content of the Bible is "Jesus Christ as the name of the God who deals graciously with man the sinner."⁴²¹ As the witness of this content, the Bible is an indispensable medium for connecting the past event of revelation with the present act of hearing.⁴²² This mediatory role of Scripture is greatly dependent upon the work of the Spirit, who not only inspired the authors of the Bible,⁴²³ but also enables readers to conceive of its content in their particular situations.⁴²⁴ Barth wrote, "[The Scriptural Word] is the testimony of [God's] revelation inspired by the Holy Ghost, and it can

⁴²⁰ Because of Barth's view of indirect identity, many evangelical theologians have critiqued his doctrine of the Bible as 'adoptionist.' See following well balanced defenses of Barth against these criticisms in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "A Person of the Book?: Barth on Biblical Authority and Interpretation," in *Karl Barth and Evangelical Theology: Convergences and Divergences*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2006), 27-37; Bruce McCormack, "The Being of Holy Scripture Is in Becoming: Karl Barth in Conversation with American Evangelical Criticism," in *Evangelicals and Scripture: Tradition, Authority, and Hermeneutics*, ed. V. Bacote (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 63-73.

⁴²¹ CD I/2, 720.

⁴²² As Burnett rightly put it, before the break with liberalism Barth saw the Bible mainly as a source. However, after the break he understood the Bible as a witness. See Richard E. Burnett, *Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis: The Hermeneutical Principles of the Römerbrief Period* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 224.

⁴²³ Barth even identified the witness of the Bible with the witness of the Spirit. See CD I/1, 538.

⁴²⁴ See CD I/2, 666, 684, 693.

become luminous for us only through the same Holy Ghost.”⁴²⁵ Barth’s emphasis upon the Spirit involves two theological implications. First, because it is the Spirit that enables the Bible to refer to Jesus Christ, an inherent quality or property of scriptural language can only acquire secondary importance to biblical hermeneutics.⁴²⁶ Second, it follows that the Bible is a continuing mediation by the Spirit rather than a closed collection of propositional truths.⁴²⁷ The Bible is the adopted Word of God in the form of a compiled book, in and through which God communicates with humanity. This concept of indirect identity gives birth to his view that God’s revelation can be contemporaneous to the reader in the process of interpretation. In order to explain this theme, Barth distinguished between three moments of interpretation.

The first step is the act of observation, in which the method of historical criticism is utilized to uncover the meaning of the scriptural word. Barth greatly emphasized that one should understand the Bible as a document formed within a concrete historical situation.⁴²⁸ While undertaking literary-historical investigations, however, one should also keep in mind that the biblical word not only unfolds the meaning of revelation, but also conceals it.⁴²⁹ In light of this dialectic of veiling and unveiling, Barth claimed that the goal of observation is not a mere discovery of the author’s historical context or hidden intention, but a critical engagement with the

⁴²⁵ CD I/2, 730.

⁴²⁶ See Jeanrond’s critical assessment of Barth’s lack of hermeneutical interests in Werner G. Jeanrond, “Karl Barth’s Hermeneutics,” in *Reckoning with Barth: Essays in Commemoration of the Centenary of Karl Barth’s Birth*, ed. Nigel Biggar (London: Mowbray, 1988). In my eyes, Jeanrond’s succinct explanation should be balanced by a careful study of Barth’s hermeneutical achievements in CD.

⁴²⁷ Runia asked whether the theme of discontinuity, according to which the Bible has to become the divine Word again and again, is implicit in Barth’s view of Scriptures. In contrast, Watson opted for this actualistic motif because it prevents us from understanding the Bible abstractly from God’s continuous salvific act. See Klass Runia, *Karl Barth’s Doctrine of Holy Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 128; Francis Watson, “The Bible,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John B. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 61.

⁴²⁸ See Barth’s instructive analysis of varied methods of literary-historical investigation and general hermeneutics in CD I/2, 722- 727.

⁴²⁹ CD I/2, 722. “

subject-matter to which the biblical witness refers.⁴³⁰ It also means that the reader should be ready to be challenged and changed by what is attested through the Bible.⁴³¹ Barth called this attentiveness to the text “the fidelity... to the object reflected in the words of the prophets and apostles.”⁴³² Because interpretation of the Bible ought to do justice both to the text and to its object, this faithfulness does not exclude a critical awareness of varied problems raised by the relativity and diversity of biblical language. This is Barth’s basic hermeneutical presupposition developed, maintained and intensified at least since his first commentary on Romans.⁴³³

The second phrase is reflection: “the moment of transition of what is said into the thinking of the reader or hearer.”⁴³⁴ Whereas the method of historical criticism plays a vital role in the act of observation, philosophical reflection is essential in this shift from objectivity to subjectivity. Barth admitted that every act of thinking is attached to a certain system of philosophy,⁴³⁵ thereby saying that “There has never yet been an expositor who has allowed only Scripture alone to speak.”⁴³⁶ However, the interpreter should also acknowledge the hypothetical and provisional character of the philosophy he/she has adopted. Its service in scriptural exposition, according to Barth, can be “legitimate and fruitful when it is a critical use, implying that the object of the criticism

⁴³⁰ As Vanhoozer rightly puts it, the term ‘witness’ itself is the operative concept, which constantly points away from oneself to the object. See Vanhoozer, “A Person of the Book?” 40.

⁴³¹ This is one of the reasons Lawrence highly prized Barth’s hermeneutics as one of the most significant turning points in Western intellectual history. According to Lawrence, along with Heidegger, Barth inaugurated integral hermeneutics in which “our concrete solution to the problem of living is integral to our interpretation of classic text.” See Frederick Lawrence, “Gadamer, the Hermeneutic Revolution, and Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 169. In a similar manner, Gadamer called Barth’s *Romans* “a kind of hermeneutical manifesto.” See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd ed. (London: Sheed & Ward, 1989), 509.

⁴³² CD I/2, 725.

⁴³³ See Barth, “The Preface to the First Edition,” in *Romans* II, 1-2.

⁴³⁴ CD I/2, 727.

⁴³⁵ CD I/2, 727, 729.

⁴³⁶ CD I/2, 728.

is not Scripture, but our own scheme of thought.”⁴³⁷ Thus it is crucial to be aware of the essential distance between the philosophy of Scripture and our own philosophy. The latter acquires the fitness for scriptural exegesis not by its own nature but by the Spirit.⁴³⁸

The third moment is the process of assimilation or appropriation, in which the interpreter becomes contemporaneous to the prophets and apostles. Barth wrote, “Because the Word of God meets us in the form of the scriptural word, assimilation means the contemporaneity, homogeneity and indirect identification of the reader and hearer of Scripture with the witness of revelation.”⁴³⁹ This act of assimilation means that God’s Word is not spoken generally but to particular hearers and that the church is the community of those who listen to the Word in their specific situations.⁴⁴⁰ This act of assimilation becomes real when the reader is “willing to transpose the centre of his attention from oneself, from the system of his own concerns and questions... to the scriptural word itself.”⁴⁴¹ However, the human reader has no capacity for this transposition. What the reader needs to do is to invoke the Spirit, who intercedes for, purifies and illuminates him/her.⁴⁴²

At this moment, one can see that pneumatology and prayer are deeply connected to Barth’s biblical hermeneutics. As Biggar insightfully pointed out, Barth’s view of indirect identity makes us ask who the living God is before discerning the biblical text *per se*, thereby bringing prayer as a crucial dimension for scriptural exposition.⁴⁴³

Following a 16th-century Basel theologian, Johannes Wolleb, for example, Barth

⁴³⁷ CD I/2, 734.

⁴³⁸ CD I/2, 730.

⁴³⁹ CD I/2, 736.

⁴⁴⁰ CD I/2, 737-738.

⁴⁴¹ CD I/2, 737-739.

⁴⁴² CD I/2, 700.

⁴⁴³ Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits*, 117-120.

conceived of frequent prayer (*frequens oratio*) as the principle for investigating the true sense of Scripture (*media verum Scripturae sensum investigandi*).⁴⁴⁴ Referring to Paul's theology of prayer in Romans 8, furthermore, Barth drew a parallel structure between prayer and scriptural interpretation.⁴⁴⁵ Although it is the Spirit who intercedes for the human pray-er in his/her prayer, it does not change the fact that it is the human pray-er who prays in his/her freedom. In a similar vein, when the Spirit makes the reader appropriate the witness of revelation, it is the human reader who interprets the Bible, utilizing literary-historical methods and philosophical reasoning. Just as the Spirit's intercession does not abolish the pray-er's freedom to pray, the Spirit's illumination does not eradicate the reader's freedom to interpret the Word. Barth writes, "When we pray we turn to God with the confession that we are not really capable of doing it, because we are not capable of God, but also with the faith that we are invited and authorized to do it.... [O]ur freedom is only true freedom when the Holy Ghost intercedes for us to enable us to accomplish what out of our own resources we certainly cannot do."⁴⁴⁶ It follows that the interpretation of the Bible is fundamentally a self-involving act to the Word in the power of the Spirit. The reader is indirectly identified with, or contemporaneous to, the witness of revelation by faith, and this faith is the Spirit's gift to the hearer who is attentive and open to the subject matter of Scriptures.

In short, as a theologian of revelation, Barth sought to do justice both to the event of revelation in Jesus Christ and to each believer's hearing of it in the Spirit. It may be fair to say that, as a christocentric theologian, he gave more weight to the objective side of revelation in Christ, preferring a healthy asymmetry concretely rooted in divine revelation to an arbitrary and abstract symmetry. Nevertheless, as a theologian

⁴⁴⁴ Johannes Wolleb, *Theol. Chr. comp.*, 1626, *Praecogn.* 19 quoted in *CD I/2*, 698.

⁴⁴⁵ *CD I/2*, 698.

⁴⁴⁶ *CD I/2*, 698.

affected by the modern discovery of historical consciousness, he paid serious attention to how and to what extent each believer can hear, experience and appropriate God's revelation here and now. By analyzing the mediatory works of the Spirit in God's speech act, in Christ's resurrection and in biblical interpretation, Barth attempted to show that the ugly wide ditch between the past event and the present believer has already been overcome by God in God's salvific communicative act. In light of this theme of contemporaneity, the next section will investigate how human beings can experience God's revelation and what the nature of that human subjectivity is.

3. Experience of Revelation in the Spirit

This section aims to study the way Barth understood experience, which is evoked, disciplined and educated by divine revelation in the Spirit. I will first show that his doctrine of experience can be more aptly understood within a wider context of the twentieth-century theology's reaction to the previous century's naïve appeal to experience. The second subsection will demonstrate that pneumatology is the proper place to reflect upon his theology of experience. The third subsection will review the way he rehabilitated the totality of human experience as a critique of the modern selective appeal to a certain faculty of humanity. The final subsection will examine his concept of acknowledgement (*Anerkennung*) as the primary form of experience of God.

3.1. From *Erlebnis* to *Erfarhrung*: Against the Modern Conception of Experience

It is commonly assumed that Barth's fierce criticisms levelled at liberal theology, pietism, existentialism and Roman Catholicism seemed to leave little room for reflecting any positive role of experience. Barth's negative view, in turn, has invited

harsh criticisms from various groups that he undermined the importance of human experience.⁴⁴⁷ Although these criticisms tell some truth about Barth, they risk creating improper and simplified images of his theology, as if it has little to add to current theological discussions about experience. By contrast, I will demonstrate that Barth offered a rich doctrine of experience within his doctrine of revelation.

To access his view of experience, it might be helpful to adopt Gadamer's distinction between the two German words for 'experience' – *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*.⁴⁴⁸ The young Barth preferred the former, whereas the mature Barth mostly utilized the latter.⁴⁴⁹ Under the shadow of his liberal teachers, especially of Wilhelm Hermann, the young Barth of the early 1910s distinguished faith from cognitive knowledge, giving priority to experience of God.⁴⁵⁰ Moreover, the pietistic background of both of his parents influenced him considerably, impressing upon him an emphasis on inner experience.⁴⁵¹ He argued, for example, that "faith is experience of God [*Gotteserlebnis*], an immediate awareness of the presence and efficacy of the power of life,"⁴⁵² and that "If Christ begins to live in *us*... that is the beginning of Christian faith."⁴⁵³ However, Barth's contact with Religious Socialism, reading of the Bible as a local pastor and break with liberal theology led him to disapprove of modern theology's

⁴⁴⁷ See Benedict XVI Pope, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J. R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 139; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1992), 313, n. 12; John Baillie, *The Sense of the Presence of God: Gifford Lectures, 1961-1962* (New York: Scribner, 1962), 254–255.

⁴⁴⁸ According to Gadamer, the term *Erlebnis* had become dominant in the modern period, especially since Kant proposed his subjectivized aesthetics. In this aesthetic tradition, *Erlebnis* is something human beings have, so it is mainly connected to human subjectivity. In contrast, *Erfahrung* is something draws them into an event of meaning between subject and object. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 55-81, 346-362.

⁴⁴⁹ The term *Erfahrung* appears 450 times in *CD*, while he uses *Erlebnis* 49 times mostly with rather negative implications.

⁴⁵⁰ On Hermann's use of *Erlebnis*, see Fisher, *Revelatory Positivism?*, 140-146.

⁴⁵¹ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth and the Pietists: The Young Karl Barth's Critique of Pietism & Its response*, trans. Daniel W. Bloesch (Downer's Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Pr, 2004), 9–17.

⁴⁵² Karl Barth, "Der christliche Glaube und die Geschichte," *Schweizerische theologische Zeitschrift*, 29 (1912), 5 quoted in McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 75.

⁴⁵³ From Barth's sermon on 1 January 1910 quoted in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 54.

explicit appeal to experience and to critique a similar anthropologizing tendency in natural theology, existentialism, pietism and Roman Catholicism.⁴⁵⁴ From then on Barth's emphasis rested more on the living God and on the holistic experience of *this* God, utilizing the term *Erfahrung* more frequently to avoid the idealistic and romantic residue of *Erlebnis*.

In this light, I suggest, Barth's intention can be more aptly understood within a wider context of the twentieth-century's reaction to the previous century's view of experience. Although his criticism of experience is unprecedentedly radical and harsh, other theologians and philosophers, including Gadamer, Marcel, Schillebeeckx, Rahner, Moltmann and many others, also have trouble with the modern conception of experience. Despite the plurality of their opinions, there seems to be one voice among them that it is mostly one-sided, individualistic and subjectified.⁴⁵⁵ In a similar manner, I propose, what Barth sought to do is to find a theologically proper understanding of experience with reference to revelation.

3.2. The Spirit as the Lord of Experience

It is important to keep in mind that Barth offered his doctrine of experience in the early twentieth century, observing the decline of the modern Western civilization in general, and the crisis of subjectivity in particular.⁴⁵⁶ At that time, the crisis of metaphysical thinking and the challenge of nihilism dissolved the modern doctrine of the autonomous

⁴⁵⁴ See *TS*, 259-260; *PT*, 99-106.

⁴⁵⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 310-325; Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World*, trans. John Bowden, New ed. (London: SCM, 1982), 42-54; Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 26-31; Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 28-31.

⁴⁵⁶ See Richard H. Roberts, "Barth and the Eschatology of Weimar," in *A Theology on Its Way?: Essays on Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991); John B. Webster, "Rescuing the Subject: Barth and Postmodern Anthropology," in *Karl Barth: A Future for Postmodern Theology?*, ed. Christiaan Mostert and Geoff Thompson (Hindmarsh: Australian Theological Forum, 2000).

and moral self as subject.⁴⁵⁷ Although Barth was critical of the modern ideal of autonomy, he took the threat of nihilistic deconstruction of selfhood seriously to the extent of claiming that it was accumulating throughout the world, finally exploding in the form of the totalitarianism of Hitler's Germany.⁴⁵⁸ Barth met these unprecedented challenges by asking what the natures of subject and of experience are.

Barth's *GD* demonstrates that the true nature of the subject is disclosed by seeing him/her in relation to divine revelation. Humanity can have this self-manifesting knowledge of God only in faith and obedience, both of which are the gifts of the Spirit. Barth wrote, "To stand before God means rather to move toward God's answer and to set oneself under the question which it addresses to humanity.... As the miracle of faith and obedience, this knowledge and action are both effected by the Holy Spirit."⁴⁵⁹ For Barth, faith and obedience are two primary categories for constituting selfhood. Analogous to the Kantian distinction between theoretical and practical reason,⁴⁶⁰ Barth proposed here the organic relationship between theoretical and practical responses – faith and obedience – to God's revelation in light of a "basic intention of Reformed thinking."⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁷ For further study of philosophical and theological discussions on this topic, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 83–105; Johannes Baptist Metz, "The Future in the Memory of Suffering," in *New Questions on God*, ed. Johannes Baptist Metz, trans. John Griffiths (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 165; Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 371–374.

⁴⁵⁸ Karl Barth, "Brief an einen amerikanischen Kirchemann," in *Theologische Fragen Und Antworten* (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1957), 278. I owe the discovery of this text to Graham Ward's essay, "Barth, Modernity, and Postmodernity."

⁴⁵⁹ *GD*, 168.

⁴⁶⁰ According to Jones, analogous to Kant's distinction between theoretical and practical reason, the mature Barth of *CD IV* distinguished between acknowledgement and obedience. See Paul D. Jones, "Karl Barth on Gethsemane," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 2 (2007): 161. In my view, this distinction was already implicit in *GD*, but he had not yet paid attention to the importance of 'acknowledgement.'

⁴⁶¹ *GD*, 192.

In *CD I/1* Barth continued to seek a place for the subjectivity of Christians, not on the basis of any abstract speculation, but on the reality (*Wirklichkeit*) of faith.⁴⁶² This reality is the miracle of the Spirit, who holds the event of divine revelation and the event of human faith together. Barth wrote, “The Lord of speech is also the Lord of our hearing. The Lord who gives the Word is also the Lord who gives faith. The Lord of our hearing, the Lord who gives faith... is the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁶³ This quotation discloses that God’s revelation presupposes from the outset the reality of the human subject. Accordingly, Barth audaciously said that human beings can truly ‘experience’ God in faith.⁴⁶⁴ Unlike his liberal teachers who defined experience from anthropological viewpoints, Barth showed here that experience is not a self-standing one, but concretely rooted in the divine Word.⁴⁶⁵ If our experience of God is understood independently from the work of the Spirit, Barth warned, this capacity may endorse “an indirect Cartesianism, the Cartesianism of the believing Christian.”⁴⁶⁶ Experience is always presented by Barth as something evoked in the process of God’s communication with creatures in the Spirit.

In short, for Barth, it is an undeniable reality that humanity experiences God in divine revelation. Experience constitutes the human self in faith and thus it is an essential element in the Christian life. It is not proper, accordingly, to charge Barth with having ignored the importance of experience on behalf of God’s sovereignty. Instead of analyzing experience *per se*, Barth first invoked the Spirit as the Lord of experience and

⁴⁶² *CD I/1*, 183. See also Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 48.

⁴⁶³ *CD I/1*, 182. See also *CD I/1*, 208; *CD II/2*, 158.

⁴⁶⁴ *CD I/1*, 183.

⁴⁶⁵ The Barth of *CD IV* also linked subjectivity with pneumatology, but in a slightly different way. Here his epistemological concern is less dominant; instead, the Spirit is primarily understood as the ‘awakening’ power in which “Christ has formed and continuously renews [the Christian community]” and “summons a sinful man to His community and therefore as a Christian to believe in Him.” See *CD IV/1*, 643; 740.

⁴⁶⁶ *CD I/1*, 213.

then sought a theologically proper way to talk about it. What we need to examine next is the nature of *this* experience.

3.3. Towards a Theology of Holistic Experience of God

As emphasized earlier, Barth's doctrine of experience must be understood within a wider context of his reaction to the modern view of the self. His appeal to the Spirit as the Lord of experience is, in fact, his radical criticism levelled towards the modern doctrine of experience, "which goes back to the Renaissance and especially to the Renaissance philosopher Descartes."⁴⁶⁷ Within the framework of the Cartesian split between object and subject, as Gabriel Marcel showed, experience is conceived on the "analogy of the transmission and reception of a message."⁴⁶⁸ It follows that what is materially needed to communicate sense data is reduced to a mere instrument of experience. As a result, subjectivity is mostly defined in terms of 'inwardness' or 'consciousness,' and mind is understood as something detached from body, community and society, all of which are essential in constituting the selfhood in reality.

Going against this stream, Barth appealed to the totality of experience, and this has made him a distinctive advocate of the whole person (*den ganzen Menschen*).⁴⁶⁹ Barth's study of Reformed theology offered him a new ground for reflecting the nature of humanity in relation to God's revelation. While delivering lectures on Reformed confessions (1923), Barth discovered that in Calvin the unity of faith and obedience, of

⁴⁶⁷ CD I/1, 195.

⁴⁶⁸ Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Vol 1: Reflection and Mystery*, trans. G.S. Fraser (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2001), 108.

⁴⁶⁹ Mangina and Chung offered insightful studies on the young Barth's doctrine of the whole person. Whereas Mangina suggested that Barth's doctrine of the Wholly Other resulted in his view of the holistic person, Chung claimed that Barth's socialist tendency played a vital role in constituting this integral vision of humanity. See Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life*, 39; Paul S. Chung, "Karl Barth and A Hermeneutics of the Poor," in *Theology Between East and West: Essays in Honor of Jan Milic* (Eugene, Or: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 172-173; Paul S. Chung, *Karl Barth: God's Word in Action* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2008), 419-448; Chung, "Karl Barth and A Hermeneutics of the Poor," 163-170.

being and act, is based on the lordship of God, whose command is directed to the whole person.⁴⁷⁰ Therefore, a theology of the Word should deal with the holistic person as the unity of soul and body. This theme can be found in his sermon on the Christian life in 1926:

Now it says: so human, I need you completely, as you are. There is not a better part in you. There is no absolute contrast between spirit and nature, or between soul and body. This [distinction] is certainly not that of the New Testament. We have to let the apostle speak to us: there is nothing nobler in you. You are sinners from head to foot. But God also needs you from head to foot. Think of this word from the bodies of the great sign, which is the beginning of the Christian life in the original sense: the cross and resurrection of the body of Christ. The cross is the death of his body, and the resurrection is the awakening of his body. And what is shown us in Christ as the Logos should also apply to us: for the whole person.⁴⁷¹

Here Barth explained the whole person christologically, basing anthropology on the cross and resurrection of Christ. This christological theme led him to rethink the importance of the body and to consider the holistic dimension of salvation, thereby going beyond the Cartesian understanding of self and faith.⁴⁷²

In *CD I/1*, Barth established the link between the Word of God and experience more explicitly. In fact, the first edition of *CD I/1* was charged by his contemporaries with a new theology of existential subjectivity.⁴⁷³ Despite severe criticisms, Barth firmly defended the significance of experience, holding that “If knowledge of God’s Word is possible, this must mean that an experience of God’s Word is possible.”⁴⁷⁴ What is unique in Barth is his painstaking effort to base the nature of experience (*Erfahrung*) on the Word, defining it as the “determination of the existence of the man

⁴⁷⁰ Karl Barth, *Die Theologie der reformierten Bekenntnisschriften 1923* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1998), 175.

⁴⁷¹ Karl Barth, *Predigten 1921–1935 (GA I.31)*, ed. Finze–Michaelson Holger (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1998), 457 (my translation).

⁴⁷² See also *Ethics*, 3.

⁴⁷³ Barth reviewed and responded these criticisms by himself in *CD I/1*, 125–131.

⁴⁷⁴ *CD I/1*, 198.

who has the knowledge of [God's Word]."⁴⁷⁵ Against the modern conception, Barth paid more attention to the holistic dimension of the God-human encounter:

If God is seriously involved in experience of the Word of God, then man is just as seriously involved too. The very man who stands in real knowledge of the Word of God also knows himself as existing in the act of his life, as existing in his self-determination.... As he decides, as he resolves and determines, he is rather in the secret judgement of the grace or disfavour of God, to whom alone his obedience or disobedience is manifest. And this is the overlapping determination by God which befalls his self-determination. Nevertheless, it does not alter the fact that his hearing is self-determination, act, and decision.⁴⁷⁶

This paragraph shows that Barth defined experience not merely as a passive reception of God's revelation, but as an *active* response to it within one's life setting. Thus, Barth disapproved Schleiermacher's view of religious experience, because Schleiermacher defined it in terms of the feeling of absolute dependence.⁴⁷⁷ For Barth, experience is the reality rooted in the encounter between God and humanity, all of whom freely posit themselves, in their loving relationship, both as subject and as object. Thus, his view of experience transcends the common opposition between activity and passivity, and the split between subject and object.

Emphasizing the holistic dimension of experience, furthermore, Barth critiqued modern theology's appeal to a certain anthropological locus. He made it clear that in principle he had no objection to the idea that a human can have a religious consciousness, feeling, or experience.⁴⁷⁸ The term 'experience' became problematic, however, when modern theology abstractly defined it on an anthropological basis. It is normally assumed that this tendency became dominant since Schleiermacher, but Barth suspected that it was already implicit in Enlightenment philosophy. The latter

⁴⁷⁵ CD I/1, 198.

⁴⁷⁶ CD I/1, 200-201.

⁴⁷⁷ CD I/1, 200. See Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 15-16.

⁴⁷⁸ CD I/1, 199.

intensively investigated the boundary of theoretical reason and thus led theologians to find a special providence for religion in humanity.⁴⁷⁹ Barth observed two dangers in this modern appeal to the anthropological locus. First, whereas feeling, will and conscience had been prized, the “so-called ‘intellect’ of man... as the locus of possible religious experience”⁴⁸⁰ had been marginalized. Second, to define the anthropological locus might lead theologians in the end to claim, seek, or discover “any unusual or hidden anthropological centres as the basis of the possibility of human experience of God’s Word.”⁴⁸¹ In Barth’s eyes, the discovery of the depth of the human mind in his contemporary culture may enlarge our understanding of experience, but it is only one dimension of experience, thus being unable to inform the totality of human openness to God.⁴⁸² In contrast, he argued that the experience of God should be understood in the totality of all human faculties “by the Word of God which affects the whole man.”⁴⁸³ Experience is to bring together all the faculties, in whose exercise any specific human possibility is neither overtly emphasized, nor suppressed.

In short, by reflecting on the nature of the divine Word, Barth made room for the totality of the human experience of God. As a response to God’s gracious coming to humanity in the divine Word, men and women determine their total existence in the Spirit. His view of the integral person certainly rehabilitated the importance of the body and of the holistic dimension of salvation, thereby going beyond the Cartesian, existential and liberal understanding of self, world, experience and faith.⁴⁸⁴ It also animated him to think of faith not simply as an issue of assenting to the Bible, to the

⁴⁷⁹ *CD* I/1, 202, 204.

⁴⁸⁰ *CD* I/1, 202.

⁴⁸¹ *CD* I/1, 203.

⁴⁸² *CD* I/1, 204.

⁴⁸³ *CD* I/1, 202.

⁴⁸⁴ Barth’s view of the body will be analyzed in the next section on the Spirit as the basis of soul and body.

church's teaching, or to theology, but as the whole person's incorporation into a new mode of life, enacted by the coming Word of God. In order to express this totality of experience, Barth frequently adopted the specific term 'acknowledgement.'

3.4. Experience of God as Acknowledgement (*Anerkennung*)

Despite Barth's interest in the term acknowledgement (*Anerkennung*), its significance for his theology has not been widely recognized. Donald Evans is one of the rare few who rightly observed its importance. Evans wrote, "Karl Barth regards [the verb 'acknowledge'] as the key to Christian religious experience, faith and language, in so far as these are truly biblical."⁴⁸⁵ For Evans, acknowledgement is an autobiographical-performative concept, which describes an action that the subject performs in reference to one's mental state or pattern of behaviour. Despite subtle dissimilarities between Evans' philosophical analysis and Barth's theological explanation, both rightly underline that this concept is not merely epistemological but deals with the whole act of self-determination.

The term's cognitive implication, however, has provoked some interpreters to suppose that Barth's concern is fundamentally epistemological and thus his theology is still captivated by the cognitive framework of nineteenth-century theology. Alister McGrath, for example, harshly charged this against Barth as follows:

Barth insists that humans are to be seen as passive epistemic objects, rather than active subjects. It is God who is active, and human beings who are passive, in revelation. For Barth, *Erkenntnis* (knowledge) is thus *Anerkenntnis* (recognition), and *Denken* (thinking) is *Nach-Denken* (contemplation)... [O]ur knowledge of God is moulded by God himself, a process in which God is active and we are passive.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁵ Donald D. Evans, *The Logic of Self-Involvement: A Philosophical Study of Everyday Language with Special Reference to the Christian Use of Language about God as Creator* (London: SCM, 1963), 41.

⁴⁸⁶ Alister E. McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology, 1750-1990*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Apollos, 1994), 134.

On McGrath's reading, Barth's epistemological tendency deprives humanity of any active subjectivity as well as any ontological implications from God's revelation.⁴⁸⁷ A careful analysis would show, however, that Barth's concern is to overcome the modern epistemological tendency. As Christoph Schwöbel has rightly observed, Barth's main contribution is the inversion of the modern order of knowing and being.⁴⁸⁸ Whereas modern theology had more interest in the constitution of subjectivity in the process of knowing the external world, Barth was more concerned with how God shapes the human being in God's self-communication. Although Barth used cognitive terms to explain faith, he redefined them theologically, first placing them within the context of God's speech to humanity, and then showing how they refer to the experience of God.

In order to know the meaning of acknowledgement, one needs to focus on Barth's own definition of it. If there were one fundamental axiom in Barth's theology, it would be this: there comes first the object of acknowledging, "and then in virtue of it, and in the last resort deriving wholly from it, there is acknowledgement."⁴⁸⁹ By reflecting on acknowledgement in light of the divine Word's varied modes of engaging with human existence, Barth showed that it involves aspects of cognition, personal relation, approving, encounter, obedience, decision, respect, movement and

⁴⁸⁷ McGrath claimed that Barth shared liberal theology's primary concern regarding correct knowledge of God. Thus, Barth's theology is only a partial reaction against the anthropocentricity of the liberal school. See Alister E. McGrath, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of Justification from an Evangelical Perspective," in *Karl Barth and Evangelical Theology: Convergences And Divergences*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2006), 181; 185-186.

⁴⁸⁸ Christoph Schwöbel, "Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. J. B. Webster (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 29-30.

⁴⁸⁹ CD I/1, 208. The notion of *Anerkennung* also plays a vital role in Barth's interpretation of the Apostle's Creed, but the English translator of *Credo* utilized the term 'recognition' instead of 'acknowledgement.' See Karl Barth, *Credo: A Presentation of the Chief Problems of Dogmatics with Reference to the Apostle's Creed*, trans. J. Strathearn McNab (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936), 2; *Credo: Die Hauptprobleme Der Dogmatik Dargestellt Im*, 3rd ed. (München: Christian Kaiser, 1935), 5.

submission.⁴⁹⁰ Barth's presentation of multiple features of acknowledgement is his painstaking endeavour to show the holistic nature of experience. By doing so, moreover, he demonstrated that experience cannot establish its own independent ontological and epistemological significance. If one seeks the independent principle of experience, he/she risks suggesting that human beings are apt for God's Word *a priori* and in general.⁴⁹¹ The actualization of experience by the Spirit is always *a posteriori*.

This link between acknowledgement and pneumatology led Barth to add eschatological implications to this concept. Human beings cannot achieve this experience by themselves, but can only hope for it in prayerful waiting. Barth wrote:

If a man, the Church, Church proclamation and dogmatics think they can handle the Word and faith like capital at their disposal, they simply prove thereby that they have neither the Word nor faith. When we have them, we do not regard them as a possession but strain after them, hungering and thirsting, and for that reason blessed. The same is true of the possibility of knowledge of God's Word. When we know it, we expect to know it. The assurance of its affirmation is thus the assurance of its expectation – the expectation which rests on its previous presence, on the apprehended promise... – but still the expectation.⁴⁹²

Christians should affirm this promise in prayer, which is “in its total humanity an affirmation of ‘unheard of’ assurance.”⁴⁹³ In this regard, prayer is neither the soul's monologue, nor a mere verbal dialogue with God, but the total responsive act of the whole person in face of God. This is one of the reasons Barth presented prayer as the beginning of ethics, as the life of God's children in the Spirit.

Pneumatological implications for acknowledgement are further intensified and clarified in Barth's doctrine of reconciliation in *CD IV/1*. Faith as a gift of the Spirit still plays a vital role here. It is still understood as something that follows its object, “Jesus

⁴⁹⁰ *CD I/1*, 205-207.

⁴⁹¹ Barth especially saw the danger of Christian Cartesianism in Wobbermin's concept of ‘pardoned man’ or in Schaefer's notion of ‘word-bound ego.’ See *CD I/1*, 209-221.

⁴⁹² *CD I/1*, 225.

⁴⁹³ *CD I/1*, 227.

Christ, in whom God has accomplished the reconciliation of the world, of all men with Himself.”⁴⁹⁴ Of particular note is how faith is now presented as a threefold act of knowledge (*Kennen*) – acknowledgment (*Anerkennen*), recognition (*Erkennen*) and confession (*Bekennen*). Acknowledgement means obedient knowledge, which presupposes the subject’s encounter with the object of faith through the medium of community.⁴⁹⁵ Recognition is informed knowledge of the object according to the witnesses of scripture and of community.⁴⁹⁶ Confession is to assimilate the object to the extent of making oneself a witness of this knowledge.⁴⁹⁷

Barth was well aware of the fact that the traditional Reformed theology normally placed recognition before acknowledgement.⁴⁹⁸ In Barth’s eyes, however, faith begins with the personal encounter with Christ and the entering into the community by the power of the Spirit. These acts do not first require the intellectual recognition of any doctrine, creed, or theology, but the real encounter with Jesus Christ through the community and one’s personal obedience to him. Thus, Barth placed acknowledgement before recognition,⁴⁹⁹ linking it with the gift of the Spirit.⁵⁰⁰

It may appear here that, giving priority to experience rather than to knowledge, the mature Barth returned to the idea of his liberal teacher, Wilhelm Herrmann, who understood revelation as one’s inward experience of the impact of Jesus Christ.⁵⁰¹ Indeed, both agreed that faith is not first of all dogma but life, not theory but a personal

⁴⁹⁴ CD IV/1, 742.

⁴⁹⁵ CD IV/1, 758-761.

⁴⁹⁶ CD IV/1, 761-776.

⁴⁹⁷ CD IV/1, 776-779.

⁴⁹⁸ CD IV/1, 758. See also John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (London: SCM, 1960), III. 2. 6.

⁴⁹⁹ CD IV/1, 760.

⁵⁰⁰ CD IV/1, 760-761.

⁵⁰¹ Wilhelm Herrmann, *The Communion of the Christian with God: A Discussion in Agreement with the View of Luther*, trans. J. Sandys Stanton (London: Williams & Norgate, 1895), 67.

relationship to Jesus.⁵⁰² Barth himself admitted, therefore, that his view definitely echoed his teacher's insofar as they opposed to a false orthodoxy which identifies faith with the acceptance of the certain texts of the Bible or the propositions of the church's teaching.⁵⁰³ However, unlike Hermann, who began his analysis from a universal anthropological desire for the supernatural, Barth moved from the reality of God's reconciliation and, then, brought recognition and confession together into the realm of faith, both of which play minor roles in Herrmann.

In summary, this section has examined how Barth's pneumatology enabled him to respond to liberal theology's explicit and selective appeal to experience. Thus, unlike many critics of Barth, I argue that what Barth sought to do in his doctrine of revelation is not to abolish experience but rather to offer a theologically proper understanding of it. This theme is further developed in his theological anthropology, with his newly-coined concept – the spiritual-corporeal perception of God.

4. The Whole Person's Spiritual-Corporeal Perception of God

The previous section has examined Barth's view of the totality of human experience of God. In his mature anthropology, in which a more christological view of the entire person is presented, Barth examined the term 'spiritual-corporeal perception' to explain the holistic nature of experience. In order to study this renewed understanding of experience, I will first examine how Barth understood Jesus Christ as a unique whole person with special reference to the Spirit's creative work. I will then discuss the way in

⁵⁰² Similarities between Hermann and Barth have often been observed by contemporary theologians. Moltmann and Fisher explained, for example, that Hermann's idea was developed anthropologically by Bultmann and theologically by Barth. See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 52; Fisher, *Revelatory Positivism?*, 144-146.

⁵⁰³ CD IV/1, 761.

which Barth understood the Spirit as the basis of soul and body and how this holistic view of humanity results in his rich reflection upon the spiritual-corporeal perception.

4.1. Jesus Christ as a Whole Person: From the Word of God to Jesus of Nazareth

One of the distinctive features which distinguish Barth's earlier anthropology from his mature one is that in his later work he firmly founded any anthropological statement upon the being and act of Jesus Christ. Barth summarized the meaning and significance of this approach as follows:

Theological anthropology expounds the knowledge of man which is made possible and needful by the fact that man stands in the light of the Word of God. The Word of God is thus its foundation. We hasten to add that for this very reason it expounds the truth about man. As man becomes the object of its knowledge in this way, it does not apprehend or explain an appearance of human essence, but the reality; not its outward features, but its most inward; not a part but the whole.⁵⁰⁴

The primacy of revelation still plays a vital role in the sense that the being and nature of humanity are examined in light of the divine Word. The content of the Word, however, has shifted from God's speech to Jesus Christ. In Barth's eyes, the merit to this approach is that it does not deal with humanity *abstractly*, but *concretely* by studying it in relation to the revelation of Jesus Christ as he is attested in the Bible.⁵⁰⁵ As Webster rightly observed, therefore, Barth's anthropology is "a derivative, not a foundational doctrine" with "descriptive expansion (dogmatic, biblical, historical) of the content of what he regards as a properly Christian anthropology."⁵⁰⁶ This methodological determination allows Barth to relate theology with anthropology in a more intimate way

⁵⁰⁴ CD III/2, 20.

⁵⁰⁵ Barth reviewed the importance of this methodological decision in "The Humanity of God," in *The Humanity of God*, trans. John Newton Thomas and Thomas Wieser (London: Collins, 1967), 46-52.

⁵⁰⁶ Webster, *Barth*, 99. About Barth's use of the term 'derivation' in anthropology and its implications, see CD III/2, 140.

than other theologians on the one hand,⁵⁰⁷ and to grow a more positive view on humanity over the years on the other.⁵⁰⁸ I will further argue in this section that his christocentric view not only animated him to reflect deeply upon the being and act of humanity, but also created more room for a robust pneumatology. Without considering this pneumatological intensification, one may risk concluding, along with many critics, that Barth dissolved humanity into Christ.

What Barth discovered in the Bible is that every person, including Jesus of Nazareth, is by one's nature a whole person, a unity of soul and body.⁵⁰⁹ The wholeness of Jesus' existence, however, can be distinguished from that of others considering his absolutely unique relationship with the Spirit, as shown in his conception, baptism and resurrection.⁵¹⁰ Jesus' earthly existence, therefore, was characterized by an ordered spiritual-corporeal unity, and he revealed to fellow men and women what the true nature of human life would be.⁵¹¹ Here Barth provided intriguing theological insights, which contemporary theologians may call a Spirit Christology. It is beyond the scope of this section, however, to compare Barth's Christology in *CD III/2* with other Spirit Christologies. It must be mentioned, however, that Barth immediately clarified that Jesus did not become the Son of God or the Messiah of Israel due to his lifelong fellowship with the Spirit.⁵¹² In other words, the being of Jesus Christ determined his relationship to the Spirit, not vice versa.

⁵⁰⁷ Henri A. G. Blocher, "Karl Barth's Anthropology," in *Karl Barth and Evangelical Theology: Convergences and Divergences*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2006), 96.

⁵⁰⁸ Daniel J. Price, *Karl Barth's Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2002), 107.

⁵⁰⁹ *CD III/2*, 325.

⁵¹⁰ *CD III/2*, 334.

⁵¹¹ *CD III/2*, 334.

⁵¹² *CD III/2*, 332.

Barth's link of Jesus' humanity with pneumatology, so crucial to constituting the overall structure of his anthropology, involves at least two theological implications. First, in contrast to common criticisms that Barth overlooked a fruitful relationship between the Spirit and creation,⁵¹³ the Spirit is here understood as the life-giving Spirit, who maintains the wholeness of soul and body, within the context of God's creation. Barth said, "In the Holy Spirit, God does of course move towards all His creatures in the fullness of His own life.... In so far as they live at all, they live by the Spirit."⁵¹⁴ Nevertheless, one may easily misunderstand Barth's intention here, for he always hesitated to speculate about the Spirit's relationship to the creature in general.⁵¹⁵ Rather, his pneumatological reasoning concerns something concretely attested in the Bible – the creator Spirit's relationships to Christ and to particular humanity, who is reconciled with God by Christ.⁵¹⁶ What Barth eventually sought to show is that creation and covenant are not two separate divine acts, but rather two moments of God's salvific work, and thus that the prophetic Spirit and the creative Spirit are the same Spirit of God.⁵¹⁷

Second, by showing that Jesus' complete humanity can be achieved not by human nature but by the Spirit, Barth added eschatological tones to theological anthropology. For him, flesh in the New Testament chiefly means "human nature under the sign of the fall and in the sphere of darkness, of the fallen and corrupt human nature

⁵¹³ See, for example, Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 171; Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 250.

⁵¹⁴ *CD III/2*, 334.

⁵¹⁵ For example, see *CD III/2*, 394-395.

⁵¹⁶ Unlike other critics, Brunner argued that Barth's exaggerated the importance of the creative Spirit. In my view, this is an example of another extreme reading of Barth's pneumatology. See Emil Brunner, "The New Barth: Observations on Karl Barth's Doctrine of Man," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 4, no. 02 (1951): 124.

⁵¹⁷ *CD III/2*, 396.

which needs to be sanctified and redeemed.”⁵¹⁸ The Word becomes *this* flesh in Jesus by assuming the nature of Adam, but something different took place in his unique relationship to the Spirit. In the life of Jesus, Barth argued, “the divine *βασιλεία* itself is present in creaturely form,” because “the life which rests on Him is the life which corresponds to that kingly Spirit.”⁵¹⁹ Under the Spirit, the fleshly nature was transformed and thus Jesus’ soul was in complete harmony with his body. Finite human beings cannot accomplish this absolute order, but the Spirit directs, instructs and educates them in an order of peace. What finite humanity hopes for is the transformation of the body’s fleshly nature into its harmonious relation to the soul under the direction of the Spirit. Accordingly, for Barth, the body is neither something static, nor merely inferior to the soul. Barth cast sceptical eyes, moreover, both on soul-body dualisms and on monisms (spiritualism and materialism).⁵²⁰ He also rejected the so-called trichotomism,⁵²¹ because the Spirit as the basis of soul and body cannot be a third element, beside the other two. The following subsection will further study how Barth understood the dynamic unity of soul and body with special attention to the Spirit’s work in and for us.

4.2. The Spirit as Basis of Soul and Body

For Barth, the inner structure of humanity can be properly demonstrated only in light of the revelation of Christ, who in his intimate relationship to the Spirit lived as the soul of his body. In this christological light, Barth greatly emphasized that the living God also

⁵¹⁸ Karl Barth, *Witness to the Word: A Commentary on John I: Lectures at Münster in 1925 and at Bonn in 1933*, trans. Walther Fürst (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1986), 88. See also Barth, *CD I/2*, 150-152. It should be noted that Barth was also aware of the neutral sense of flesh in the New Testament.

⁵¹⁹ *CD III/2*, 335.

⁵²⁰ *CD III/2*, 380-394.

⁵²¹ *CD III/2*, 354-355.

establishes and maintains humankind as soul and body in the Spirit. He called this creative event “a transcendental determination of the human constitution.”⁵²² Seen from this standpoint, Barth held, “Man is ontically and ... noetically dependent on the fact that he is not without God.”⁵²³ Humanity is structured by God in such a way that he/she is radically open to God and responsible for God’s covenant.⁵²⁴

It follows that the Spirit is understood by Barth as the life giving agent, who connects humankind with God and maintains him/her as the soul of the body. Barth wrote, “Through the Spirit of God, man is the subject, form and life of a substantial organism, the soul of his body – wholly and simultaneously both, in ineffaceable difference, inseparable unity, and indestructible order.”⁵²⁵ To be a human being, therefore, means to have spirit, and to have spirit means humanity’s openness to God. Although human beings cannot possess the Spirit on their own, they can have spirit when the Spirit is continually given as the event of the gift of life. At root, then, the modern conception of a unitary, autonomous subject is fundamentally flawed.

In this regard, as von Balthasar rightly put it, Barth understood the Spirit as the “dialogical principle which is bestowed on man from the outset, coming from God and therefore leading back to God.”⁵²⁶ In this circular movement, the Spirit can freely choose to dwell on humankind. Barth described this dialogical model as follows:

⁵²² CD III/2, 348.

⁵²³ CD III/2, 344. See also CD III/3, 72.

⁵²⁴ In this regard, Krötke claimed that Barth’s main concern was to show the structural openness of the human as God’s creature. McInroy’s reading of Barth’s anthropology also supports this view. See Wolf Krötke, “The Humanity of the Human Person in Karl Barth’s Anthropology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. J. B. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 160; Mark Johnson McInroy, “Perceiving Splendor: The ‘Doctrine of the Spiritual Senses’ in Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Theological Aesthetics: A Dissertation” (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 2009), 117.

⁵²⁵ CD III/2, 325.

⁵²⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Vol I, Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 385.

[The] Spirit is, in the most general sense, the operation of God upon His creation, and especially the movement of God towards man. Spirit is thus the principle of man's relationship to God, of man's fellowship with Him. This relation and fellowship cannot proceed from man himself, for God is his Creator and he His creature.... If this is indeed possible for him, and if he on his side realises it as movement from him towards God, this is because the movement of God towards him has preceded and because he may in his movement imitate it.⁵²⁷

This passage shows that humanity's standing in covenantal relationship to God can be actual and real due to the meeting initiated by the Spirit.⁵²⁸ Despite the infinite distance between Creator and creature, human beings have capacity for encountering God by participating in the Spirit's movement.⁵²⁹

In Barth's view, despite their unity, soul and body are related to the Spirit in different ways: the Spirit is in human beings in their soul and through soul in their body, thereby maintaining the particularity between them without separating them. Barth summarized this complex relation as follows: "[I]n man the soul is the quickening factor aroused by the Spirit and the body is that which is quickened by it and lives."⁵³⁰ If soul and body are different in their relationships to the Spirit, then, how did Barth understand the relationship between soul and body? For Barth, "Soul is life, self-contained life, the independent life of a corporeal being."⁵³¹ It is related to humanity's consciousness, therefore enabling one to recognize oneself as a subject.⁵³² Barth emphasized, however,

⁵²⁷ CD III/2, 356.

⁵²⁸ Although Barth mainly attributed redemption to the work of the Spirit, he also made room for the Spirit in his doctrine of creation. Whereas the work of the Spirit is linked to the concrete Christian community in the doctrine of redemption, it applies in the doctrine of creation to all persons by structuring the basic form of humanity. See Stuart D. McLean, *Humanity in the Thought of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 44.

⁵²⁹ This capacity does not endorse natural theology. Hart offers a useful distinction between two different levels of capacity in Barth - active capacity (or aptitude) and passive capacity. For example, Mary as a virgin did not have active capacity for conceiving Jesus. Nevertheless, she still had passive capacity to bear Jesus because of the Spirit's work. What Barth rejected in natural theology is our active capacity, but he showed rich reflections upon passive capacity. See Trevor A. Hart, *Regarding Karl Barth: Essays toward a Reading of His Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 172.

⁵³⁰ CD III/2, 394.

⁵³¹ CD III/2, 374.

⁵³² CD III/2, 375.

that this human soul is always grounded, constituted and maintained by God as the soul of the body. Soul is always in and of one particular body, which Barth called “a spatio-material system of relation.”⁵³³ Soul belongs to this visible, outward, earthly world of body, whereas body, in turn, depends on soul in order to have life.⁵³⁴ Resisting the temptation of either transcending or dissolving this enigmatic relationship between body and soul, theology should articulate the integral, mysterious, dialectical relationship of unity and opposition between the two.⁵³⁵

It should be noted here that Barth radically conceives of the body as the subject of perception. Because of the Spirit, body is always besouled, and it means that body is not a mere passive organ, through which sense data is received; rather it actively participates in making decisions and initiating actions against the surrounding world.

Barth wrote:

As the organic body of a soul, it is no longer merely object of its self-movement, self-activity and self-information.... It is and works with the soul.... When a living corporeal being says I, this I, as that of its soul, is also that of its body, and not merely of some privileged part of its body, but of its whole body in which there are... no parts which are simply excluded from the besouling of the whole.⁵³⁶

This passage shows that body is a subject when it is besouled. Barth called this unity an organic body. As a German speaking theologian, Barth distinguished the organic body (*Leib*) from the purely material body (*Körper*),⁵³⁷ claiming that what theological

⁵³³ CD III/2, 376.

⁵³⁴ CD III/2, 350.

⁵³⁵ About the complexity and difficulty of explaining the body-soul relationship, see Sarah Coakley, “Introduction: Religion and the Body,” in *Religion and the Body*, ed. Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2–7; Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 35–38; Price, *Karl Barth’s Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought*, 245–277.

⁵³⁶ CD III/2, 378.

⁵³⁷ CD III/2, 377.

anthropology primarily concerns is the former.⁵³⁸ It is hard to miss here that Barth was one of the first twentieth-century thinkers, along with Merleau-Ponty, who argued for the corporeal constitution of selfhood and suggested the body-subject as an alternative to the Cartesian cogito.⁵³⁹ However, unlike Merleau-Ponty, Barth still endorsed a “relative antithesis”⁵⁴⁰ between soul and body, making analogies between the relation of soul and body, of God and humanity, of Christ and his church, and of man and woman.⁵⁴¹

Barth’s view of the soul-body relationship has often led critics to undervalue his theological anthropology because of his hierarchical ordering.⁵⁴² Despite his controversial argument, it should be noted that, without the profound experiential knowledge of psychology and biology on which Merleau-Ponty based his phenomenology, Barth offered a rich doctrine of body by listening to the witness of Scripture.⁵⁴³ In my view, moreover, Barth’s strength can be partly found in his view of the relative antithesis, which does not undermine the significance of body, but conceives of its dynamic relation to soul. By doing so, his theological vision presents the practice and transformation of the body under the Spirit’s direction as an essential part of the

⁵³⁸ See Ward’s theological elaboration of the German word *Leib* in Graham Ward, “The Schizoid Christ,” in *Christ and Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 68-69.

⁵³⁹ See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), 429-475. Barth’s theological anthropology in *CD III/2* was published in 1948, and Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* was published in 1945.

⁵⁴⁰ *CD III/2*, 369.

⁵⁴¹ *CD III/2*, 427-428.

⁵⁴² In this regard, Barth has been even charged as a dualist. See Blocher, “Karl Barth’s Anthropology,” 120; Price, *Karl Barth’s Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought*, 256. Unlike these critics, von Balthasar argued that Barth’s anthropology is radically anti-Platonic, so anti-dualistic. See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, I*, 386.

⁵⁴³ Recent scholarship has demonstrated that biblical anthropologies presuppose and maintain a certain degree of dualism, although it would be different from Platonic version. See Blocher, “Karl Barth’s Anthropology,” 122-123.

Christian life. It also offers an alternative way of seeing humanity at a time when the body was being idolized in both secular and religious discourses.⁵⁴⁴

4.3. Spiritual-Corporeal Perception of God

As discussed above, Barth attempted to secure the place of experience in theology and to rehabilitate the holistic view of humanity. These two themes converge into and culminate in his notion of spiritual-corporeal perception of God. For Barth, the basic structure of humanity is organically connected to the Spirit, and this ontological determination means that “he is capable of meeting God, of being a person for and in relation to Him, and of being one as God is one.”⁵⁴⁵ Because both body and soul serve as the presupposition and precondition of the potentiality of subjectivity,⁵⁴⁶ any kind of knowledge, including that of God, involves a corporeal dimension. In this light, Barth developed an intriguing idea that God not only creates humanity as a being who can ‘sense’ the divine both spiritually and bodily, but that God also appeals to this capacity when approaching men and women. This theological point of contact replaces an anthropological one in Barth.

It is noteworthy that Barth used the term ‘perception’ (*Wahrnehmung*) to describe this spiritual-bodily totality of human experience.⁵⁴⁷ A distinctive, inclusive, holistic and corporeal nature of perception has been studied by notable scholars – including, Aldous Huxley, John Oman, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Hans Urs von

⁵⁴⁴ About the danger of idolizing and romanticizing the body in religious, theological and philosophical reflections, see Timothy Gorringer, *The Education of Desire: Towards a Theology of the Senses* (London: SCM, 2001), 83–85; Coakley, “Introduction: Religion and the Body,” 2–7.

⁵⁴⁵ *CD* III/2, 395.

⁵⁴⁶ *CD* III/2, 396.

⁵⁴⁷ Barth used the term *Wahrnehmung* 83 times in the entire *CD*, intensively utilizing it 29 times in his theological anthropology in *CD* III/2.

Balthasar and others.⁵⁴⁸ Barth examined the faculty of perception with reference to human relatedness to the other. In the act of self-consciousness, human beings as soul and body recognize themselves wholly and simultaneously as being-before-God and as being-in-the world.⁵⁴⁹ In this regard, perception is the primary mode of human act of engaging reality both spiritually and bodily.⁵⁵⁰ Barth wrote:

[M]an is capable of perceiving the God who meets him and reveals Himself to him.... In dealing with man, God appeals to this ability.... Without this ability, every appeal would obviously be without object; and the meeting between God and man, as it took place in the history of the covenant, would obviously be impossible. If God created him to have his being in His Word and as His partner, it is always decided that He created him as a percipient being.⁵⁵¹

Barth understood the human subject primarily as a percipient being and structured humanity as a fundamentally relational being. To perceive is an act of receiving another into one's self-consciousness. Accordingly, to be a subject means to be capable of positing another in relation to oneself and oneself in relation to this other.⁵⁵² In contrast to the Enlightenment's vision of purely self-contained consciousness, Barth's use of perception makes inter-subjectivity a key concept for his anthropology.

To explain this holistic dimension of relatedness more clearly, Barth distinguished two functions of perceiving – thinking and awareness. One may easily constitute a one-for-one correspondence between thinking and soul, or between awareness and body. It is true that awareness has a closer relation to body because it is

⁵⁴⁸ See Aldous Huxley, *The Art of Seeing* (London: Flamingo, 1994), 19; John Oman, *The Natural & the Supernatural* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 168–170; Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 266; von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, I*, 24, 120.

⁵⁴⁹ CD III/2, 397.

⁵⁵⁰ According to von Balthasar, perception [*Wahrnehmung*] literally means “the seeing of what is true,” or “a taking to oneself (*nehmen*) of something true (*Wahres*) which is offering itself.” In other words, perception is not merely one of the (frequently ignored) sense faculties, but the primary form of knowing for humankind when engaging with self-revealing reality. See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, I*, 24, 120.

⁵⁵¹ CD III/2, 399.

⁵⁵² CD III/2, 399.

the outer side of perception, and that a special relation to soul is ascribed to thinking because it is the inner side. However, soul and body together deal with awareness and thought, because in the Spirit they are inseparably connected. It follows that all human thought has a corporeal dimension, and any awareness affects, and is influenced by, soul. In this regard, Barth claimed that the biblical term *jada*, which embraces both awareness and thinking, is extremely significant in theology.⁵⁵³

In light of the distinction between thinking and awareness, Barth explained the process of perception. The self becomes aware of the other when the other comes *to* the self through the body. The body is, thus, the openness of soul, or “the capacity in man in virtue of which another can come to him and be for him.”⁵⁵⁴ The other, then, comes *into* the self when the self thinks.⁵⁵⁵ The self not only receives the other in one’s consciousness in the act of perceiving, but also enters into the other’s consciousness by positing oneself within the nexus of corporeal beings. Perceiving as thinking and awareness is this spiritual-bodily total act of receiving another into one’s consciousness and of giving oneself to another’s consciousness.⁵⁵⁶

This spiritual-bodily perception is a God-given possibility insofar as the Spirit structures humanity as a spiritual-corporeal being. However else critics have charged Barth, he had no suspicion over human ability to perceive God. Barth also claimed that this view is biblical: “The God of the Bible wills to be perceived, desired and loved in His visible, audible, tangible witnesses. That is why the Bible speaks so

⁵⁵³ *CD* III/2, 405; *CD* IV/3, 183.

⁵⁵⁴ *CD* III/2, 401.

⁵⁵⁵ *CD* III/2, 401.

⁵⁵⁶ One may find here similarities between Hegel’s notion of recognition (*Anerkenntnis*) and Barth’s concept of perception. However, Barth showed more interest in the corporeal dimension of mutual recognition and less attention to the returning movement of consciousness to the self. It is noteworthy, moreover, that the translators of *CD* used the term ‘acknowledgement’ for *Anerkenntnis*, which was translated into recognition in the English translation of Hegelian philosophy. See Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Arnold V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 111-119.

anthropomorphically of God's speech and conduct."⁵⁵⁷ In reality, however, not every person does perceive God. In Barth's view, this does not prove an ontological inability but rather a misuse of capacity. In light of biblical anthropology, theology should not deal with an abstract view of a damned humanity, but a concrete understanding of a sinner who can deny, but cannot alter, this God-created nature.⁵⁵⁸ At this point, one may suspect, as with Brunner, that Barth indirectly endorses natural theology.⁵⁵⁹ For Barth, however, the human capacity to know God precedes natural theology because the possibility of perception presupposes God's gracious decision to be known by humanity.⁵⁶⁰

A more difficult question Barth had to respond to was how our perception of God is related to our perception of creatures. As shown above, humanity is defined by Barth fundamentally as the "God-perceiving man...who finds God and to whom God is present."⁵⁶¹ In reality, humanity also receives into self-consciousness particular things, including action, voice, nature, historical event, and many others. The general capacity for perceiving secular materials is rooted in the concrete capacity for perceiving God, whose all-embracing and gracious act makes the whole world come to exist. This means that men and women are "able to perceive...God first and foremost, but because God, therefore and therewith another in general."⁵⁶² There is no reality which is not the creation of God, and all rational activity, knowledge and philosophy are rooted in the perception of God. The created faculty of thought and of sense cannot avoid generalizing in the process of perceiving, but the concrete capacity should come first by

⁵⁵⁷ CD III/2, 413.

⁵⁵⁸ CD III/2, 403.

⁵⁵⁹ Brunner, "The New Barth," 123.

⁵⁶⁰ See also von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 153.

⁵⁶¹ CD III/2, 402.

⁵⁶² CD III/2, 400.

the Spirit, not the other way around. It does not mean, however, that Barth undervalued the significance of general capacity. Enriching his earlier doctrine of the secularity of revelation,⁵⁶³ he claimed that these creaturely things are used by God as the medium for self-revealing. Through these secular materials, the unknowable God meets the human being-in-the world. Barth wrote:

[I]n, behind and over the other things which he perceives by sense and thought there always stands in one way or another the Other who through other things approaches and enters him, who wills to be sensed and thought by him, to be for and in him, not casting him off, not leaving him to himself, willing rather that man should be with Him and that He should be received and enclosed in his self-consciousness. In order that this may take place, man is percipient.⁵⁶⁴

Alluding to the circumlocution of sacramental union, Barth argued that God is perceived in, behind and over secular mediums. He pushed his argument to the point that “[w]hen biblical man perceives, when he properly and normally perceives God in all that he perceives, he is open as whole man; and again as whole man he is the open place in which God is present in His witnesses and takes up His habitation.”⁵⁶⁵ Here Barth’s proposal bears some similarities to postmodern thinking in the sense that the self as the percipient being is open to the intrusion and the surprise of the other.⁵⁶⁶

In short, Barth’s study of spiritual-corporeal perception is of two-fold theological significance with reference to my pneumatological concerns. First, both the Bible and our ordinary life demonstrate that humanity-in-the world is a being-in-encounter-with-the other.⁵⁶⁷ Barth’s emphasis upon the faculty of perception does justice to this fundamental relatedness of humanity and retrieves the importance of

⁵⁶³ CD I/1, 165-174.

⁵⁶⁴ CD III/2, 402.

⁵⁶⁵ CD III/2, 405.

⁵⁶⁶ See Derrida’s dialogue with Kearney on this issue in Jacques Derrida, “Deconstruction and the Other,” in *States of Mind: Dialogues with Contemporary Thinkers on the European Mind*, ed. Richard Kearney (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

⁵⁶⁷ CD III/2, 247.

bodily sense in theology. In one's encounter with the other, there is the real act of seeing, speaking, hearing, smelling and touching.⁵⁶⁸ These bodily senses gain a theological and practical importance in Barth, because God as the Spirit enters and dwells in humanity by being received through sensory awareness into spiritual thinking.⁵⁶⁹ Second, as with his view of acknowledgement, Barth's doctrine of perception is both pneumatological and prayerful.⁵⁷⁰ It is the Spirit as the basis of soul and body who holds human sensory experience and spiritual thinking together, thereby making the act of perception possible. They should be attentive to secular materials in their prayerful anticipation of the Spirit's illumination, because God indirectly meets them through these creaturely media in their ordinary life.

5. Conclusion

The concept of revelation, as a dominant manner of God's communication with humanity in the Bible and fundamental importance to Christian theology, has become widely questioned in the modern period.⁵⁷¹ Unlike his predecessors and contemporaries, who tried to offer Christianity without revelation or marginalize its importance, Barth placed the doctrine of revelation at the forefront of his theology and constructed his theological method in light of revelation. This chapter has discussed crucial aspects of his doctrine of revelation with special attention to how his pneumatology makes us see revelation not as a mere epistemological issue but as a primary mode of God's dealing with the whole person. Although his view of revelation is christocentric, he also emphasized the Spirit's act of creating the knower of God and lifting the Christian life

⁵⁶⁸ *CD* III/2, 250-273, 405.

⁵⁶⁹ See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, I, 388.

⁵⁷⁰ See Barth's interpretation of the Spirit's intercessory prayer in Romans 8 with reference to his anthropology in *CD* III/2, 360-361.

⁵⁷¹ See Dulles' analysis of contemporary difficulties against revelation in Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1992), 8-14.

upward into the very life of the Trinity. Accordingly, there is no place in Barth for the autonomous epistemological subject or for the perspective of the mere spectator.⁵⁷²

Barth demonstrated that the basis of revelation is God's self-knowledge in the Trinity, and humanity can indirectly conceive of God by being drawn into this intra-divine knowledge. At this point, one may still ask why human beings have to respond to God's self-knowledge. Moreover, how can God persuade them to participate in this divine self-knowledge? Is it too irresponsible to say that the Spirit's miracle is an answer to everything that other doctrines could not explain clearly? In my view, Barth responded to these inherent problems by bringing back the concept of beauty in theological discourse. He claimed that God reveals God-self in divine glory, and its splendor is perceived in the form of beauty.⁵⁷³ Before our desire directs us to the unknown God, the God of beauty pleases, persuades and enlightens us to receive revelation in our joyful freedom.⁵⁷⁴ In this regard, Barth claimed that the logic with which theology deals is "the logic of wonders."⁵⁷⁵ At least since his first dogmatic lectures at Göttingen, Barth had greatly emphasized that "[the] knowledge of God on God's side presupposes the revelatory wonder," which correspondingly evokes "the act of prayer, in which human beings as creatures... gratefully recognize the presence of God in the world in faith and obedience."⁵⁷⁶ This aesthetic and prayerful dimension of the divine-human encounter is essential to making sense of Barth's theology. The next chapter, therefore, will examine in detail Barth's doctrine of beauty and its pneumatological implications.

⁵⁷² *CD* IV/1, 335.

⁵⁷³ *CD* II/1, 650.

⁵⁷⁴ *CD* II/1, 651.

⁵⁷⁵ *ET*, 66.

⁵⁷⁶ *UCR* II, 245 (my translation).

IV. The Spirit and the Beauty of the Lord

In his book *Conversation with Barth on Preaching*, William Willimon named Barth's God as "the talkative God."⁵⁷⁷ This God communicates with humanity through the threefold form of the Word – revelation, Scripture and proclamation.⁵⁷⁸ It is commonly assumed, accordingly, that the centrality of the Word in Barth resulted in his skepticism towards religious art. Barth himself even boldly claimed, "Images and symbols do not have *any* place in a Protestant church building."⁵⁷⁹ This 20th-century Swiss Reformed theologian's rejection of images certainly echoes the voice of 16th-century Swiss Reformers. For examples, Zwingli attempted to entirely abolish images in Protestant worship: because the Word alone will suffice, images must not be used even as aids in teaching the Christian faith.⁵⁸⁰ Calvin offered a more nuanced opinion about the use of images, discussing their role at length in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*:⁵⁸¹ any visible image cannot be attributed to the invisible divine, and the Ten Commandments forbid any pictorial representation of God;⁵⁸² the images, nevertheless, can be utilized only for teaching or for pleasure insofar as they are not displayed in sacred places. Barth seemed to inherit this Reformed tradition, which played a vital role in his dispute over

⁵⁷⁷ William Willimon, *Conversations with Barth on Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 143.

⁵⁷⁸ See CD I/1, 88-124.

⁵⁷⁹ Karl Barth, "Protestantism and Architecture," *Theology Today* 19/2 (1962): 272.

⁵⁸⁰ Huldrych Zwingli, *Huldrych Zwingli Writings, Vol 2. In Search of True Religion: Reformation, Pastoral and Eucharistic Writings*, trans. H. Wayne Pipkin (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1984), 68-70.

⁵⁸¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I. 11. 99-116.

⁵⁸² Gouwens and Wolterstorff explained the link between the Reformed tradition and its so-called iconoclastic tendency in the light of the Reformed emphasis upon the radically transcendent God. However, they argued that the Reformed tradition does not abolish the place of beauty in the church but leaves room for its distinctive aesthetic sensitivity. See David J. Gouwens, "Mozart Among the Theologians," *Modern Theology* 16, no. 4 (2000): 464-465; Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace: The Kuyper Lectures for 1981 Delivered at the Free University of Amsterdam* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1983), 131-134.

installing a new stained glass window in the Basel Münster in 1952.⁵⁸³ As a result, he has often been accused as a contemporary Protestant iconoclast.⁵⁸⁴

In contrast to Barth's strict view of the use of image, one of his greatest contributions is often regarded as his retrieval of beauty in theological discussions. Moltmann, for example, highly praised Barth as "the only theologian in the continental Protestant tradition who has dared to call God 'beautiful.'"⁵⁸⁵ According to von Balthasar, moreover, fragmentary attempts to seek the category of beauty in theology "finds their full form in Karl Barth's isolated treatise on God's glory and (therein) his beauty."⁵⁸⁶ Barth himself even lamented that the theological significance of beauty had not been properly appreciated in both the Catholic and the Protestant traditions.⁵⁸⁷ How, then, can we reconcile these seemingly contradictory images of Barth as a new iconoclast and as a theologian of divine beauty?

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold in this regard: on the one hand, I will examine Barth's doctrine of beauty and his theology of art, resisting improper criticisms leveled towards him; on the other hand, I will argue that pneumatology plays a vital role in making sense of his so-called theological aesthetics. For this, I will illustrate that his innovative understanding of beauty and art is developed within the context of his trinitarian theology in general, and in relation to his pneumatology in particular. Those who are familiar with Barth may easily find previous researches on his doctrine of beauty,⁵⁸⁸ but most of them insufficiently dealt with the fragmentary character of this

⁵⁸³ Busch, *Karl Barth*, 385.

⁵⁸⁴ See, for example, George Pattison, *Art, Modernity and Faith: Restoring the Image*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 1998), 21.

⁵⁸⁵ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology and Joy*, trans. Reinhard Ulrich (London: SCM, 1973), 58.

⁵⁸⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Vol VII: Theology: The New Covenant*, trans. Brian McNeil (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 21.

⁵⁸⁷ See CD II/1, 651.

⁵⁸⁸ See the following researches on Barth's theology of beauty: John Capper, "Joy in the Church Dogmatics? A Neglected Theme," in *Karl Barth: A Future for Postmodern Theology?*, ed. Geoffrey

doctrine, or overlooked his deep interest in particular forms of art. This study will consider this promising topic with special attention to Barth's Spirit-talk, offering a broader framework for understanding the way in which beauty, art and theology are interrelated. To explore this possibility, I will first explicate his doctrine of beauty within the context of his theology of God's glory, which arguably announced a new aesthetic turn in 20th-century theology. The next section will investigate his doctrine of glorification, which offers a rich pneumatological reflection about the loving relationship between God and the whole creation in an eschatologically refined aesthetic language. In the final section, I will briefly survey Barth's deeply pneumatological view of art theory and artistic representation. This constructive engagement will provide a new theological perspective for conceiving of the Spirit's redemptive work, our daily appreciation of beauty and the creative work of the artist.

1. Barth on Beauty: Towards a Pneumatological Aesthetics

Considering Barth's resistance to liberal theology's aesthetic propensity, one may initially be sceptical about the use of the term 'aesthetics' in the study of Barth. As many philosophers and theologians have noted, this notion is extremely slippery and has been frequently misused. It was originally coined in a distinctly philosophical context by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, who defined it as the "science of cognition by senses," in the mid 18th century.⁵⁸⁹ After the idea of the beautiful began to be liberated

Thompson and Christiaan Mostert (Hindmarsh: Australian Theological Forum, 2000), 114–119; Richard Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty, and Art* (New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 26–29; von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, I*, 52–57; 380–390; Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader* (London: SCM, 2004), 315; O. V. Bychkov, "Introduction," in *Theological Aesthetics after Von Balthasar*, ed. O. V. Bychkov and James Fodor (Aldershot, Hants, England: Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), xv–xvii; Paul S. Fiddes, "Concept, Image and Story in Systematic Theology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 1 (2009): 3–4.

⁵⁸⁹ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Ästhetik, Teil 1*, trans. Dagmar Mirbach (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 2007), § 14.

from the true and the good, as von Balthasar claimed, an “estheticization of the beautiful”⁵⁹⁰ took place during the periods of German Idealism and Romanticism. Accordingly, aesthetics was even elevated to the distinctive discipline of studying the beautiful and art,⁵⁹¹ although the reception of the term has varied within theological, philosophical and artistic circles.

If the term ‘aesthetics’ can be used in a theologically qualified way, it is necessary to ask how and to what extent it can properly describe Barth’s distinctive view. In other words, where can we place Barth within a wide range of aesthetic discourse? Viladesau’s categorization may offer us a helpful guidance. He grouped various definitions of aesthetics under three rubrics as follow:

1. The general study of sensation and imagination and/or of “feeling” in the wider sense of nonconceptual or nondiscursive (but nevertheless “intellectual”) knowledge
2. The study of beauty and/or of “taste”
3. The study of art in general and/or of the fine arts in particular (I use the word “study” rather than “theory” in order to include empirical, phenomenological, historical, and other such approaches besides the philosophical or systematic).⁵⁹²

The first and the third category can be found in Barth, albeit fragmentarily, but I propose that the second definition, the study of beauty, primarily represents his stance. What Barth explored, however, is not the beautiful *per se*, but divine beauty as the revealed form of God’s glory. This section, therefore, seeks to survey his theology of beauty, inquiring into why aesthetics drew his attention from his earlier career, where the category of beauty can be properly discovered, how divine beauty is linked with so-

⁵⁹⁰ Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Revelation and Beautiful,” in *Word and Revelation: Essays in Theology I*, trans. A. V. Littledale (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 122.

⁵⁹¹ Beardsley’s study illustrates that the term aesthetics contained pejorative implications before German Idealism and Romanticism because of its difficulty in producing a clear, universal and distinctive idea on the object. See Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present: A Short History* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.; London: University of Alabama Press, 1975), 209–282.

⁵⁹² Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 7.

called ‘aesthetic pleasure,’ and what the Spirit’s role is in God’s self-interpretation of the divine glory.

1.1. A New Iconoclast?: Barth’s Attack on Modern Aestheticism

In contemporary theology, the clearest account of the necessity and danger of a theology centred on beauty perhaps comes from von Balthasar. His study of the long tradition of pursuing the beautiful resulted in a following conclusion: “The esthetic has a strange power of attraction. When put aside it does not rest until as myth, eros, framework of thought or Hegelian kingdom of ideas it comes finally to dominate all the rest, and to incorporate Christianity as a way to itself or as an intermediary or as last stage in the ascent.”⁵⁹³ In order to prevent the beautiful from domesticating revelation, he carefully distinguished ‘theological aesthetics’ from ‘aesthetic theology.’⁵⁹⁴ Aesthetic theology tends to compromise theology’s language, content and method for the sake of aesthetics, and thus it is an improper way to adopt the category of beauty.⁵⁹⁵ In contrast, he sought to do justice both to the priority of God’s revelation and to the significance of the category of beauty alike. Thus, he suggested a “theory of beauty from the data of revelation itself with genuinely theological method,”⁵⁹⁶ calling it a “theological aesthetics.” Not every theologian agrees with von Balthasar’s distinction,⁵⁹⁷ but it has been widely influential in current theological debates about aesthetics. How, then, can

⁵⁹³ von Balthasar, “Revelation and Beautiful,” 121.

⁵⁹⁴ von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, I*, 79-117.

⁵⁹⁵ von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, I*, 79.

⁵⁹⁶ von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, I*, 117.

⁵⁹⁷ There have also been criticisms directed towards the use of the term ‘theological aesthetics’ by contemporary theologians. For example, Pattison rejected this term, because it risks obscuring a current theological engagement with art. For him, the growing field of theological engagement with art is more like ‘aesthetic theology’ rather than ‘theological aesthetics.’ Fiddes has also explored the place of ‘aesthetic theology,’ because it can better do justice to religious and secular arts alike. See George Pattison, “Is the Time Right for a Theological Aesthetics?,” in *Theological Aesthetics after Von Balthasar*, ed. O. V Bychkov and James Fodor (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 108–114; Fiddes, “Concept, Image and Story in Systematic Theology,” 4–5.

one begin with revelation and discover aesthetical elements in *this* specific act of God? Von Balthasar claimed, under Barth's influence, that "the manifestation of which is the glory of God"⁵⁹⁸ is the basis for theological aesthetics. The primary object of theological aesthetics is neither an abstract notion of the beautiful, nor a human artistic work, but God's engagement with humanity "in terms of the self-glorification of divine love."⁵⁹⁹

I should make it clear here that Barth neither coined the term 'theological aesthetics,' nor achieved a high conceptual clarity about 'aesthetics.'⁶⁰⁰ Unlike von Balthasar, furthermore, he did not impose the category of being on to the beautiful. However, Barth may be regarded as a pioneer of theological aesthetics, at least in a Balthasarian sense.⁶⁰¹ He neither studied God's beauty as an independent theological topic, nor made it a controlling motif.⁶⁰² Instead, he placed the beautiful under the rubric of the reality of God, carefully reading scriptural testimonies concerning how God's glory invokes human response to this self-revealing God. Moreover, Barth seemed to have had little trouble with the term 'theological aesthetics': he cautiously recommended "the theological aesthetics of H. U. von Balthasar"⁶⁰³ to Kurt Lüthi, who questioned whether Barth's theology was still relevant considering his insufficient view

⁵⁹⁸ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible*, trans. D. C. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 10.

⁵⁹⁹ von Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible*, 10.

⁶⁰⁰ Barth himself used the term 'aesthetics' in both positive and negative ways in *Ethics*, but he used it more carefully (and in a more negative sense) in *CD*. See *Ethics*, 508–510.

⁶⁰¹ It is widely accepted by many theologians that von Balthasar's theological aesthetics is indebted to Barth's doctrine of beauty, and von Balthasar himself admitted Barth's influence. However, there are also crucial dissimilarities between them, which will be briefly explained later. See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, I*, 54, 124. For brief reviews of von Balthasar's indebtedness and resistance to Barth's doctrine of beauty, see Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics*, 29–30; John Riches, "The Biblical Basis of Glory," in *The Beauty of Christ: An Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Bede McGregor and Thomas Norris (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 59–61; Breandan Leahy, "Theological Aesthetics," in *The Beauty of Christ: An Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Bede McGregor and Thomas Norris (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 31–32.

⁶⁰² *CD* II/2, 652.

⁶⁰³ Karl Barth, *Letters 1961–1968*, ed. Jürgen Fangmeier and Hinrich Stoevesandt, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 101.

of art. Barth also praised Vogel's work on this topic,⁶⁰⁴ which examined the beautiful in relation to God's glory. Thus one may draw a provisional conclusion that Barth did not entirely reject the category of 'aesthetics' itself when situated within what he saw as its proper context.

In order to clarify Barth's own view on aesthetics, it is necessary to look at his reaction to previous centuries' theology. As discussed above, Barth has often been regarded as a contemporary Protestant iconoclast. It is true that Barth himself played a certain role in popularizing this rather pejorative image. In my view, however, Barth's stance is more complex and subtle than those of his Reformed predecessors. Zwingli's and Calvin's negative views on images were formed against the backdrop of their resistance to the medieval Catholic Church. As a theologian who inherited the legacy of 19th-century theology and initiated a new theological movement, Barth had to respond to a totally different challenge – liberal theology's aestheticizing tendency.⁶⁰⁵ In his eyes, one of the fatal errors made by liberal theologians was that they overlooked the difference between theology and culture, while making the Christian faith more accessible and plausible to modern people. It follows that, argued Barth, "theological humanism, moralism, psychologism, synergism, and ultimately an anthropocentric monism"⁶⁰⁶ had become main trends in religious discourse, whereas God's Word was not properly heard.⁶⁰⁷ The rise of modern aestheticism, in his view, had also affected

⁶⁰⁴ See Barth's paraphrase of the term *Rühmung* (praise), with its reference to glory, used by Heinrich Vogel in *Der Christ und das Schön*, and *Die Rühmung. Psalmen und Kirchenlieder* in his letter to Vogel. Barth, *Letters 1961-1968*, 129.

⁶⁰⁵ In a similar manner, Jüngel suspected, "Theological observations on [the aesthetic] have been particularly problematical since at least the nineteenth century, when aesthetics or the work of art seemed to take the place of religion and theology." Eberhard Jüngel, "'Even the Beautiful Must Die' - Beauty in the Light of Truth. Theological Observations on the Aesthetic Relation," in *Theological Essays II*, ed. John B. Webster, trans. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast and John B. Webster (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 59.

⁶⁰⁶ *CD IV/2*, 8.

⁶⁰⁷ See also Barth's critique of Brunner's compromise with modern philosophy in this light. Karl Barth, "No! Answer to Emil Brunner," 111-112.

Christian theology in a considerably negative manner.⁶⁰⁸ In this light, he critiqued the danger of aesthetic propensity in the young Schleiermacher's thought, which risked distorting the task of theology and the Christian understanding of God alike, as follows:

Schleiermacher's self-description as an orator... tells us something else.... It differs... from that of the preacher.... The form of the orator is controlled not only by material, logic, and purpose, but also by the aim to speak artistically or beautifully, to achieve perfection of form.... And shortly thereafter he tells us that the most definite and understandable expression of the heart of this matter is speech without words, that is, music.... Is this only a part of the fullness and majesty of human oratory? No, for we are told that in human life in general the aim is to achieve virtuosity, whether in morals, philosophy, or art.... In exactly the same sense, but in a way which surpasses and supplements this general virtuosity, he thinks that there should be virtuosos and artists in religion.... Indeed, God himself can sometimes be called a virtuoso, and a moody one, as befits the virtuoso, while religion can be described as the noblest of all human works of art..., and the whole world is called a gallery of religious scenes. Where are we, and what is it all about, if these pictures, if the recollection of a Paganini or a Böcklin that the orator kindles in us, are supposed to lead us to the matter?⁶⁰⁹

Schleiermacher called God the supreme artist and understood the world as God's work of art. These metaphors have often been utilized to describe God's being and act since the Early Church.⁶¹⁰ For Barth, however, the problem of Schleiermacher lies in the fact that the self-consciousness of a theologian as an artist and the quasi-aesthetic method of theology would arbitrarily control human knowledge of God rather than receiving God's revelation in prayerful obedience.⁶¹¹ Barth's polemic against the aesthetic in theology centers, not on aesthetic categories as such, but on uses of such categories in conflict with the priority of divine revelation.

⁶⁰⁸ See *GD*, 273; *CD I/2*, 773; *CD II/1*, 652; *CD III/3*, 486, 526; *CD III/4*, 381, 557; *CD/IV/1*, 344; *CL*, 152.

⁶⁰⁹ *TS*, 246.

⁶¹⁰ For example, St. Basil wrote, "Moses showed you a Craftsman all but pervading the substance of the universe, harmonizing the individual parts with each other, and brining to perfection a whole, consistent with itself, consonant and harmonious." St Basil, *Fathers of the Church*; V. 46, *Saint Basil Exegetic Homilies*, trans. Agnes Clare Way (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1963), 13. See also St Ambrose, *Fathers of the Church*; V. 42, *Saint Ambrose, Hexameron; Paradise; and, Cain and Abel*, trans. John J. Savage (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1977), 259-260; St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Fathers of the Church*; V. 58, *Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Ascetical Works*, trans. Virginia Woods Callahan (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1967), 110-111.

⁶¹¹ See Barth's harsh criticism towards the young Schleiermacher's homiletics in Karl Barth, *Homiletics*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Donald Daniels (Louisville: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1991), 20-23.

Barth's attack on aestheticism in modern theology immediately invited criticisms as to whether he could do justice to the importance of beauty and art. For example, one of Barth's liberal teachers, von Harnack, was skeptical on this issue.⁶¹² He observed in Barth "a dividing wall between experience of God and the good, true, and beautiful, instead of uniting them with the experience of God."⁶¹³ Barth answered Harnack, arguing that "There is a connection between [them], but the connection is precisely the dividing wall, the divine crisis, which is the only basis on which it is possible to speak seriously of the good, true, and beautiful."⁶¹⁴ Although Barth did not develop his theory of beauty in this correspondence, which appeared in *Die Christliche Welt* in 1923, his answer anticipates a key theological motif, which plays a vital role in his later doctrine of beauty. The beautiful in a theological sense is not an individual quality or self-standing category; rather, the event of God's revelation is the only *locus* where the beautiful can be properly sought and perceived. Indeed, Barth presented in *CD II/1* the doctrine of beauty within the distinctive theological context of revelation. More specifically, he retrieved the biblical concept of glory in order to properly situate his discussion of beauty. To explore this theological achievement, the next subsection will study how Barth appreciated the biblical link between God's beauty and act.

1.2. The Glory of the Lord: Return to the Biblical Concept of Beauty

⁶¹² Hunsinger rightly observed that the young Barth's failure to distinguish between the normative and the valid caused Harnack's failure to grasp the complexity of Barth's stance, George Hunsinger, "The Harnack/Barth Correspondence: A Paraphrase with Comments," in *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2000), 334.

⁶¹³ Adolf von Harnack, "Fifteen Questions to Those among the Theologians who are Contemptuous of the Scientific Theology," in *The Beginning of Dialectic Theology*, ed. James M. Robinson, trans. Keith R. Crim (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1968), 166.

⁶¹⁴ Karl Barth, "Fifteen Answers to Professor von Harnack," in *The Beginning of Dialectic Theology*, 169.

As Victor Cousin rightly observed, an argument for God based on human delight in the beautiful has been very rare and even avoided, although it seems to lie parallel to the arguments from goodness and truth.⁶¹⁵ In a similar manner, von Balthasar observed that “[F]or the great thinkers of the West (from Homer and Plato via Augustine and Thomas down to Goethe and Hölderlin, Schelling and Heidegger), beauty is the last comprehensive attribute of all-embracing being.”⁶¹⁶ Both thinkers argued that the elusiveness and the subjective character of the beautiful have created a feeling of unease among theologians and philosophers.⁶¹⁷ In particular, I suspect, many scholars have had difficulty in dealing with the *actualistic* nature of the biblical concept of beauty. As von Rad critically capitulated, what biblical people experience and express as God’s beauty is an *event* in and through which God shows God-self in creation and history. He summarized this scriptural view as follows:

(1) For Israel beauty was never something absolute, existing in its own right, but was always a thing unceasingly bestowed on the world by God. (2) Beauty was therefore a datum of faith. (3) Enjoyment of this beauty of God is truly present as early as the hymns, and it is most certainly present in the utterances of the prophets as something anticipated, that is, it is oriented towards an eschatological fulfilment: it is perception in faith and faith perceived. (4) Israel perceived splendour even in the workings of the divine *kenosis* and hiddenness. (5) For Israel beauty was something that happened rather than something that existed, because she understood it as the result of God’s action and not of God’s being.⁶¹⁸

This actualistic nature of beauty hindered Israel from comprehending ‘the’ beautiful as an abstraction.⁶¹⁹ This event character of beauty, in conjunction with the prohibition of images by the Ten Commandments, encouraged Israel to express God’s beauty in

⁶¹⁵ Victor Cousin, “God Seen in the Beautiful,” in *Selections from the Literature of Theism*, ed. Alfred Caldecott and H. R. Mackintosh (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904), 305–315.

⁶¹⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, “In Retrospect,” in *The Analogy of Beauty: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. John Riches (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 213.

⁶¹⁷ In addition, both thinkers observed the paradoxical lack of aesthetic discourse in modern theology, when philosophical aesthetics began to emerge at the time.

⁶¹⁸ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology, Vol. I: The Theology of Israel’s Historical Traditions*, trans. David M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 367–368.

⁶¹⁹ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology I*, 365, n. 21.

poetry and narrative. Due to this unique representation of beauty, argued von Rad, “Israel occupies a special place in the history of aesthetics.”⁶²⁰ The New Testament also has little interest in developing its own conception of beauty and rarely attributes the category of beauty to the divine. Nebel even suspected that “The world of the new testament is completely lacking in the beautiful.... It is unthinkable that anything beautiful could arise here.”⁶²¹ In other words, the Bible rarely offers a conceptual foundation for reflecting on the beautiful *per se*, and this is one of the main reasons the category of beauty has not often been prized in theology.

One of Barth’s greatest achievements in this regard is his revival of the biblical conception of beauty in theology. Barth was even embarrassed by the fact that beauty had not been properly prized in the Christian tradition, especially in the Reformation and the post-Reformation periods.⁶²² In his judgement, Roman Catholicism also failed to reflect it until J. M. Scheeben rediscovered it in the 19th century.⁶²³ One may raise objections that some Protestant theologians, particularly those who worked in the English-speaking world,⁶²⁴ and Catholic mystics praised the beauty of God before Barth. His ignorance of these may be subject to criticism, but his intention should not be denigrated. Unlike his predecessors, his main concern was to find a right place for the category of beauty in theology. Resisting liberal theology’s aestheticism, he underlined that theology cannot be constrained by human conventional criteria of beauty. He also

⁶²⁰ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology I*, 365.

⁶²¹ Gerhard Nebel cited in von Balthasar, “Revelation and the Beautiful,” 145.

⁶²² *CD II/1*, 651.

⁶²³ However, Barth suspected that Scheeben’s concept of beauty “seems to be a particularly secular one... and indeed extremely dangerous.” See *CD II/1*, 651.

⁶²⁴ For example, see John Owen, *The Glory of Christ*, ed. Hervey Mockford (London: Grace Publications Trust, 1987), Ch. 12, esp., 57–62; Jonathan Edwards, *Experiencing God: Jonathan Edwards, Selected Readings from His Spiritual Classics*, ed. Robert Backhouse (London: Marshall Pickering, 1995), 29–31; Jonathan Edwards, *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards, From His Private Notebooks*. (Eugene: University of Oregon, 1955), 254–257. I owe my discovery of Owen and Edward’s emphasis upon the beautiful to Theissen’s *Theological Aesthetics*, 167–176.

opposed a pre-Reformation Catholic tendency of philosophizing the beautiful, because it risked abstracting it as “the ultimate cause which produces and moves all things.”⁶²⁵ These provocative criticisms came from his biblically qualified view, in which the beautiful is situated under the rubric of God’s glory. Instead of adopting the Platonic ontological notion of the beautiful, he sought to do justice to its actualistic nature by painstakingly gazing it in the *event* of God’s revelation.⁶²⁶ What needs to be investigated further is how he utilized the biblical concept of beauty within his theology of the Word of God.

1.3. Primary Aesthetic Concepts: Glory, Beauty and Joy

For Barth, God’s glory is the fullness and sum of all the perfections of God. It is not an abstract philosophical concept, but a way in which God manifests God-self in power, truth and act.⁶²⁷ It first establishes the distance between God and human beings in God’s *freedom*. God’s freedom revealed in glory, however, is marked by God’s gracious *love* for them in God’s nearness to and dwelling among them. The glory of God, therefore, is the appropriate conclusion of the doctrine of God’s freedom and love. Barth explained this dialectical view as follows:

God Himself in the truth and capacity and act in which He makes Himself known as God. This truth and capacity and act are the triumph, the very core, of His freedom. And at its core it is *freedom to love*. For at the core of His being, and therefore in His glory, God is the One who seeks and finds *fellowship*, creating and maintaining and controlling it. He is in Himself, and therefore to everything outside Himself, relationship, *the basis and prototype of all relationship*. In fact that He is glorious He loves.⁶²⁸

⁶²⁵ See Barth’s critique of Pseudo-Dionysius and Augustine’s aestheticization in *CD II/1*, 651-652.

⁶²⁶ In this respect, Barth would agree with van der Leeuw’s statement: “beauty... is served, but not worshiped.” Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art*, trans. David Green (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963), 337.

⁶²⁷ *CD II/1*, 643.

⁶²⁸ *CD II/1*, 641(emphasis added).

In Barth's eyes, both the *kabod* of the Hebrew Bible and the *doxa* of the New Testament demonstrate that God's glory is the manifestation of God's love in freedom, and this biblical concept must be the starting-point for discussing the beauty of God.⁶²⁹ Both Testaments see glory not only as God's sovereignty, but also as God's condescension and friendliness to the creature. For Barth, nevertheless, the New Testament adds a crucial content – Jesus Christ as “the prototype of all participation by creation in the glory of God.”⁶³⁰ This idea plays a vital role in Barth's discussion of the visible form of beauty and eschatological glorification, both of which will be examined shortly after.

As with von Rad, Barth found that both beauty and power are experienced when divine glory is manifested.⁶³¹ The glory of the Lord (*Herrlichkeit*), therefore, usually means the manifestation of God's power,⁶³² which can be translated, as von Balthasar pointed out, into the biblical concepts of lordliness (*Herr-heit*) and sublimity (*Hehr-heit*).⁶³³ However, the idea of ‘glory’ contains something which cannot be exhausted by that of ‘power.’ For Barth, the glory of God *also* “gives pleasure, creates desires and rewards with enjoyment.”⁶³⁴ These are feelings created and aroused when one encounters the beautiful, so it can be an essential element to praise God and to perceive revelation.⁶³⁵ *This* beauty persuades and enlightens us that God's glory is not a mere

⁶²⁹ CD II/1, 641-643.

⁶³⁰ CD II/1, 643. See also, von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, VII, 24-29

⁶³¹ CD II/1, 650; von Rad, *Old Testament Theology I*, 239–240.

⁶³² One may notice at this point some analogies between the aesthetic concept of the sublime and the biblical concept of glory in the sense that they mainly arise when encountering the beauty of powerful things. See E. F. Carritt, *The Theory of Beauty*, 6th ed. (London: Methuen, 1962).

⁶³³ von Balthasar, “In Retrospect,” 213. About the difficulty of translating the *Herrlichkeit* into English, see Aidan Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad: A Guide Through Balthasar's Aesthetics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 187.

⁶³⁴ CD II/1, 651.

⁶³⁵ CD II/1, 656.

thing, concept or fact, which exists apart from creation; rather, “it is effective because and as it is beautiful.”⁶³⁶ Barth explained the reason God is ‘beautiful’ as follows:

If we can and must say that God is beautiful, to say this is to say how He *enlightens* and *convinces* and *persuades* us..... It is to say that God has this superior force, this power of *attraction*, which speaks for itself, which wins and conquers, in the fact that He is beautiful, divinely beautiful, *beautiful in His own way*, in a way that is His alone, beautiful as the unattainable primal beauty, yet really beautiful.⁶³⁷

Seen from this rich theology of glory, God does not rule over or control created beings, but attracts, pleases or persuades them by graciously communicating divine joy.⁶³⁸

Barth’s association of joy with beauty arguably results in a theological doctrine of ‘aesthetic pleasure’ in this respect.⁶³⁹

Most theorists of the aesthetic have attempted to define aesthetic pleasure, but Barth distinctively characterized it in the light of biblical view of pleasure. Especially, his reading of the poems of the Hebrew Bible provided crucial insights,⁶⁴⁰ allowing him to argue that “God must be the object of joy” and “God... Himself radiates joy.”⁶⁴¹ God’s glory is an objective basis, which enacts our perception of beauty, awakens desire and creates delight in us. The source of aesthetic pleasure in a theological sense is not the perceiver’s subjective feeling, but God’s overflowing self-communicative joy. It establishes the loving and reciprocal relationship with the perceiver by creating in him/her longing to receive love and to praise God in return.⁶⁴² The beautiful, thus,

⁶³⁶ CD II/1, 653.

⁶³⁷ CD II/1, 650 (emphasis added).

⁶³⁸ About the importance of joy in Barth’s theology, See Gunton, *The Barth Lectures*, 63; Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life*, 132-152; Capper, “Joy in the Church Dogmatics? a Neglected Theme.”

⁶³⁹ For further study on ‘aesthetic pleasure,’ see Monroe Beardsley, *The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays*, ed. Michael J. Wreen and Donald M. Callen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), chs 1–3.

⁶⁴⁰ See CD II/1, 653-654.

⁶⁴¹ CD II/1, 654.

⁶⁴² According to Murdoch, this is the fundamental difference between Platonic metaphysics and the biblical faith. Although there is a place of ‘grace’ in Plato’s Good, it never sees, seeks or desires finite beings as God does. See Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Penguin, 1993), 83.

makes our knowledge and experience of God something affective, enjoyable and anticipated. Barth wrote:

[W]e cannot overlook the fact that God is *glorious* in such a way that He radiates *joy*, so that He is all He is with and not without *beauty*. Otherwise His glory might well be joyless. And if a different view of His glory is taken and taught, then even with the best will in the world, and even with the greatest seriousness and zeal, the proclamation of His glory will always have in a slight or dangerous degree something joyless, without sparkle of humour, not to say tedious and there finally neither persuasive nor convincing.⁶⁴³

This quotation clearly captures that glory, beauty and joy are three critical concepts in Barth's version of theological aesthetics.⁶⁴⁴ This triad constitutes a new paradigm not only for conceiving of God's being and act, but also for examining the God-creation relationship.

Barth's distinctiveness, furthermore, comes from his argument that the source of pleasure *fills* the perceiver's lack of aesthetic capacity when establishing a personal relationship with him/her in *love*.⁶⁴⁵ The perception and appreciation of divine beauty is not limited to certain educated art critics, talented artists, or trained religious leaders. Barth wrote, "God loves us as the One who is worthy of love as God. This is what we mean when we say that God is beautiful."⁶⁴⁶ This vision distinctively differs from modern aestheticism's neutral stance or from its praise of artistic genius.

In short, Augustine's question, "whether things are beautiful because they give pleasure, or give pleasure because they are beautiful,"⁶⁴⁷ is also central in Barth's

⁶⁴³ CD II/1, 655 (emphasis added).

⁶⁴⁴ Etymologically, the Greek term *χαρά* (joy) and *χάρις* (grace/glory/beauty) are connected. See Patrick Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 79.

⁶⁴⁵ In this regard, Ford rightly pointed out that glory has strong interpersonal connotations of love and dynamic overflowing movements towards the other. See David Ford, *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 242.

⁶⁴⁶ CD II/1, 651.

⁶⁴⁷ Saint Augustine, "Of True Religion," xxxii, 59. in *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, ed. and trans. John H. S. Burleigh, Ichthus ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 255.

conception of the relationship between beauty and joy. Barth argued, in agreement with the doctor of the church, that delight arises from beauty, not vice versa. However, the actualistic view of beauty in the Bible animated him to go further, claiming that God is beautiful, not because there is an ontologically beautiful element in God's being, but because God is God and *this* God reveals God-self in *this* way.⁶⁴⁸ In this distinctive conception of the *fruitio Dei*, therefore, the beautiful should not be elevated to the supreme category for explaining divine attributes. The unanswered question at this point is how human beings can perceive the glory of God revealed in the created world. It can be answered by surveying Barth's discussions of the form of beauty through which God's glory is manifested and his reflection on the act of the Spirit who allows humanity to perceive this divine splendour.

1.4. The Radiance of Glory: The Form of Beauty and the Spirit's Interpretation

As discussed in the previous chapter, Barth maintained that God can be known only through God-self in order to overcome liberal theology's anthropological epistemology.⁶⁴⁹ When Barth wrote his theology of beauty in the late 1930s, moreover, he observed the political divinization of Hitler as being praised to be a new form of divine revelation for the German *Volk*.⁶⁵⁰ This methodological decision in his earlier theology and the deteriorating political situation urged Barth to confirm that the form of divine beauty must not be sought apart from God's being in God-self and for us.⁶⁵¹ In

⁶⁴⁸ I owe my discovery of similarities between Augustine and Barth to von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, VII, 22.

⁶⁴⁹ *GD*, 62; *CD* I/1, 306; *CD* II/1, 44

⁶⁵⁰ See Klaus Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Vol I: Preliminary History and the Time of Illusions, 1918-1934* (London: SCM, 1987), 427. See also Barth's contextualization of his critique of natural theology within the political situation of 1930s Germany in *CD* II/1, 173.

⁶⁵¹ *CD* II/1, 658-659.

this light, Barth developed a threefold view of the divine form of beauty – God’s being in its perfections, the triunity of God, and the incarnation of Christ.

First, for Barth, “God’s being itself speaks for His beauty in His revelation.”⁶⁵² God determines to reveal God-self as the one who loves in freedom and who is free in love at the same time. In addition, God’s being unfolds itself in God’s all perfections in their unity. God’s mysterious unity of “identity and non-identity, simplicity and multiplicity, inward and outward, God Himself and the fullness of that which He is as God”⁶⁵³ arouses wonder and pleasure in the human heart, and this is the first form of divine beauty.

Second, just as God is triune in God-self and in history, so the form is “the concrete form of the triune being of God.”⁶⁵⁴ The triunity is associated with the radiant character of beauty, because this form of beauty corresponds to the *perichoresis* of the Trinity, in which joy is at first shared within the triune God and then overflows to the creature. “To this extent,” claimed Barth, “the triunity is the secret of His beauty. If we deny this, we at once have a God without radiance and without joy (and without humour!): a God without beauty.”⁶⁵⁵ One may inquire, however, how to link this intra-divine basis with our experience of the beautiful and the ugly. Barth’s highly theological account of beauty leaves room for reflecting on this critical issue in the third form of divine beauty.

Third, the incarnation “reveals the beauty of God in a special way and in some sense to a supreme degree.”⁶⁵⁶ The incarnation is the source of all beauty by pointing to the divine glory and to the whole earthly existence of humanity alike. It is the locus not

⁶⁵² CD II/1, 657.

⁶⁵³ CD II/1, 657.

⁶⁵⁴ CD II/1, 659.

⁶⁵⁵ CD II/1, 661.

⁶⁵⁶ CD II/1, 661.

only where God's perfections, the triunity, and the union of divinity and humanity are revealed, but also where human being receive their lost glory through their union with God.⁶⁵⁷ Barth explained the mystery of incarnation as follows:

[God] bestows on him nothing other and nothing less than Himself. He so enters into fellowship with him, and into so complete a fellowship, that He Himself, God, *takes his place*, to suffer for him in it what man had to suffer, to make good for him the evil he had done, so that he in turn, man, may take God's place, that he, the sinner, may be *clothed with God's holiness and righteousness* and therefore be truly holy and righteous. This *change* and *interchange* of position and of predicates is the perfect fellowship between God and man as it has been realized in the incarnation, in the person of Jesus Christ, in the death of the Son of God on the cross and in His resurrection from the dead.⁶⁵⁸

When discussing the incarnation as the third form of divine beauty, he especially emphasized Jesus Christ's condescension, suffering and death for the sake of and in the place of sinful humanity. By radically associating the cross with beauty, he opened up a possibility of integrating the ugly into the category of beauty theologically, thereby subverting our conventional aesthetic judgement.⁶⁵⁹ He wrote, "If the beauty of Christ is sought in a glorious Christ who is not the crucified, the search will always be in vain.... In this self-declaration..., God's beauty embraces death as well as life, fear as well as joy, what we might call the ugly as well as what we might call the beautiful."⁶⁶⁰ Barth's link between the crucifixion and the beautiful shows that God's love is not initiated by something creaturely attractive; rather, it justifies, sanctifies and glorifies the ugliness and suffering of finite beings by clothing it with God's own holiness.⁶⁶¹ Moreover, the claim that, not the German *Führer's* heroic life, but one Jewish person's death on the

⁶⁵⁷ This theme is further intensified and sophisticated in Barth's discussions of an exchange of status between Christ and humanity and of the elevation of humanity in his doctrine of election (CD II/2).

⁶⁵⁸ CD II/1, 663 (emphasis added).

⁶⁵⁹ See Barth's critique of the aesthetic piety of Schleiermacher, who clearly divided between the beautiful and the ugly and constructed his theology based on this distinction in TS, 228.

⁶⁶⁰ CD II/1, 655.

⁶⁶¹ See also Jüngel, "Even the Beautiful Must Die" 80; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, trans. Aidan Nichols (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), 12–20.

cross under an ancient imperialistic regime is the revelatory form of beauty, is not only a theologically rich expression, but also embedded within it a very strong ethical message, offering a radical social and political criticism in a time of crisis.⁶⁶² Although one may still critique Barth's insufficient view of our concrete aesthetic experience,⁶⁶³ his incarnational view offers a theologically solid ground for reflecting on the perceptible manifestation of God's beauty in this world.

It is apparent that Barth's discussion of the three divine forms of beauty is christological. However, in my view, it also opens up a door for a rich pneumatology. When Christ has been understood as the visible form of the invisible glory of God in the Christian tradition, the corresponding mediatory role of the Spirit has also been equally highlighted. For example, the Spirit was conceived as the illuminator, who makes human beings conformable to the revelation of Christ,⁶⁶⁴ or as "the oil of gladness"⁶⁶⁵ which spreads the fragrance of joy. Barth offered a similar but unique pneumatology in his treatment of divine beauty. On the one hand, the Spirit's main role is to bring the invisible divine beauty to men and women by appealing to their subjectivity. On the other hand, the attractiveness of divine beauty is deeply connected to the Spirit's call of human beings into the Christian life.

⁶⁶² The problem of evil had been explicitly associated with Jesus' suffering since *CD II/2*, where Barth illustrated God's self-decision to elect human beings in order them to participate in the divine glory as based on God's eternal decision to punish the Son on the cross in the place of sinful humanity. See *CD II/2*, 122. About the development of Barth's theodicy from *CD II/1* to *CD II/2*, see R. Scott Rodin, *Evil and Theodicy in the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York: P. Lang, 1997), 71-130.

⁶⁶³ For example, Pattison pointed out, especially from a Heideggerian perspective, that the weakness of theological aesthetics lies in its difficulty to explain beautiful things in this corporeal world. See Pattison, "Is the Time Right for a Theological Aesthetics?," 114. Concerning a world-revealing nature of art in Heidegger, see Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic Writings: from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, ed. David Farrell Krell, Rev. and expanded ed. (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁶⁶⁴ For example, see Saint Hilary of Poitiers, *The Fathers of the Church, Saint Hilary of Poitiers, The Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc, 1954), Book II, para 49.

⁶⁶⁵ Saint Ambrose, *The Fathers of the Church, St Ambrose, Theological and Dogmatic Works* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of American Press, 1963), para. 100-102.

First, Barth's appeal to the Spirit in his doctrine of beauty comes primarily from the question concerning how humanity can perceive God's glory despite its lack of capacity.⁶⁶⁶ Resisting a common view that "a 'natural' knowledge of God is indispensable,"⁶⁶⁷ he explained:

Can they not see that in a much better way, in one that is much more appropriate to Himself, God Himself has provided and continues to provide in His revelation, in the very being of His Godhead, that He should be attractive to the natural man and worthy of His love.... And that He has done this simply by giving them joy, and given them joy by being beautiful? The enterprise of natural theology is surely a questionable one for the further reason that it is so profoundly tedious and so utterly unmusical.⁶⁶⁸

Along with several issues Barth raised to critique natural theology,⁶⁶⁹ he added one more disagreement at this point: it is unaesthetic. In Barth's eyes, especially, the errors of natural theology, and those of Brunner in particular, can be found in its misguided conception of the Spirit: "It seems that behind [Brunner's] re-introduction of natural theology a 'new' doctrine of the Holy Spirit wants only too logically to break off."⁶⁷⁰ Within the system of natural theology, the Spirit risks being restrained by the logic of a theologian. In contrast, for Barth, "The Holy Ghost... does not stand in need of any point of contact but that which he himself creates."⁶⁷¹ The distance between God and humanity is not a static gap, which should be filled by a human natural capacity for revelation, but a rhythmic and dynamic space where "the wisdom of God... takes pleasure in the circle of the earth and to have its delight with the children of men, and thus to reply in the happy way to the vexed question how God can be clear to us as

⁶⁶⁶ Although Barth discovered the 'aesthetic' role of the Spirit of mediating between God and humanity within the distance between them, he did not develop this idea further. This view was elaborated in a more sophisticated way by Graham Ward. See Graham Ward, "Spiritual Exercises: A Christian Pedagogy," in *Christ and Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

⁶⁶⁷ CD II/1, 666. It is noteworthy that Barth's debate with Brunner on natural theology and his rediscovery of the beautiful belong to the similar phase in his theological career.

⁶⁶⁸ CD II/1, 666.

⁶⁶⁹ See Barth's six criticisms towards Brunner in Barth, "No! Answer to Emil Brunner," 78-94.

⁶⁷⁰ Barth, "No! Answer to Emil Brunner," 94.

⁶⁷¹ Barth, "No! Answer to Emil Brunner," 121.

God.”⁶⁷² Within a space stretched by the distance between God and creation, the Spirit evokes joy in God and in us, and interprets the beauty of God by opening us up to its appreciation “from the heart.”⁶⁷³ Where there is no freedom of the Spirit, therefore, there is no overflowing joy and thus no beauty in the creaturely realm.⁶⁷⁴

Second, Barth’s pneumatology interlocks the doctrine of vocation with that of beauty, thereby showing that God’s beauty plays an important role in initiating and sustaining the Christian life. He observed the etymological connection between the Greek term *καλόν* (beauty) with that of *καλεῖν* (call), and argued that “God’s *καλόν*... itself has the power of a *καλεῖν*.”⁶⁷⁵ When human beings are enchanted by the Spirit, they are at the same time called by the Spirit into the glory of God. God who calls us is not an abstract transcendental being or the philosophical wholly other, but God who “bears a name and calls us by name,”⁶⁷⁶ thus establishing a personal and intimate relationship with us. By bringing divine beauty to us, the Spirit calls us to live in accordance with God and to glorify God in return.⁶⁷⁷ In this regard, Barth’s doctrine of beauty is neither a mere theory about subjective aesthetic experience, nor an ontological explanation about the beautiful, but primarily about God’s gracious self-disclosing act *for us* and our delight-filled response to *this* God.

To conclude, Barth argued that divine beauty is associated with the triune God’s being and act, and human beings perceive this beauty by sharing the glory of God. This motif of participating in the glory of God is both pneumatological and eschatological. It is the Spirit who calls human beings into God’s self-manifesting beauty. In their joyful

⁶⁷² CD II/1, 666.

⁶⁷³ CD II/1, 674.

⁶⁷⁴ CD II/1, 666.

⁶⁷⁵ CD II/1, 665.

⁶⁷⁶ CD II/1, 647.

⁶⁷⁷ CD II/1, 643, 649, 673, 674.

perception, a person becomes a partaker of God's own glory in one's daily life. The idea of participating in the glory of the Lord lays a foundation for Barth's eschatological vision of God's self-glorification in and through creation. The next section will investigate how he utilized the traditional Reformed doctrine of glorification as one of his primary eschatological motifs.

2. Drawn into the Glory of God: Prayerful Participation in God's Self-glorification

Despite Barth's rediscovery of beauty, some critics have argued that his Reformed background restricted him from further developing an ontology of beauty and thus from deepening its theological implications.⁶⁷⁸ Most critics, however, have failed to grasp the theological implications embedded in his tantalizing improvisation of the Reformed doctrine of glorification (*Verherrlichung*), linking it with eschatology within a wider framework of the Spirit's redemption (*Erlösung*). To explore this promising but improperly neglected topic, this section will proceed from Barth's eschatology in *GD*. I will then discuss Barth's mature doctrine of glorification in *CD* II/1, which consummates his doctrine of beauty. While studying this topic, one may discover that there are some similarities between Barth's doctrine of glorification and Hegel's dialectic. To show the distinctiveness of Barth's eschatological vision, the third subsection will briefly compare and contrast Barth and Hegel.

2.1. Glory and Eschatology in Barth's *Göttingen Dogmatics*

⁶⁷⁸ See Capper, "Joy in the Church Dogmatics? A Neglected Theme," 111; von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, I*, 56; von Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible*, 48; Richard Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God through Music, Art, and Rhetoric* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 147; Bychkov, "introduction," xvi.

Barth treated the notion of glory within the eschatology part of his *GD*.⁶⁷⁹ As Milgriore argued, “Since Barth did not live to write the fifth volume of the *Church Dogmatics* that was to deal explicitly with [eschatology], the final section of his earliest dogmatics holds special interest and will be carefully examined by readers for clues as to how Barth might likely have unfolded his eschatology in his *magnum opus*.”⁶⁸⁰ This earlier dogmatic lecture demonstrates that Barth already conceived of the Spirit’s redemption as eschatological in terms of God’s glorification of creation.

Resisting liberal theology’s de-eschatologizing tendency, Barth sought to re-eschatologize theology,⁶⁸¹ and *GD* witnesses his initial endeavour to incorporate eschatology back into dogmatics. In Barth’s eyes, Christian eschatology differs from other philosophical, psychological, religious and scientific theories of the future,⁶⁸² because its affirmations of and openness to the future do not lie in metaphysical, spiritual, mythological or natural causes, but fundamentally in Jesus Christ whose glorious coming is attested by Scripture and proclaimed by the church.⁶⁸³ It follows that reflection on glory is a proper ‘conclusion’ of dogmatics in general and eschatology in particular.⁶⁸⁴ At this point, Barth had already moved from his earlier eschatological

⁶⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the importance of his doctrine of glorification at this stage should not be overstated, because there are notable differences between Barth’s doctrines of election in his *GD* and *CD*, which significantly affect the way he conceived of God’s freedom, the distinction between election and reprobation, the communal dimension of salvation and the role of human faith.

⁶⁸⁰ Milgriore, "Karl Barth’s First Lectures in Dogmatics," 15.

⁶⁸¹ *UCR* III, 388. See also, *Romans* II, 314.

⁶⁸² *UCR* III, 380-383.

⁶⁸³ *UCR* III, 430-431.

⁶⁸⁴ Barth’s *GD* discusses eschatology by dividing its content into three – the presence of Jesus Christ (§ 36); the resurrection of the dead (§ 37); and the glory of God (§ 38). Because the purpose of this chapter is to examine Barth’s doctrine of glory, I will limit my study into the last section.

vision of the time-eternity dialectic, as presented in *Romans II*, to a more futurist and participatory view.⁶⁸⁵

Barth's retrieval of glory and/or glorification within his eschatology seems to be based on two sources – the Bible and the Reformed tradition. First, the Bible offers a rich theology of glory, which significantly structured the development of his pneumatological and eschatological thinking. In the Hebrew Bible, God's action in judgement and/or on behalf of God's people restores and transforms them, invoking their appropriate worship and thanksgiving to glorify God. The New Testament also associates the term glorification with creature's praise to God's glory and with the fulfilment of God's work. The biblical concept of glorification, therefore, involves the twofold process – God's self-glorification through creation and creation's corresponding glorification. Moreover, the noun form of 'glorification,' which occurs only once (1 Cor. 2:7) in the Bible,⁶⁸⁶ explicitly alludes to the believer's experience of full and final glory. In short, the Bible presents glorification as a reciprocal and eschatological concept, and God is the one who initiates, facilitates and consummates it.

Second, in the Reformed tradition, through which Barth attempted to read the Bible during his Göttingen period,⁶⁸⁷ glorification is the final stage of salvation, following election, justification and sanctification. It refers both to the receiving of perfection before entering into the kingdom of heaven and to the receiving of the resurrection bodies in eternal bliss. Accordingly, this doctrine has played a vital role in

⁶⁸⁵ In a similar manner, McCormack claimed that Barth's study of the Reformed doctrine of Anhypostatic-Enhypostatic Christology animated him to offer a pneumatologically oriented eschatology from 1924 to 1936. See McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 327–425.

⁶⁸⁶ See E. F. Harrison, "Glory," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1982).

⁶⁸⁷ Barth often mentioned the significance of Heppes collection of Reformed dogmatics, which he "read..., studied..., reflected; and found that... the road by way of the Reformers to H. Scripture was a more sensible and natural one to tread than... of the theological literature determined by Schleiermacher and Ritschl." See Karl Barth, "Forward," in Heinrich Heppes, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set out and Illustrated from the Sources*, ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G. T. Thompson (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950), v.

constituting Reformed eschatology. For example, Heppe's *Reformed Dogmatics* ends with the eschatology chapter, entitled 'glorification.' Heppe epitomized the meaning of this doctrine as follows: "Since the glorification of God is the purpose of all things, and since as the original source of all blessedness God will to be glorified in the faithful, the latter are called by the Father not only to the enjoyment of Christ's grace but also to Christ's glory, which however, is not imparted to the elect in its entire perfection until after death."⁶⁸⁸ Although the Reformed tradition has had a keen sense of underlining the enjoyment of eternal glory during the believers' lifetime, the emphasis has lain more on the final glorification of the resurrected body.⁶⁸⁹ This vision has resulted in a teleologically structured doctrine of glorification and urged Reformed theologians to take the corporeal dimension of salvation seriously. Barth was strongly influenced by this Reformed doctrine, thereby completing his first dogmatic cycle with an eschatological lecture, entitled the glory of God (*Die Ehre Gottes*).⁶⁹⁰

Every doctrine of Barth's dogmatic lectures, in fact, makes clear that God is God, pointing to the need to give God alone the glory.⁶⁹¹ Nevertheless, he closely and explicitly related glory with redemption (*Erlösung*) or eschatology in a special manner. He defined redemption as "humanity's fulfilment of the purpose of creation in eternity."⁶⁹² Drawing insights from the Reformed view that the end of creation is "the glory of God in creation and to the creature,"⁶⁹³ Barth claimed that God is glorified

⁶⁸⁸ Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 695.

⁶⁸⁹ See, for examples, François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Collins, 1965), 287–289; R. Michael Allen, *Reformed Theology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2010), 86; Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 695–712.

⁶⁹⁰ At this stage, Barth frequently utilized the term *Ehre*, which mean both honour and glory, but we can find both *Ehre* and *Herrlichkeit* in *CD*.

⁶⁹¹ See, for example, Barth's quotation of Thomas' prayer at the beginning of dogmatic lectures in *GD*, 3.

⁶⁹² *UCR* III, 481.

⁶⁹³ Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 195.

through creation when human beings see and love God through the light of the divine glory without the barrier of sin and death (*visio* and *fruitio Dei*).⁶⁹⁴

The glory of humanity in creation has been lost because of the fall, but it is recovered by Jesus Christ's reconciliation. Therefore, it is not a general human person but a sinner who participates in the divine glory in faith and obedience.⁶⁹⁵ It follows that this eschatological promise is not given to the world or general humanity, but to the church as the *communio electorum* and individuals as members of the body of Christ.⁶⁹⁶ God's glorification of creation, thus, should not be understood as an abstract worldview; rather, it should be conceived within the concrete context of the church's worship and praise in memory of God's reconciliation with sinners and in anticipation of the final fulfilment of redemption.⁶⁹⁷ It cannot be denied that, as the biblical doctrine of glory illustrates, the glory of God judges the self-glorification of sinful humanity,⁶⁹⁸ but God's glory is not antithetical to the glory of humanity; rather, the former includes and grounds the latter.

In this sense, the doctrine of glorification certainly hints at Barth's lifelong emphasis upon the ethical dimension of eschatology, although the chapter on the glory of God in *GD* is too brief to extract more eschatological insights. The splendour of God calls for the renewal of the whole creation and invites redeemed humanity to enjoy a life of glorious existence in hope. In this respect, "Barth's dogmatics," argued Ivor Davison, "offers a sustained endeavour to grapple with what is to confess that the God who is all-

⁶⁹⁴ *UCR* III, 486-487.

⁶⁹⁵ *UCR* III, 490.

⁶⁹⁶ *UCR* III, 484.

⁶⁹⁷ *UCR* III, 491.

⁶⁹⁸ *UCR* III, 489.

glorious in himself invades and dispels our darkness.”⁶⁹⁹ Although Davison focused on Barth’s mature theology, in my view, Barth’s early eschatology obviously involves a strong ethical, not merely a logical, character,⁷⁰⁰ resisting a purely spiritual, individual and anthropological interpretation of last things, which fails to do justice to the biblical concept of God’s new creation in terms of the new heavens and the new earth.⁷⁰¹

In short, at least since his Göttingen dogmatic lectures, Barth had utilized the term glorification as a crucial basis for his eschatological reasoning. His enduring insistence on God’s lordship is also explicit here in the sense that the eschatological glorification of creation originates from God’s act of hollowing God’s name and the coming of God’s kingdom.⁷⁰² In this light, I suggest, the uniqueness of his doctrine of glorification is that, without giving up God’s sovereignty, God’s glorious redemptive act ultimately includes, rather than excludes, the glory of humanity, thereby making room for creation’s free response to and joy in existence. These peculiar characteristics are further intensified, enriched and sophisticated in his mature theology.

2.2. Glorification and Consummation: Lifting up Creation into God’s Glory

Even after moving to Münster, Barth kept showing special interest in the concept of glory. For example, in his Christmas meditation on John 1:14, which he contributed in 1927 to the *Münstener Neuste Nachrichten*, he reflected on the meaning of the words “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his *glory*, the *glory* as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”⁷⁰³ From these short

⁶⁹⁹ Ivor J. Davidson, “Divine Light: Some Reflections after Barth,” in *Trinitarian Theology after Barth*, ed. Myk Habets and Phillip Tolliday (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 68.

⁷⁰⁰ *UCR* III, 486.

⁷⁰¹ *UCR* III, 482.

⁷⁰² *UCR* III, 481.

⁷⁰³ John 1:14 (KJV, emphasis added)

statements, he pulled out critical theological insights. In his eyes, the latter sentence's 'we' are different from the former's 'us.' What, then, divides 'we' from 'us' or 'the act of beholding' from 'an act of mere seeing'? This question can be answered by another question: 'what' has been beheld. Barth observed that Herod, Caiaphas, Pilate and Judas saw the human Jesus, but it was John the Baptist (and the evangelists) who beheld the glory of God revealed through him. Barth wrote, "Glory (*doxa*) is the brightness of light through which God reveals Himself. The divine Word revealed Himself to 'us,' and 'we' beheld him.... These 'we' are the persons who saw the Word and beheld glory. By this unique act..., they constitute the Christian Church."⁷⁰⁴ This statement gives us a brief look at Barth's developing understanding of glorification. First, the incarnation as the enfleshed Word is the visible form of God's self-revealing glory. Second, we need to be affected by this glory in order to perceive it in return. Third, the church is a unique locus for witnessing to and praising this transformative glory.

What Barth presented here is what other theologians have called the rapture in a qualified sense. Von Balthasar explained this concept as follows: "Theological aesthetics began as a 'coming to see' the form in which God's Word comes to us... In this act of seeing, there already lies the 'rapture': a breaking out from ourselves in the power of our being called and affected, in the power of the divine love which draws near to us and enables us to receive itself."⁷⁰⁵ In a similar vein, Barth illustrated that our perception of the divine glory presupposes God's gracious coming to us and drawing of us into God's self-revealing act.

In his doctrine of glory in *CD* II/1, Barth intensified and sophisticated this theme, distinguishing the four aspects of God's glory under the influence of a 17th-

⁷⁰⁴ Karl Barth, *Christmas*, trans. Bernhard Citron (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), 15.

⁷⁰⁵ von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, VII, 389.

century German-Dutch Reformed theologian, Petrus van Mastricht.⁷⁰⁶ It is important to see how Barth transformed the imagery of light in each stage in order to explain how God's glory draws sinners into the very life of the Trinity by awakening, cleansing and illuminating them. In this respect, for Barth, the doctrine of glory is closely linked to soteriology.

(1) As the self-revealing *sum* of all divine perfections, the glory of God shows the fullness and self-sufficiency of God's being. The relationship of this divine glory to creation is analogous to that of light to darkness. Barth argued that "For this reason and in this way. He is the source of light."⁷⁰⁷

(2) The fullness of God's glory must not be understood as God's aseity in an Aristotelian sense.⁷⁰⁸ As the source of light, God is invisible and imperceptible in freedom. God's glory as the divine self-sufficiency in love, however, means God's capacity to "reach all other beings and permeates them."⁷⁰⁹ Accordingly, the living God is not only the source of light and light in God-self, but also the radiance which illumines the whole creation.

(3) Although God's light is radiated, we cannot see it because our eyes are closed. However, for Barth, "our lack of ability to know Him is filled up by His glory, and our ability to know Him is healed and restored."⁷¹⁰ He further claimed that "God's glory is God's love. It is the justification and sanctification of us sinners out of pure,

⁷⁰⁶ CD II/1, 649.

⁷⁰⁷ CD II/1, 646.

⁷⁰⁸ In a similar manner, resisting shifting the location of the concept 'aseity' from trinitarian to cosmological teaching, Webster argued that the eternal fullness of God should be understood as the loving relations not only among the three Persons of the Trinity but also between God and the creature. See John Webster, "Life in and of Himself: Reflections on God's Aseity," in *Engaging the Doctrine of God: Contemporary Protestant Perspectives*, ed. Bruce McCormack (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Baker Academic, 2008), 107–124.

⁷⁰⁹ CD II/1, 646.

⁷¹⁰ CD II/1, 644.

irresistible grace”⁷¹¹ At this point, our justification and sanctification are deeply associated with our rehabilitated capacity for gazing into God. This is a crucial epistemological step foreshadowing a decent doctrine of perception in *CD* III/2.

(4) God’s glory transforms us as the radiant light, but we are “not light in itself and... [cannot] be light without being illuminated.”⁷¹² Barth agreed, “This is the destiny which man received and lost, only to receive it again, inconceivably and infinitely increased by the personal participation of God in man’s being accomplished in Jesus Christ.”⁷¹³ In this God-man, the self-manifestation of God’s glory has its distinctive future, but yet it is revealed to us in present.⁷¹⁴ By sharing his glory, we can reflect the splendour of God to the world in our own creaturely manner.

These four stages show in the end that God is glorified by the creature’s worship and praise in its utter creatureliness. They are, in fact, the reflection of God’s light and the echo of God’s voice. This light and voice originate from Jesus Christ, who is the prototype of glory. In order that the creature mirrors the glory manifested by Jesus, however, it needs to be evoked and awakened by the Spirit. In the Spirit, we are “free for God’s glory,”⁷¹⁵ not because of our ability, but because of God’s gift of freedom as the “liberation from powerlessness and presumption and the limitations of its existence as a mere creature.”⁷¹⁶ In the Spirit, despite our creaturely and sinful impotence, we can participate “in the chorus of all other creaturely voices surrounding us.”⁷¹⁷ It follows

⁷¹¹ *CD* II/1, 645.

⁷¹² *CD* II/1, 647.

⁷¹³ *CD* II/1, 648. This christocentric statement foreshadows his doctrine of election in the sense that human beings are already determined to be exalted into God’s glory due to Christ’s work. What cannot be explicitly stated in *CD* II/1 is God’s self-rejection on the cross. See also, *CD* II/1, 94.

⁷¹⁴ *CD* II/1, 643.

⁷¹⁵ *CD* II/1, 669.

⁷¹⁶ *CD* II/1, 672.

⁷¹⁷ *CD* II/1, 668.

that we are able to *see* the eternal centre of the glory in Jesus Christ in faith and in the life of the Church. Barth beautifully depicted this pneumatological motif as follows:

It is as well to realise at this point that the glory of God is not only the glory of the Father and the Son but the glory of the whole divine Trinity, and therefore the glory of the Holy Spirit as well. But the Holy Spirit is not only *the unity of the Father and the Son* in the eternal life of the Godhead. He is also, in God's activity in the world, the divine reality by which the creature has its heart opened to God and is made able and willing to receive Him. He is, then, *the unity between the creature and God*, the bond between eternity and time. If God is glorified through the creature, this is *only because* by the Holy Spirit the creature is baptised, and born again and called and gathered and enlightened and sanctified and kept close to Jesus Christ in true and genuine faith. There is no glorification of God by the creature that does not come about through this work of the Holy Spirit by which the Church is founded and maintained, or that is not itself, even in its creatureliness, this work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who begets the new man in Jesus Christ whose existence is thanksgiving. It is in virtue of His glory, which is the glory of the one God, that what this new man does is the glorification of God, and therefore the creature may serve this glorification. It is in this way that it has its part in His glory and therefore in the glory of God.⁷¹⁸

This is a remarkable passage, which subverts criticisms commonly levelled towards Barth's pneumatology that he not only reduced the Spirit into the noetic function of revelation, but also placed the Spirit at the last stage of the hierarchy of revelation.⁷¹⁹ In contrast, Barth showed that, in the wake of the glorification, the creature proceeds from the Spirit into the divine fellowship of the Trinity.⁷²⁰ The Spirit glorifies the creature in order that it can enter into the glory of God, and God is glorified in return by the creature's participation in the trinitarian fellowship. In this respect, the creature really *serves* God's act of glorification by being "called and appointed in Jesus Christ by the Spirit."⁷²¹ This is not a natural necessity, but a permission which flows from the mercy of God.

⁷¹⁸ CD II/1, 669-670 (emphasis added).

⁷¹⁹ See Williams, "Word and Spirit," 115; Rogers, *The Holy Spirit*, 1-2.

⁷²⁰ Despite his severe criticism of Barth's supposedly insufficient doctrine of the Trinity, this paradigm is further developed by Moltmann in his discussion of trinitarian glorification. See Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 127.

⁷²¹ CD II/1, 670.

In addition to this, the Spirit endows us with a unique gift – freedom to *pray*. For Barth, men and women drawn into God’s glorification are primarily praying beings, who yearn for the beauty of God and desire to participate in the divine glory. The following is Barth’s interpretation of the *Berne Liturgy* to explain the necessity of prayer as a way to express our desire to see the glory:

Because of our waiting, we on earth need this special uplifting [of our thoughts and desires] (which God alone can accomplish.... We need our prayers which are dependent on God’s hearkening). We need, in short, a holy place on earth in which we can stand “in true reverence and a heavenly mind,” if God permits us to do so. This prayer, its concrete content and its fulfilment through Him to whom it is directed is temporal and provisional form of our participation in the glorification of God and therefore in God’s glory itself.⁷²²

This *prayerful* desire for God arises from the eschatological nature of the glory. Although the Spirit awakens and invites us to God’s own glory, there is no full manifestation of it in time. This eschatological openness, nevertheless, is the source of our yearning, which characterises our existence and invokes prayer. It makes us hasten to dwell in ‘a holy place on earth’ that emerges from God’s self-glorification. Barth wrote, “There is... a genuine creaturely *glorificatio*. It does not cease to be creaturely.... It takes place this side of redemption and has to wait for it. But all the same it has already a part in the genuine divine *gloria*, and the divine Gloria is not ashamed to dwell in it and to shine through it.”⁷²³ Busch rightly highlighted this theme, albeit very briefly, arguing that there is ‘an aesthetic’ which accords with this eschatological waiting for God’s glory.⁷²⁴

In short, I propose, one of Barth’s greatest and enduring contributions is to rehabilitate the aesthetical dimension of theology, not by treating aesthetics as an

⁷²² CD II/1, 676.

⁷²³ CD II/1, 669.

⁷²⁴ Busch, *The Great Passion*, 287–288.

independent discipline of theological studies, but by linking it to God's comprehensive act of dealing with the creature. Consequently, for Barth, our creaturely existence in the promise of the future glory is indeed aesthetic, because we are part of "creation's choir in heaven and earth, which has never ceased its praise."⁷²⁵

2.3. Glorification and Dialectic: Barth and Hegel on the Self-manifestation of God

Barth's doctrine of glorification may appear to be analogous to Hegel's dialectic in terms of God's circular self-movement of unfolding and returning to God-self in and through creation. Does this mean that Barth imposed Hegel's logic on the Christian doctrine? Throughout his theological career, Barth had a subtle, complex and even ambiguous relationship with Hegel.⁷²⁶ To investigate Barth's reception of Hegel is a crucial topic, but it is beyond the purpose and scope of this chapter. Instead, I will briefly sketch Barth's appropriation of Hegel and, then, assess the crucial similarities and dissimilarities between Hegel's dialectic and Barth's doctrine of glorification.

Barth often expressed high respect for Hegel, asking whether "the dawn of the true age of Hegel is still something that will take place in the future,"⁷²⁷ although there has been a controversy over whether he understood Hegel correctly.⁷²⁸ Barth praised Hegel because, unlike most Enlightenment philosophers, he grounded his philosophy on the claim of truth, relating it with God's being and movement, and thus perfecting and

⁷²⁵ *CD* II/1, 648.

⁷²⁶ See the following studies about the relationship between Hegel and Barth. Micahel Welker, "Barth und Hegel: zur Erkenntnis eines methodischen Verfahrens bei Barth," *Evangelische Theologie* 43, no. 4 (1983): 307-328; Paul D. Jones, *The Humanity of Christ: Christology in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (London; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2008), 198; Graham Ward, "Barth, Hegel and the Possibility for Christian Apologetics," in *Conversing with Barth*, ed. John C. McDowell and Mike Higton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

⁷²⁷ *PT*, 376.

⁷²⁸ See Ward, "Barth, Hegel and the Possibility for Christian Apologetics." The mature Barth even confessed that he was "always fond of doing a bit of Hegeling," although he also admitted that he had a weakness for Hegel. See Barth quoted in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 387.

overcoming the Enlightenment.⁷²⁹ In this respect, Barth was not afraid of a structural resemblance between Hegel's philosophy and his theology. At the same time, however, he also distanced himself from Hegel, because of his suspicion over Hegel's accomplished system that geared towards the all-encompassing Spirit. This scepticism caused his mixed feeling and ambiguous attitude towards the Hegelian tradition.

For Hegel, philosophy is the systematic exposition of the dialectical movement of God, in which God manifests God-self in nature and history and comes to self-consciousness in and through human consciousness. God's implicit self-division within God-self is the basis for God's explicit dialectical movement in history. Hegel claimed, "God in his eternal universality is the one who distinguishes himself, determines himself, posits an other to himself, and likewise sublates the distinction, thereby remaining present to himself, and is spirit only through this process of being brought forth."⁷³⁰ Following Hegel, Barth began his theology with God. Moreover, just as Hegel offered the three dialectical stages of the Spirit's self-alienating and -returning movement, so Barth's view of glorification can be roughly divided into three steps: (1) the self-sufficient God enjoys the eternal glory in God's being. (2) The inner divine glory flows towards created beings and gives a share to them in the self-manifestation of the glory of God. (3) In and through the creature's glorifying process, God is glorified in return to a supreme degree. In this respect, Barth certainly seemed to offer a Hegel-like triadic paradigm.

One should not ignore, however, that there are also crucial differences between them. Barth's study of Hegel, as presented in the *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth*

⁷²⁹ *PT*, 398; See also *CD* II/1, 399.

⁷³⁰ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. One-volume Edition, The Lectures of 1827*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. P. C. Hodgson and R. F. Brown (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 427.

Century, can provide crucial insights into this subject.⁷³¹ Barth's dissatisfaction with Hegel in this book can be arranged into three clusters:⁷³² (1) Hegel's concept of truth tends to be a single-sided theorizing in the sense that he saw truth as thinking. Thinking was also understood as the centre of humanity. In Barth's judgement, however, Hegel failed to see the seriousness of sin and the distance between God and humanity. (2) The Hegelian self-movement of truth is identical with the self-movement of the human subject's thinking. At this point, Barth warned against the danger of identifying the Trinity with the basic principles of Hegelian logic, a strategy which risks making the living God an abstract idol. (3) In his philosophical system, finally, Hegel could not properly recognize God's freedom. Barth claimed, "[in Hegel] God's revelation can no longer be a free act of God; God, rather, *must* function as we see him function in revelation."⁷³³ As a theologian who always gave priority to God's freedom, Barth diagnosed that the first two points have their origin in the third one.

Barth's earlier response to the Hegelian tradition offers us a comprehensive and critical interpretive background for conceiving of his view of glorification.⁷³⁴ First, in the process of God's self-glorification, God does not find God's identity in and with humanity. Moreover, unlike Hegel's emphasis of thinking, the partaking of glory and of the sharing of joy are holistic notions in Barth, because they are connected to the renewal of the whole creation. Second, although I divided Barth's doctrine into the three steps according to Hegel's paradigm, there is one additional key moment within the

⁷³¹ As Ward argued, the chapter on Hegel in *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century* is the only place where Barth seriously engaged with Hegel's thinking. See Ward, "Barth, Hegel and the Possibility for Christian Apologetics," 65, n. 6.

⁷³² *PT*, 403-406.

⁷³³ *PT*, 406.

⁷³⁴ Barth lectured in Germany on modern Protestant theology three times. He intensively studied Hegel while delivering his last lecture at Bonn University in 1932-1933. His lectures were eventually published as *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century* in 1947. See Barth, *Letters 1961-1968*, 14; Webster, *Barth's Earlier Theology*, 95-96.

process of glorification. What was added by Barth is the Spirit's work of evoking, awakening and baptizing sinners. The gap between God and humanity still opens widely in Barth, but the Spirit mediates between God and the creature, going between them and opening the creature's eyes.⁷³⁵ In this regard, Barth dealt with the distance between God and human more seriously than Hegel, and Barth's pneumatology plays a distinctive role in distancing him from Hegel. Third, in contrast to Hegel's attempt to explain God's freedom within the logic of his dialectic, Barth strongly emphasized that the process of glorification is God's free decision to share divine joy and glory with the creature. If there is one central force which determines the movement of God, it is not the logic of dialectic but God's *love*. This love is the content, logic and driving force of God's gracious movement of glorification, in which the whole cosmos hastens and dares to participate.

In sum, Barth was aware of the strength and weakness of Hegelian philosophy when it was adapted to theology. As Busch rightly observed, "its use ought never to be a matter of principle; it should always be deliberately and recognizably eclectic."⁷³⁶

Barth's doctrine of glorification shows not only a structural resemblance between the two, but also fundamental differences. Just as Hegel's dialectic enabled him to perfect and surpass the Enlightenment, so Barth's engagement with the Hegelian paradigm allowed him to raise his own distinctive voice against the Hegelian tradition and 19th-century Spirit theology.

3. Barth on the Arts: Art, Representation and the Spirit

⁷³⁵This is a crucial (but brief) pneumatological theme in Barth. To see how this theme can be a primary basis for pneumatological reflection, see John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM, 1972), 19.

⁷³⁶ Busch, *Karl Barth*, 387.

As discussed above, Barth's negative attitude towards the use of art in Protestant worship has hindered people from constructively engaging with his discussions of art. His praise of Mozart has often been quoted, but his respect for diverse forms of art has been less spotlighted and has even been marginalized.⁷³⁷ In fact, however, he loved music not simply as a listener, but also as a relatively well-trained performer. His keen insights into music were formed not only by his musicality, but also under the influence of aesthetic theorists, such as Eduard Hanslick and Ferruccio Busoni. Moreover, in contrast to his supposedly iconoclastic tendency, he did not hesitate to disclose his respect for great paintings. When he visited Holland, for example, he was disappointed with Calvinism there, but enchanted by Rembrandt's paintings, before which he sat "in amazement for a long, long time."⁷³⁸ He also commented that "My great friend in [Florence] is called Sandro Botticelli and he lives in the Uffizi. I paid him a lengthy visit."⁷³⁹ These episodes suggest that his relationship with the arts may be more subtle and nuanced than normally assumed. In this respect, this section will examine his view of art and its relationship with divine beauty, discussing them within a wider context of his theology in general and pneumatology in particular.

3.1. A Brief Reflection on Barth's Theology of Culture

In 1963, one year after Barth retired from the University of Basel, he claimed that "I have always believed that the problem of art or the arts must be dealt with in connection with the eschatological apocalypse."⁷⁴⁰ He humorously commented that it was a reason

⁷³⁷ For a brief overview of Barth's engagement with music and aesthetic theory, see Philip Edward Stoltzfus, *Theology as Performance: Music, Aesthetics, and God in Western Thought* (New York; London: T. & T. Clark International, 2006), 113–127.

⁷³⁸ Barth quoted in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 170.

⁷³⁹ Barth quoted in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 404.

⁷⁴⁰ Barth, *Letters 1961-1968*, 100.

he did not work on the final volume of *CD*, which would treat the Spirit's redemptive work. Instead, he referred to the second part of his ethical lectures in Münster, delivered in winter semesters 1928/29 (and repeated at Bonn in 1930/1931). The aesthetic section in these lectures, otherwise expressed, is a proper context in which his theology of art can be surveyed. However, before engaging with this crucial text, I will briefly explore his lecture, entitled "Church and Culture," delivered in 1926, which impressively interlocks the task of the church with that of secular culture from an eschatological perspective. This lecture not only outlines a basic structure of Barth's theology of culture, but also hints at his pneumatological interpretation of art.

The uniqueness of Barth's approach to culture lies in the way in which he connected theology with culture by appealing to the Word of God. This methodological decision is largely indebted to his engagement with the dual Christological formula of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* after 1924, which allowed him to offer a truly incarnational doctrine of revelation.⁷⁴¹ In this christological light, unlike the young Barth of *Romans*, he could see a more robust and positive, but still dialectical, link between divinity and humanity, sacred and secular, and theology and culture.⁷⁴² However, this christological shift does not fully account for his renewed theology of culture. In my view, his rehabilitation of trinitarian structure in theology and attribution of eschatological

⁷⁴¹ This christological doctrine demonstrates that Christ's humanity does not have its own reality apart from divinity (*anhypostasis*) and that it is hypostatized in union with divinity (*enhypostasis*). The importance of this doctrine in Barth's theology has recently become a popular topic in Barth scholarship. In particular, McCormack initiated a new discussion as to whether it triggered a methodological shift in Barth before developing the doctrine of *analogia fidei*. See McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 362.

⁷⁴² In a similar manner, Metzger surveyed the relationship between sacred and secular in Barth with special attention to his anhypostatic-enhypostetic Christology. Palma and Torrance also claimed that Christology is a proper basis for examining Barth's theology of culture, but they paid more attention to his mature Christology. See Paul Louis Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular through the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2003); Robert J. Palma, *Karl Barth's Theology of Culture: The Freedom of Culture for the Praise of God* (Allison Park, Pa: Pickwick Publications, 1983); Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: Introduction To Early Theology* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), 208–217.

redemption to the third person of the Trinity significantly affected his re-evaluation of culture as part of God's beloved creation.⁷⁴³

For Barth, it is the Word of God that links the church and culture, without identifying one with the other and without separating them. The church is the community instituted by the Word,⁷⁴⁴ and culture is the task (*die Aufgabe*) set through the Word "for achieving the destined condition of man in unity of soul and body."⁷⁴⁵ Culture as a human activity can serve God for the fulfilment of human creaturely life in its own way.⁷⁴⁶ It follows that the church and culture cannot be synthesized because of their different relationships to the Word, but they are not exclusive entities because of their connections to the Word. In light of this dialectical vision, Barth further surveyed a theological meaning of culture in relation to the economic act of the Trinity. Barth wrote:

Seen from the point of creation, the kingdom of nature (*regnum naturae*), culture is the *promise* originally given to man of what he is to become.... From the point of view of reconciliation (*regnum gratiae*), culture is the *law* in reference to which the sinner, sanctified by God, has to practise his faith and obedience.... From the point of view of redemption, the kingdom of glory (*regnum gloriae*), culture is the *limit* set for men, on the other side of which God himself, in fulfilment of his promise, makes all things new.⁷⁴⁷

The Word of God manifests itself in the hidden form in the finite world, but this fragmentary character also means that it is present in creation as God's promise.

Although culture itself is not this promise, it can bear a witness to it. Barth claimed,

⁷⁴³ Vahanian also claimed that the positive relationship between theology and culture in Barth can be properly examined within a pneumatological context, in which they can be conceived as God's new creation in an eschatological sense. See Gabriel Vahanian, "Karl Barth as Theologian of Culture," *Union Seminary Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1972): 37-49.

⁷⁴⁴ Barth, "Church and Culture," 334.

⁷⁴⁵ Barth, "Church and Culture," 337.

⁷⁴⁶ In this respect, Palma claimed that Barth offered a 'free' theology of culture. Metzger also suggested that behind Barth's attempt to engage with culture lies his prospect of a humanization of culture. See Palma, *Karl Barth's Theology of Culture*; Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture*, xxii.

⁷⁴⁷ Barth, "Church and Culture," 341, 344, 349 (emphasis added).

accordingly, “there can be no thought of a general sanctifying of cultural achievement..., 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.”⁷⁴⁸ God, then, gives the law to men and women, who have become free by reconciling with God, to perform and actualize the promise in obedience and faith in and through culture. Finally, redemption refers to the “final and eternal self-revelation of the glory of God in a newly created world.... [From this third point of view] culture is seen not only as promise, not only as law..., but as event, as *formed* reality and *real* form, which is not already here but is in the process of becoming.”⁷⁴⁹ In the act of redemption, God reveals God-self as the limit of human situation, but on this border the church hopes in God’s fulfilment and confronts culture with this eschatological anticipation.

In this light, according to Barth, no human cultural activity contains its meaning within itself; rather, it should be recognized as a *game*, which means “an imitative and ultimately ineffective activity – the significance of which lies not in its attainable goals but in what it signifies.”⁷⁵⁰ This playful nature of culture encourages us not to take the human work in society with the utter seriousness and also warns us not to approach culture from a strictly dogmatic perspective, thereby offering a possibility that theology and culture meet one another freely, joyfully and playfully. In this respect, the distance between theology and culture is not a static gap but an *eschatological* boundary in which theology and culture can be truly connected by the Spirit’s redemptive work.

In sum, Barth’s theology of culture certainly belies claims made by his critics about his one-sidedly negative attitude towards human achievements. Rather, as Torrance rightly observed, “The *diastasis* which Barth was concerned for so many

⁷⁴⁸ Barth, “Church and Culture,” 344.

⁷⁴⁹ Barth, “Church and Culture,” 347-348.

⁷⁵⁰ Barth, “Church and Culture,” 353.

years... was not only in the interests of good theology, but in the interest of good culture.”⁷⁵¹ By defining both theology and culture in the light of the Word, he could suggest that culture is not an exclusively secular entity, but it “*can* be a symbol which is transparent and meaningful and which partakes of the promise originally given to man.”⁷⁵² This fundamentally theological point of departure allowed him to freely and joyfully appreciate both culture and varied cultural phenomena on the one hand, and to maintain a critical perspective over against them on the other. However, it is hard to deny that Barth imposed his unique theological interpretation upon culture, and thus some critics have argued that Barth did not take culture itself seriously enough.⁷⁵³ It might be his weakness, but this is also what Barth intended by denying a simple identification of the role of the church with that of culture: “What the Church of our time needs most of all to relearn in relation to the problem of culture is... the *eschatological* form.”⁷⁵⁴ Observing the increasing cultural threats of the Nazi’s deification of *Kultur* and of radical secularization of European culture alike,⁷⁵⁵ he offered a way to appreciate culture while not treating it with a deadly seriousness, and to make it serve the fulfilment of humanity’s creaturely life, not vice versa. For this, he examined the nature and function of culture within the wider context of God’s gracious act of justification, sanctification and glorification of creation. This theological understanding of culture and its playful character constitute a basic structure for his reflection on art in his ethical lectures.

3.2. The Eschatological Origin of the Work of Art

⁷⁵¹ Torrance, *Karl Barth*, 211.

⁷⁵² Barth, “Church and Culture,” 351.

⁷⁵³ See Palma, *Karl Barth’s Theology of Culture*, 82.

⁷⁵⁴ Barth, “Church and Culture,” 353.

⁷⁵⁵ See Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture*, 63–82.

Considering Barth's interests in varied art genres, it is surprising that, to my knowledge, only in his lectures on ethics during winter semester 1928/1929 and 1930/1931, did Barth really engage with the arts. Recent Barth scholarship has paid renewed attention to these posthumously published ethical lectures,⁷⁵⁶ but most scholars have claimed that their importance should not be exaggerated, and they should not be used as the overarching paradigm for interpreting Barth. In a similar vein, Barth's art theory presented here certainly offers invaluable insights into the way in which he understood the origin and nature of art. Nevertheless, it should not be conceived as Barth's comprehensive view on aesthetics, but as a fragment of his aesthetic reflection.

Barth did not have any theory of art when he presented a rich doctrine of beauty. In my view, both his early aesthetic reflections and his later silence are attributable to the social, political and theological context. When Barth's lectures were delivered in Münster, it was still a time of the Weimar Republic's imminent danger. Thus his lectures aimed to facilitate responsible participation in varied aspects of culture.⁷⁵⁷ On the contrary, *CD II/1* (1940) was written when Barth kept a wary eye on the growing power of Hitler and the violence of the Third Reich. The Nazis boasted a remarkably intense aesthetic sensibility that influenced almost every aspect of politics and policy. Barth was aware of and reacted against this totalitarian aesthetic challenge and thus offered a highly theological view of beauty, relativising any earthly attempt to grasp the perfection the eternal.⁷⁵⁸ In this regard, Biggar has pointed out that, compared to his later ethics, the tone of his Münster *Ethics* is more or less 'conservative.'⁷⁵⁹ However, as Webster argued, the radical character of Barth's Münster *Ethics* can still be found in its

⁷⁵⁶ See Gorringer, *Karl Barth*, 91–93; Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits*, 46–96; Webster, *Barth's Earlier Theology*, vii; Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology*, 41–64.

⁷⁵⁷ Gorringer, *Karl Barth*, 92–94.

⁷⁵⁸ See Colin E. Gunton, "Mozart the Theologian," *Theology* 94, no. 761 (1991): 347.

⁷⁵⁹ Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits*, 52–62.

strong critique of modernity.⁷⁶⁰ In this respect, I propose, although Barth's theory of art in the Münster *Ethics* may not as radical as his theology of beauty in terms of its critical distance from secular cultural phenomenon, it obviously demonstrates his painstaking endeavour to overcome modern theology's de-eschatologizing and aestheticizing tendency.⁷⁶¹

In the Münster *Ethics*, the origin and nature of art are presented within the chapter on pneumatology, entitled "The Command of God the Redeemer," in general, and under the section on 'gratitude' in particular. For Barth, the command of God the Redeemer is distinctively the command of promise.⁷⁶² Men and women are, at first, God's creatures, and they are eternally reconciled with God in Jesus Christ. In him God is not simply the Creator, but also the Father of humankind. In this world, however, the reality of sonship is not fully realized or experienced. Due to the Spirit's redemptive work, argued Barth, "[t]he distinctive feature of eschatological truth.... is its presence not *in* the future but *as* the future, as coming to us."⁷⁶³ This futuristic nature of our present reality is constituted by God's eschatological promise, which demands a certain enthusiasm to pray to God for the reality of sonship here and now. This prayerful waiting for the promise requires our gratitude, creating a joyful and free-willed readiness for God's gift of final participation in God.⁷⁶⁴ Unlike the command of secular law or authority, which does not necessarily make us 'glad' and may not be 'voluntary,' God's command and our corollary obedience in the Spirit please both God and us.

⁷⁶⁰ Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology*, 61–64.

⁷⁶¹ In this respect, I agree with Torrance that for Barth a primary task of the Church in face of modernity is to address itself to "the age of Kant and Hegel, of Goethe and Schiller, and many others, not to speak of the world of music and art." See Thomas F. Torrance, "Introduction," in Karl Barth, *Theology and Church: Shorter Writings, 1920-1928*, trans. L. P. Smith (London: SCM, 1962), 16.

⁷⁶² See *Ethics*, 461–475.

⁷⁶³ *Ethics*, 465.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ethics*, 499.

Therefore, as Barth claimed in his theology of culture, our life has the distinctive character of *play*:

[O]ur conduct bears the mark of good, of what is pleasing to God, when it is not done in earnest but in *play*.... Ultimately, in the last resort, our life is truly only a game.... We should not fail to say that as God's children we are in fact released from the seriousness of life and can and should simply play before God.... We are always, in fact, his little children, and our work in relation to his is more play than work, obedient play, play in the peace of the father's house that is waiting for us, yet still play.⁷⁶⁵

Joyful obedience and playful life are present to us as promise, which allows us to bear the eschatological mark in our existence. In this light, theological ethics should consider 'two special possibilities of life' – art and humour, both of which "define human action as something that is done gladly, voluntarily, and cheerfully."⁷⁶⁶ They arise from the contrast between our existence as the children of God and our existence as the children of this aeon. Whereas humour is the universal and inner form of playful action, art is its particular and external form. They prevent us from taking the present with ultimate seriousness, "not because it is not serious enough itself, but because God's future, which breaks into the present, is more serious."⁷⁶⁷

For Barth, art is not God's special gift to the creation, or to reconciled sinners, but to God's children, who live in obedience to the command of promise in thanksgiving. This eschatological origin results in four theological characteristics of art. First, although the work of art requires the language, image, sound, movement or other means of this world, its nature is fundamentally futuristic, thereby transcending the present reality. Barth wrote, "True aesthetics is the experiencing of real and future

⁷⁶⁵ *Ethics*, 503-504.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ethics*, 506.

⁷⁶⁷ *Ethics*, 511.

reality.... To this extent art *plays* with reality.... It transcends it with its own word.”⁷⁶⁸

In other words, art is a playful way for us to transcend this world and move towards the coming Kingdom, while living within the limitation of this world.

Second, because of the futuristic character of art, it creates the field in which we live in new creation.⁷⁶⁹ The artist’s activity of new creation can be conceived in the light of God’s announcement of creating “new heavens and a new earth” in Isaiah 65:17. Art does not see the created reality in the present as in its complete actuality; rather, with a longing for the future fulfilment, art creates another reality, along with the present, thereby opening up new possibilities of thinking and acting. Nevertheless, art always has to be connected to the present reality “in order to create *it* anew and see *it* changed and show *it* to be so – the reality that was created by God and has been reconciled to him, but this as redeemed reality in its sensed and anticipated perfection, hence, a clarified and purified reality.”⁷⁷⁰ On the basis of its eschatological capacity for depicting God’s new creation, the work of art pictures the world into which we are drawn to live as God’s children. In a similar way to Heidegger, Barth contended here that the main function of art is to disclose the world in which we exist and towards which we are moving. At this point, both thinkers appear to react against a modern aesthetic tendency to project the human subject’s significance onto things in the world. Both wish to overcome a modern conception of art conceived in terms of pure representation.⁷⁷¹ However, unlike Heidegger, who explicitly relates art to this-worldliness,⁷⁷² Barth’s theological version is deeply coloured by his zeal for God’s future, bearing the tension between the present world and the world to come.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ethics*, 508.

⁷⁶⁹ *Ethics*, 508.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ethics*, 508.

⁷⁷¹ Kerr, *Immortal Longings*, 55–57.

⁷⁷² Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” 157–165.

Third, despite Barth's emphasis upon the futuristic character of art, he suspected that art must not turn its back on the suffering of the real world. Thus, the Romantic slogan "art for art's sake" risks overlooking the reality of this world and the place of art in society. As a joyful and playful activity in an *eschatological* sense, art should not ignore the sorrow and suffering of this-worldliness. Barth wrote, "Humour that is not grim humour, humour that laughs through tears [Kutter], is not real humour. Nor is art that is not born of sorrow, even though conceived of joy, real art."⁷⁷³ The true artist is the one who can express the suffering of the world in his/her creative activity,⁷⁷⁴ and art ought to "suffer with groaning creation in the present in which the future is present only as the future."⁷⁷⁵ Art can be redemptive because of its eyes to see the sorrow of the world and its ears to hear the cry of creation.

Fourth, Barth's association of art with eschatology results in his unique visions of human existence and of the nature of religious art. Barth wrote, "The word and command of God demand art.... Participation in art is... a general element in what is demanded of us."⁷⁷⁶ On the one hand, the universal scope and eschatological character of the Spirit's redemptive work inspire us to conceive of human existence as fundamentally aesthetic. On the other hand, because the origin of art comes from God's eschatological promise, which human beings cannot control or grasp, the so-called artistic genius cannot be achieved by our own endeavour. At this moment, Barth drew parallels between art and salvation: "We now have the doctrine of justification to back us – that the greatest artists, notoriously, have not always been the best of men."⁷⁷⁷ It also means that great religious arts are not necessarily created by good Christians. Barth

⁷⁷³ *Ethics*, 507.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ethics*, 509.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ethics*, 507.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ethics*, 510.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ethics*, 506.

is not the only person who claims that neither the faith of the artist, nor the content of the art, can determine the religiosity of art.⁷⁷⁸ His distinctiveness rather lies in his view that the value and quality of art is dependent upon the way it discloses in this world the eschatological promise. In this light, it is not at all surprise that the mature Barth discovered the genuine form of beauty in the *sound* of Mozart's music (not in Bach's sacred music) and in the *human faces* of Botticelli's paintings (not in Rafael's religious work).⁷⁷⁹

Conclusively speaking, Barth's discussion of art is not so much 'artistic'; rather, it is a theological explanation about the origin of art and its ethical nature. For those who seek a well refined aesthetic or art theory, therefore, Barth's Münster ethics may not be the best place to look. It neither offers a systematic view about the relationship between beauty and art, nor pays any interest in the subjectivity of artist or in artistic creations. Nonetheless, his account is deep and rich in its pursuit of the issue and makes room for aesthetic reflection within a well-organized doctrinal framework. In particular, by defining art as an obedient response in thanksgiving to God's redemption, he illustrated the prayerful and pneumatological dimension of art. In addition, his reflection on the eschatological function of the Spirit makes room for aesthetical discourse within a robust moral theology. Unlike the romantic ideal of separating aesthetics from other disciplines, for Barth, art should neither isolate it as a sphere of its own, nor seek beauty

⁷⁷⁸ See Paul Tillich, *On Art and Architecture*, ed. John Dillenberger, trans. Robert P. Scharlemann (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 149–151; Karl Rahner, "Art Against the Horizon of Theology and Piety," in *Final Writings*, trans. Joseph Donceel and Hugh M. Riley (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1992), 166–167; Rahner, "The Religious Meaning of Images," in *Final Writings*, 159; Pie-Raymond Régamey, *Religious Art in the Twentieth Century*. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 177–190; George Pattison, *Crucifixions and Resurrections of the Image: Christian Reflections on Art and Modernity* (London: SCM, 2009), 9–12.

⁷⁷⁹ Karl Barth, *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, trans. Clarence K. Pott (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1986), 59. Hereafter, *WAM*

only for the sake of beauty.⁷⁸⁰ Because of this playful and aesthetic aspect of our existence, we do not live a pessimistic, deterministic, or legalistic life in the midst of this world, but a glad, voluntary, and prayerful life. In this respect, He claimed that “to be unesthetic is to be immoral.”⁷⁸¹

3.3. Art as the Witness to God?: Beauty, the Spirit and Artistic Representation

Associating art with pneumatology, the Barth of the Münster ethics demanded that “the church’s activity, as human activity, ought to include the marginal possibility of art.”⁷⁸²

The term ‘marginal’ positively means that the church must secure a place of art insofar as it is an obedient reaction to God’s command. In a negative sense, the church should not overestimate the importance of art and that “[art] must not be confused with proclamation.”⁷⁸³ This carefully qualified view is hardly found in his later writings.

Instead, the priority of proclamation and the rejection of *analogia entis* do not seem to leave any place for art.

The centrality of proclamation in Barth’s theology resulted in his scepticism towards art’s capacity for representing God’s revelation. Instead of offering a decent theory of art, therefore, his concern eventually shifted to seeking a theologically proper context of the beautiful. His increasing emphasis upon the unity of divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ further marginalized a place for religious art in his theology.

Jesus’ face is the place where God’s beauty is disclosed in a special way and to a

⁷⁸⁰ It is interesting to see Barth’s critique of *l’art pour l’art* in comparison with Walter Benjamin’s criticisms. In his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” published in 1936, Benjamin criticized the way that the self-alienation of fine arts in the modern period eventually resulted in the aestheticization of politics. Barth’s doctrine of beauty in *CD II/1* (1940) has a radical iconoclastic tone which may be parallel to Benjamin’s critical insights. See Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 242.

⁷⁸¹ *Ethics*, 510.

⁷⁸² *Ethics*, 510.

⁷⁸³ *Ethics*, 510.

supreme degree, because it expresses the human suffering of God and the divine glory of humanity alike. However, religious art can only focus on only one nature, and thereby improperly represent the face of Jesus. Barth wrote:

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.⁷⁸⁴

The above passage illustrates that the danger of abstraction is a main reason Barth criticized religious art. In a similar vein, for Barth, other genres of art inevitably fail to describe this God-Man: “[Jesus Christ] obviously cannot be represented ... either in the form of narrative or (especially) in drawing, painting or sculpture. The attempt to represent Him can be undertaken and executed only in abstraction from this peculiarity of His being, and at bottom the result, either in literary or pictorial art, can only be a catastrophe.”⁷⁸⁵ In addition to this, his suspicion about *analogia entis* intensified his critical attitude towards religious art: “[T]he glory of God in its glorification by the creature must assume the form of correspondence. No other image or copy, however perfect, has any significance in this respect.”⁷⁸⁶ Here one must carefully discern the deeper logic of Barth’s harsh criticism of religious art. He did not abolish the place for art at first on the basis of its own improper nature; rather, the mystery of Christ’s two natures is the primary reason. We may, then, ask following questions: (1) is there a creaturely medium through which the mystery of Christ can be properly expressed? (2) Is there any way that artists do not attempt to explain the mystery of incarnation but to

⁷⁸⁴ CD II/1, 666. See also CD IV/3.2, 867.

⁷⁸⁵ CD IV/2, 103.

⁷⁸⁶ CD II/1, 674. See also Barth, “Protestantism and Architecture,” 272.

simply praise and witness it? If so, can Barth's love of certain artists be understood without conflict with his stark criticism of religious art?

First, for Barth, God's perfections, triunity and incarnation are the three beautiful elements in God. To examine God's beauty, thus, it is necessary to work through the doctrine of God rather than analyzing the work of art *per se*. It follows that, due to its special connection to proclamation, theology can be an appropriate medium through which God's beauty can be perceived albeit fragmentarily. Dealing with the Word, maintained Barth, theology is beautiful in correspondence to the beauty of God. Because God's beauty is the source of all beauty, theology is the most beautiful science, and the theologian has unique joy in his work.⁷⁸⁷ In this regard, one may find that Barth's loving and obedient gaze into the glory of God endowed his theology with a peculiar aesthetic sensibility. In Gunton's eyes, for example, "Barth is an aesthetic theologian. Barth worshipped before he theologized. His love of Mozart is to be noted here.... [His theology] can be considered as a sort of music.... Mozart just plays. I think that is Barth's aim: to play on the revelation of God so that its truth and beauty will shine. He is a very aesthetic theologian."⁷⁸⁸

Barth's claim goes further to the extent that any reflection on the beauty of God must be kept in an appropriate context. For example, he presented the church as *the* locus for praising and enjoying God's beauty, and through the ministry of the Word the glory of God can be properly acknowledged.⁷⁸⁹ At this point, Barth's doctrine of beauty arguably anticipates his later arguments against the use of images in his controversial essay, "Protestantism and Architecture," first appeared in 1959. It claims that images

⁷⁸⁷ CD II/1, 656-657.

⁷⁸⁸ Gunton, *The Barth Lectures*, 63. In a similar manner, Hunsinger discovered analogies between Mozart's musical composition and Barth's theological writing, showing that music is a suitable metaphor for describing the nature of Barth's theology. See Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 28.

⁷⁸⁹ CD II/1, 676.

and symbols risk distracting people's attention and creating confusion. The aim of worship should be related to the ministry of the Word, including proclamation, confession, teaching, prayer, baptism, and Holy Communion, in the strictest sense. In conversation with his students, Barth made this point clear again:

I do not like the idea of symbol! We do not believe in symbols. We are trying to repeat what we have heard, to testify to what God has done, to proclaim what we are told to proclaim. Symbols are a philosophical means of communication.... We are *told* to testify by our lives, to live within the community of the Church, to take part in the work of proclamation.... What we need is the Holy Spirit and His gifts! To change the pictures, symbols, and so forth, would be like a sick man in the hospital who wants to change his bed.⁷⁹⁰

This passage is radical enough to create the image of Barth's as a modern Reformed iconoclast, but the deeper logic of his statement should not be missed. For him, it is not a general human creative activity but the Christian life within the concrete Christian community is the medium through which God's beauty radiates in and towards the creaturely realm. Moreover, and more importantly, he underlined that the congregation in *everyday life* "represents the person and the work of Jesus Christ."⁷⁹¹ The fundamental issue here is not whether artworks can represent God's beauty, but whether the totality of one's thinking and acting can embody and witness it. This radical claim, in fact, opens up a possibility of considering the wide-range of human activities, which would undoubtedly include artistic ones, as the representation of the person and work of Jesus Christ insofar as their ecclesial context is properly underlined. Moreover, one may confirm that Barth still held his earlier view that our earthly existence itself can be aesthetic in a theological sense, although he based his argument in a different context.

⁷⁹⁰ Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, 23. See also *CD II/1*, 674.

⁷⁹¹ Barth, "Protestantism and Architecture," 272.

Second, both the ministry of the Word and the work of art are creaturely activities, but Barth's theology gives a priority to the former when discussing the media of revelation. It is mainly because proclamation has become the Word whereas art does not. However, he often placed Mozart and Grünewald's masterpieces on almost the same level with, or even higher level than, the work of great theologians. These show that Barth did not entirely deny the representational function of art in his theology. In other words, surveying his appreciation of these great artists may give us a clear hint at the relationship between beauty and art.⁷⁹²

Barth's interest in Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece can be traced back to the confirmation instruction he provided at his parish in Safenwil in 1918-1919.⁷⁹³ From then onwards, it is not hard to find Grünewald's name in Barth's books, letters and lecture notes.⁷⁹⁴ The question as to whether Barth properly interpreted Grünewald risks missing the force of his theological point. In his eyes, the greatness of this altarpiece lies in the fact that it does not explain what the mystery of salvation is, but to invite us to gaze at the crucified one, pointing to the horror of death and to the promise of redemption. Here one may see the function of artistic representation in relation to revelation. Art itself cannot be called God's Word and it does not have capacity to argue what revelation is. One's feeling invoked by art, moreover, is not directly related to

⁷⁹² For further study of Barth's engagement with these artists, see Roy A. Harrisville, "Encounter with Grünewald," *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 31, no. 1 (2004): 5-14; Matthew J. Milliner, "A Vacation for Grünewald: On Karl Barth's Vexed Relationship with Visual Art," *The Princeton Theological Review* VIII, no. 2 (2007): 5-16; Thodore A. Gill, "Barth and Mozart," *Theology Today* 43, no. 3 (1986): 403-411; Gouwens, "Mozart Among the Theologians"; Jeremy Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 93-96; Stoltzfus, *Theology As Performance*, 107-166; Patrick Sherry, "Mozart, Amadeus and Barth," *New Blackfriars* 67, no. 791 (1986): 233-240.

⁷⁹³ Karl Barth, *Konfirmandenunterricht 1909-1921*, *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe*, I, ed. Jürgen Fangmeier (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1987), 277.

⁷⁹⁴ See, for examples, Karl Barth, "Biblical Questions, Insights and Vistas," in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928), 76-77, 84-85; *Romans* II, 117, 141; *TC*, 61; *TS*, 78; *Gespräche 1964-1968 (GA IV.28)*, ed. Eberhard Busch (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1996), 149.

one's salvation. However, as shown in Grünewald's work, art functions as a sign or a finger which *indirectly* points to revelation. Just as our eyes are drawn into the crucified God, so our aesthetic response leads us to see what the artist wishes to witness by utilizing his/her artistic inspiration and skills. Perceiving art in this way, the expressionistic function of art plays a constitutive role in Barth. As Bychkov insightfully pointed out, Barth is not very far from Tillich in this respect.⁷⁹⁵ Despite their contrasting theological visions and methods, both great theologians had considerable interest in an analysis of the impression invoked by each work of art. In this light, it is not surprising to see that both Barth and Tillich were enchanted by the ugly Christ of Grünewald and by the melancholy human face of Botticelli's paintings rather than by Raphael's elegance.⁷⁹⁶

Barth's love of Mozart throws a clearer light on this issue.⁷⁹⁷ In Barth's eyes, the greatness of Mozart's music lies in the fact that Mozart had a "childlike awareness of the essence or center - as also the beginning and the end - of all things,"⁷⁹⁸ and that those who have ears can hear that Mozart created his music from this centre. Barth wrote, "There is no Mozartean metaphysics.... With God, the world, himself, heaven and earth, life - and, above all, death - ever present before his eyes, in his hearing, and in his heart, he was a profoundly unproblematical and thus a free man."⁷⁹⁹ In this freedom of *humility*, Mozart could be only "the instrument with which he allows us to hear what he hears."⁸⁰⁰ Just as Grünewald points to the center of all theology – the

⁷⁹⁵ Bychkov, "Introduction," xvi-xvii.

⁷⁹⁶ Tillich, *On Art and Architecture*, 99, 234–235.

⁷⁹⁷ Many theologians, including Torrance, have assumed that Barth's appreciation of Mozart is the most appropriate place for understanding his theology of culture. See Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: Introduction To Early Theology* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), 215.

⁷⁹⁸ WAM, 16.

⁷⁹⁹ WAM, 53.

⁸⁰⁰ WAM, 38.

crucified Christ, so Mozart invites us to hear from this center. Barth explained the center as follows.

The Mozartean "center" is not like that of the great theologian Schleiermacher - a matter of balance, neutrality, and, finally, indifference. What occurs in Mozart is rather a glorious upsetting of the balance, a turning in which the light rises and the shadows fall, though without disappearing, in which joy overtakes sorrow without extinguishing it, in which the Yea rings louder than the ever-present Nay. Note the reversal of the great dark and the small light episodes in Mozart's life!⁸⁰¹

Mozart's center is not the mathematical middle point, but the unbalanced point which he translated into a constant movement from the No to the Yes in his music.⁸⁰² In this light, Mozart could see the truth that the creation of God is, even in the negative, God's good creation.⁸⁰³ This resulted in Barth's radical claim that "Mozart has a place in theology, especially in the doctrine of creation and also in eschatology, although he was not a father of the Church, and does not seem to have been a particularly active Christian."⁸⁰⁴ Without appealing to the logic of natural theology, Barth did indeed observe a parallel analogy between his theology and Mozart's music in the light of "the great, free 'objectivity' with which Mozart went through life."⁸⁰⁵ Just as "[Mozart] never wished merely to display his technical prowess, but only to place himself at the service of Frau Musica, to whom he had dedicated himself from childhood,"⁸⁰⁶ so Barth attempted to let the matter (*Sache*) contained in the Bible speak itself and sought to witness what he was *told*.⁸⁰⁷ Barth's respect for Mozart's music shows that both theology and art can serve for the revelation of God's beauty, not by arguing what the

⁸⁰¹ WAM, 16.

⁸⁰² WAM, 55.

⁸⁰³ CD III/3, 297.

⁸⁰⁴ CD III/3, 298.

⁸⁰⁵ WAM, 16. Von Balthasar even said, "One will do well to keep in mind Mozart's melodies while reading Barth's *Dogmatics* and Mozart's basic style when searching for Barth's basic intentions." von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 108. See also Stoltzfus, *Theology As Performance*, 108.

⁸⁰⁶ WAM, 48.

⁸⁰⁷ See, for example, *Romans* II, 8.

truth is, but by hearing from God in the freedom of obedience and by gladly witnessing the beauty of God in its own voice.

In his engagement with Grünewald and with Mozart, more conclusively, Barth demonstrated that art can serve for God's beauty by drawing men and women to the objectivity (*Sachlichkeit*) of God's revelation.⁸⁰⁸ If utilizing the triad concepts of classical representation theory – object, manner and means,⁸⁰⁹ one may rightly say that Barth's concern mostly lies in the category of manner, which is about the way in which the object is represented. The question whether Barth offered a proper aesthetic theory or a balanced view of artistic representation is largely irrelevant, because his aim was neither to revive the importance of religious art, nor to argue the truth of Christianity in the light of aesthetics, but to participate in the chorus of all other creaturely voices, including those of artists, to glorify God and to enjoy the beauty of God.

There is one important issue which Barth did not make clear: although his engagement with great artists may have room for a rich pneumatological reflection, he never mentioned the Spirit even in his discussion of Mozart. Some critics argued in this regard that his lack of Spirit-talk resulted in his silence over artistic inspiration as a creative work of the Spirit.⁸¹⁰ Does Barth's vision really lack the pneumatological dimension of artistic inspiration? What, then, does artistic inspiration mean in a theological sense? Begbie explained it as follows: "[Artistic inspiration] may be best to regard the artist not simply as a tool... but of the Spirit generating a process of interaction between artist and subject, artistic medium, fellow artists, community or

⁸⁰⁸ The English translator of Barth's *WAM* utilized the term 'objectivity' to translate *Sachlichkeit*, but 'reality' is sometimes used by other translators.

⁸⁰⁹ Aristotle, *Aristotle on the Art of Poetry: A Revised Text with Critical Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, trans. Ingram Bywater (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 1447a–1448a, 2–8.

⁸¹⁰ For example, see Sherry, "Mozart, Amadeus and Barth," 235-236.

whatever.”⁸¹¹ This statement is theologically rich and suggestive, but it seems to presuppose current cultural assumption to disrespect any kind of ‘instrumental view.’ In contrast, I suggest that one may unearth implicit but rich pneumatological implications from Barth’s so-called instrumental approach.

As discussed above, Barth depicted Mozart as God’s instrument. Interestingly, the author of the modern day classic play *Amadeus*, Peter Shaffer, also illustrated that God *needs* Mozart as an ‘instrument’ through which God’s Spirit blows where it pleases.⁸¹² Whereas Shaffer expressed explicitly and dramatically the necessity of Mozart as God’s flute, Barth did it implicitly and theologically within the context of God’s freedom.⁸¹³ God’s freedom to be with creation ironically creates the necessity of a creaturely instrument in order to playfully share the overflowing joy. Nevertheless, God’s freedom does not eradicate Mozart’s freedom to hear and sing from the *Sache*, which Barth called “the essence of Mozart’s special quality.”⁸¹⁴ In other words, the tension between God’s freedom and God’s need for instrument can be harmonized in the Spirit-given freedom of Mozart, who gladly and playfully exercised his autonomy and musicality to conform to the source of beauty. In this respect, for Barth, the necessity of art does not compete with the necessity of proclamation or that of theology. God can freely utilize varied genres of arts, not to educate people, or to redeem them, but to joyfully dwell among them, encouraging them to live freely and gladly in this fragile world with the hope of God’s coming.

⁸¹¹ Jeremy Begbie, “Christ and Culture: Christianity and the Arts,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 115–116.

⁸¹² Peter Shaffer, *Amadeus: A Play*, Rev. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 56–57.

⁸¹³ However, Sherry has claimed that Shaffer’s view of Mozart is more pneumatological than Barth’s. See Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 2.

⁸¹⁴ WAM, 56.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has explored Barth's doctrine of beauty and theory of art with special attention to their pneumatological presupposition. One may still complain that Barth's reluctance to articulate a clear account of the relationship between God's beauty and creaturely beauty inevitably causes ambiguities in his discussion. In addition, in my view, Barth's lack of interest in the positive function of *eros*, which von Balthasar called "a chosen place of beauty"⁸¹⁵ in the realm of nature, clearly resulted in his nearly exclusive interest in the objective self-interpretation of God's glory.⁸¹⁶

These apparent weaknesses, however, may turn out to be the distinctive strength of Barth's stance. Although Barth never conceived of art or beauty as a means of God's salvation, his view may ironically involve redeeming 'efficacy' for culture due to its strong theological orientation and radical eschatological vision. As the atheist art critic Peter Fuller argued, when theology cannot differentiate a religious dimension of art from other aesthetic dimensions, it risks not only showing little concern over aesthetic grayness, but also losing its redeeming efficacy.⁸¹⁷ He saw this danger in Tillich's artistic theory and its possible remedy in Barth.⁸¹⁸ The question as to whether Fuller understood these theologians correctly needs further investigation, but he has called attention again to the critical function of theology in relation to aesthetics. It might be

⁸¹⁵ von Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible*, 54.

⁸¹⁶ Barth offered his view of *eros* throughout *CD*, but he showed ambiguous attitudes towards it. In my view, his varied conceptions of *eros* can be grouped under two headings – *eros* as self-love and *eros* sanctified by God's command. His ambiguity partly comes from the fact that he developed his view in various contexts over eighteen years. However, I propose, behind his inconsistent view of *eros*, there lies his rigid distinction between *agape* and *eros* under the influence of Nygren. See *CD* I/2, 192-193; *CD* III/1, 312-315; *CD* III/2, 279-283; *CD* III/4, 126; *CD* IV/2, 734-737. About Barth's use of *eros* and its theological/ethical implication, see David Clough, "Eros and Agape in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2, no. 2 (2000): 189-203; Gene Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 222-224.

⁸¹⁷ Peter Fuller, *Images of God: The Consolations of Lost Illusions* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1985), 48.

⁸¹⁸ Torrance also offered a similar view as follows: "The best contribution theology can make to the whole of creation is simply by being genuine theology." See Torrance, *Karl Barth*, 216.

impossible to interpret various arts or re-write aesthetics primarily from the perspective of Barth's theology. Barth himself did not offer his theology of beauty and art in competition with, or as a complementary view for, those of other theorists, art critics, and artists. Nonetheless, by resisting identifying his theological vision of beauty and art with those of any trend of aesthetic theory or school of artists, and by placing the work of art and theory of the aesthetic under the judgement of God's beauty, Barth's theology would leave room for thinking about the redeeming *efficacy* of art as God's instrument.

V. The Spirit and the Drama of Salvation in History

Wolfgang Pannenberg, once a student of Barth in Basel in 1950, sent his magisterial treatise on Christology, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, to Barth in 1964. Barth read it “with the sincere curiosity whether I might be dealing at last with the child of peace and promise whose work would represent a genuine superior alternative to what I myself have attempted and undertaken in theology the last forty-five years.”⁸¹⁹ However, Barth was immediately disappointed with Pannenberg’s attempt to offer a Christology from below, saying to Pannenberg that “we are theologically... very different if not separated people.”⁸²⁰ Barth even advised his faithful pupil, Helmut Gollwitzer, not to “expect much of Pannenberg (whose christology I read thoroughly in Bethesda) unless he has the grace to undergo a radical conversion.”⁸²¹ In his reply to Barth, Pannenberg did not hide his strong disappointment: “Of course, I cannot say that I feel you have understood me.”⁸²² Pannenberg took himself to have produced “a continuation of the basic thought of [Barth’s] theology of revelation in a changed intellectual climate.”⁸²³ The correspondences between these two giants of modern theology invoke questions as to whether Barth really misunderstood Pannenberg, why Barth thought Pannenberg needed a radical conversion, and what made their theologies so different.

These letters show that one critical point triggered their debate – how to find the particularity of revelation in history. Barth harshly critiqued that “[Pannenberg] followed a consistent course from below to above, or from the general to the particular

⁸¹⁹ Karl Barth, “To Prof Wolfgang Pannenberg: 7 December 1964,” in Barth, *Letters 1961-1968*, 178.

⁸²⁰ Barth, “To Prof Wolfgang Pannenberg,” 177.

⁸²¹ Barth, “To Prof Helmut Gollwitzer: 12 March 1965,” in Barth, *Letters 1961-1968*, 186.

⁸²² Wolfgang Pannenberg, “Prof W. Pannenberg to K. Barth: 9 May 1965,” in Barth, *Letters 1961-1968*, 350.

⁸²³ Pannenberg, “Prof W. Pannenberg to K. Barth,” 350.

— beginning with the shadowy figure of [the] historical man Jesus.”⁸²⁴ Pannenberg retorted that theologians “should start with the historical question of Jesus of Nazareth, since otherwise [Jesus’] historical particularity would be concealed at once by general theological or other concepts.”⁸²⁵ Although these remarks clearly show Barth and Pannenberg’s different approaches to particularity, one should not simply conclude in the light of Pannenberg’s project that Barth failed to do justice to the category of history. On the contrary, I suggest, a close reading of Barth will demonstrate that he not only took the historical nature of revelation seriously, but also paid special attention to how human agency is shaped by revelation in a specific historical context. In my view, it is through a study of Barth’s Spirit theology that we come to understand both Barth’s own position and the differences between himself and Pannenberg. Pannenberg’s rather simplified interpretation of Barth may come from his failure to see the link between pneumatology and history in his teacher’s theology.

This chapter will survey Barth’s theology of history with specific attention to the Spirit’s redemptive work in God’s gracious act of election. As even Pannenberg later conceded in a letter to the British theologian, Timothy Bradshaw, Barth’s theology of history can be more properly studied with reference to the doctrine of election.⁸²⁶ It is clearly true that the doctrine of election made Barth closely link history with the eternal life of God, who not only creates history, but also lifts it into the very life of the intra-divine fellowship. In my view, however, Barth had begun to see a robust relationship between history and eternity in his earlier theology. In particular, his radical view of the

⁸²⁴ Barth, “To Prof Wolfhart Pannenberg,” 179.

⁸²⁵ Pannenberg, “Prof W. Pannenberg to K. Barth,” 350.

⁸²⁶ See Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Appendix: Letter to the Author from Professor Pannenberg (1983),” in Timothy Bradshaw, *Trinity and Ontology: A Comparative Study of the Theologies of Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1988), 403. It is noteworthy that in the last volume of systematic theology (1993), the mature Pannenberg offered a theology of history in relation to the doctrine of election.

indirect nature of revelation enabled him to underline the inseparability of the Word and its historical media.⁸²⁷ I will develop this position in four steps. Firstly, I will survey how Barth incorporated the category of history in his earlier theology of the Word. In the second section, I will study how Barth's doctrine of election structures God's relation to history in a strikingly new way. Especially, I will explore his highly innovative view of history as God's salvific drama within the cosmic theatre. The third section will show that the Spirit's calling of individuals through the elected community constitutes free, responsible and historical agents. Finally this chapter will expound Barth's vision of history neither as a mere continuation of time, nor as an accumulation of memory, nor as a sequence of temporal events, nor as the existential framework over which humankind has power to manipulate, but as the revelatory *field* of the Trinity's mission *ad extra*, within which the Spirit guides and encourages prayerful human actions.

1. Revelation as History?: Barth's Theology of History in *Church Dogmatics I*

This section will study Barth's theology of history in *CD I* with special reference to his doctrine of the Word of God. I will begin by contrasting Barth's position with that of Pannenberg. I will, then, turn to Barth's use of the triadic structure of form-freedom-historicity of revelation to explain God's engagement with history. Finally, I will show how the Spirit enables human agency to subjectively appropriate revelation in everyday life.

1.1. Pannenberg's Challenge to Barth: Comparisons and Contrasts

⁸²⁷ See my analysis of the Word of God and its secular media in the chapter on revelation. I also argued in the section on contemporaneity that Barth's renewed understanding of the resurrection encouraged him to see eternity as embracing temporality

In 1961, by publishing the volume *Revelation as History*, a group of younger German theologians proposed a new theological agenda. It was Pannenberg, the editor of the book and the systematic theologian within the group, who most clearly articulated the main thrust of this new theological programme in his introduction and in his essay, “Dogmatic Theses on the Concept of Revelation.” Acknowledging his indebtedness to Barth’s view of revelation as being indirect, Pannenberg argued that revelation cannot be understood as God’s direct and transparent communication with human beings.⁸²⁸ In Pannenberg’s eyes, moreover, Barth rightly emphasized “before any of the theologians of his day.... the unity of God with Jesus Christ in the context of his conception of revelation.”⁸²⁹ In a letter to Barth, Pannenberg explicitly named this linking as one of Barth’s greatest achievements, and the most important lesson Pannenberg had learnt from him in Basel.⁸³⁰

For Pannenberg, however, Barth’s enormous influence had made a ‘pure’ theology of revelation into the dominant theological movement in modern Protestantism. Pannenberg raised the following fundamental objections to Barth. First, in opposition to Barth’s view that the form of revelation implies both veiling and unveiling, Pannenberg objected that “if... the revelation is truly revelation so that its special form belongs to itself, then this form cannot, at the same time, veiling.”⁸³¹ Secondly, for Pannenberg, Christian theology deals not with the Word of God *per se* but with history as a whole,

⁸²⁸ See following comparative studies of Barth and Pannenberg. Bradshaw, *Trinity and Ontology*; Christiaan Mostert, “Barth and Pannenberg on Method, Revelation and Trinity,” in *Karl Barth: A Future for Postmodern Theology?*, ed. Christiaan Mostert and Geoff Thompson (Hindmarsh: Australian Theological Forum, 2000); Laurence W. Wood, “Defining the Modern Concept of Self-Revelation: Toward a Synthesis of Barth and Pannenberg,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 41, no. 2 (1986): 85-105.

⁸²⁹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Introduction,” in *Revelation as History*, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg, trans. David Granskou (London: Sheed & Ward, 1969), 7.

⁸³⁰ Pannenberg, “Prof W. Pannenberg to K. Barth,” 350; “Letter to the Author from Professor Pannenberg,” 403.

⁸³¹ Pannenberg, “Introduction,” 7.

“the most comprehensive horizon.” He further argued, “All theological questions are meaningful only within the framework which God has with humanity and through humanity with his whole creation – the history moving toward a future still hidden from the world but already revealed in Jesus Christ.”⁸³² How, then, can historical contingencies be God’s self-communication? Under a fundamental assumption that “history as a totality is God’s revelation,” Pannenberg offered a twofold argument.⁸³³ First, history as a totality is not presented to us as a self-contained unit, and so God’s revelation cannot be comprehended completely until the end of history.⁸³⁴ In this eschatological light, contingent historical events can only be conceived as God’s self-revelation indirectly, and we continuously revise and reflect on the content of revelation during the course of history.⁸³⁵ Second, conversely, Pannenberg stressed the importance of the particular history of Jesus with reference to universal history. Jesus’ resurrection not only reveals God’s authentication of his divine sonship, but also discloses that the end of history has broken into time through him.⁸³⁶ In the activity and the fate of Jesus, therefore, the complete manifestation of God in the future is pre-actualized and experienced in advance as its anticipation. After the resurrection, any divinely revealed event is not a mere historical occurrence, but has transforming power, bearing the mark of Jesus Christ.

The radicalness of Pannenberg’s theology can be found in his further proposal that “the historical revelation is open to anyone who has eyes to see.”⁸³⁷ On

⁸³² Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Redemptive Event and History,” in *Basic Questions in Theology, Vol 1*, trans. George H. Kehm (London: SCM, 1970), 15.

⁸³³ Pannenberg, “Introduction,” 16.

⁸³⁴ Among Pannenberg’s varied writings on revelation, I mainly focused on the following essay: Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Dogmatic Theses on the Concept of Revelation,” in *Revelation as History*, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg, trans. David Granskou (London: Sheed & Ward, 1969).

⁸³⁵ Pannenberg, “Dogmatic Theses on the Concept of Revelation,” 131.

⁸³⁶ Pannenberg, “Dogmatic Theses on the Concept of Revelation,” 146.

⁸³⁷ Pannenberg, “Dogmatic Theses on the Concept of Revelation,” 135.

Pannenberg's reading of Scriptures, God reveals God-self through historical events to all people in such a way that faith is not a necessary condition for finding revelation in the history of Israel and of Jesus Christ. This view results in his equally revolutionary claim that "[t]heology has no reason or excuse to cheapen the character and value of a truth that is open to general reasonableness."⁸³⁸ For a Barthian, Pannenberg is close to making faith superfluous. Indeed, resisting Barth's claim that revelation is knowledge of God *in faith*, Pannenberg maintained, "The *knowledge* of God's revelation in the history demonstrating his deity must be... the basis of faith."⁸³⁹ Here Pannenberg reversed the order of Barth's pneumatological reasoning: whereas Barth understood faith as the gift of the Spirit, Pannenberg found in the New Testament, and in agreement with Bultmann's interpretation of Gal. 3, that "the Spirit is described as the gift received by means of faith."⁸⁴⁰ Pannenberg attempted to show that faith and knowledge are compatible by redefining faith: it is not a mere basis for knowing God, but a fundamental openness to the future.⁸⁴¹ Because of this openness, faith in God enables the believer to participate in salvation, thus securing its unique realm.

Accordingly, Pannenberg claimed that historical research is never antithetical to the content of faith. In this light, he offered a 'Christology from below,' beginning with historical analysis of the activity and the fate of Jesus, but offering his resurrection as the basis for his unity with God. In his eyes, Barth's Christology from above, which presupposes faith from the outset, eventually "comes closer to the basic outline of the

⁸³⁸ Pannenberg, "Dogmatic Theses on the Concept of Revelation," 137.

⁸³⁹ Pannenberg, "Dogmatic Theses on the Concept of Revelation," 138 (emphasis added).

⁸⁴⁰ Pannenberg, "Dogmatic Theses on the Concept of Revelation," 136. See also Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament, Vol 1*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 330.

⁸⁴¹ Pannenberg, "Dogmatic Theses on the Concept of Revelation," 138. This theme developed into Pannenberg's anthropological theme of humanity's openness to the world. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *What Is Man?: Contemporary Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 1–13, 137–149.

Gnostic redeemer myth.”⁸⁴² Theology should not hide behind fideism, and a Christology should not be afraid of the quest for the historical Jesus. Pannenberg even said to Barth that his emphasis upon “historico-critical biblical investigation for theology... is the prominent sign of the change of intellectual climate in comparison with you.”⁸⁴³ Considering the *universal* nature of its subject matter, theology needs to do justice both to the biblical view of revelation and to the demand of the contemporary cultural situation.⁸⁴⁴ Hence his view of history as the medium of revelation results in his serious engagement with secular intellectual development.

Interestingly enough, however, Barth regarded Pannenberg’s new trend “as reactionary..., return[ing] to the old shores”⁸⁴⁵ of theological liberalism. Here Barth seemed to intentionally overlook the difference between Pannenberg’s historicist approach and the theological historicism of Troeltsch or Harnack. Pannenberg himself, in fact, attempted to keep distance from a modern view in which individuals, institutions, nations or humanity are simply conceived as the autonomous acting subject of history.⁸⁴⁶ To compare Pannenberg with his predecessors would be an important topic of further research, but it is beyond the scope and purpose of this section. What I have attempted to illustrate is that both Barth and Pannenberg took the category of history seriously, and their contrasts come from the different ways in which they conceive of it. In this sense, James Barr, in the context of some harsh criticism of Barth, correctly pointed out that Barth was an advocate of revelation through history before

⁸⁴² Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 16.

⁸⁴³ Pannenberg, “Prof W. Pannenberg to K. Barth,” 351.

⁸⁴⁴ See Timothy Bradshaw, *Pannenberg: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009), 5–6.

⁸⁴⁵ Barth, “To Prof Wolfhart Pannenberg,” 178.

⁸⁴⁶ See Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology, Vol 1*, 231; See also Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Divine Revelation and Modern History,” in *Faith and Reality*, trans. John Maxwell (London and Philadelphia: Search Press, 1977).

Pannenberg.⁸⁴⁷ The following subsections will study Barth's theology of history within the doctrine of revelation. They will not only show the similarity and the difference between Barth and Pannenberg at a deeper level, but also prepare my analysis of Barth's doctrine of election, where his mature theology of history is presented.

1.2. The Divine Word in History: The Form-Freedom-Historicity of Revelation

When Pannenberg studied under Barth and developed his seminal view of revelation as history in 1950s, the first volume of *CD* had already achieved the status of a modern theological classic. It suggested an intriguing way of conceiving of revelation with reference to the particularity of history. It is strange that, while critiquing Barth's theology as a theology of pure revelation, Pannenberg did not pay attention to this crucial and suggestive theme. Had Pannenberg appropriated these ideas of Barth, perhaps the conflict we have just noted would not have arisen? This subsection will explore the way in which Barth understood the relation between revelation and history in *CD I* with special attention to God's constitution of revelation as historical. This study will make it clear that, for Barth, the concept of revelation itself includes its actualization in history and, moreover, that human conceptions of God's revelation arise in and through historical particularities.

In the doctrine of the Word, Barth sought to find a legitimate place for history within God's being and act, and more specifically within a doctrine of the Trinity. More specifically, his discussion of the root of the doctrine of the Trinity is a main context in which his theological view of history develops. For Barth, the Bible demonstrates that the doctrine of the Trinity is grounded neither on philosophical speculation, nor the

⁸⁴⁷ James Barr, "Revelation through History in the Old Testament and in Modern Theology," *Interpretation* 17, no. 2 (1963): 195.

outcome of doctrinal development, but the statement that “God reveals Himself as the Lord.”⁸⁴⁸ In other words, revelation has a threefold sense, signifying “the self-unveiling, imparted to men, of the God who by nature cannot be unveiled to men.”⁸⁴⁹ Barth used various triply hyphenated expressions in this context: freedom-form-historicity, unveiling-veiling-impartation, revealer-revelation-revealedness, or Father-Son-Spirit.⁸⁵⁰ It is noteworthy here that the Spirit is connected to the historicity of revelation. Yet, this does not mean that the Spirit is exclusively concerned with history, but all three are linked to history in different modes.

Among the three, the fundamental relatedness of God to history lies in the form, unveiling, revelation, or Son. God is utterly hidden, but God reveals God-self in Jesus Christ by taking a perceivable and particular form.⁸⁵¹ Barth wrote, “It is not impossible nor is it too petty a thing for Him to be His own alter ego [*Doppelgänger*] in His revelation.”⁸⁵² It follows that God discloses God-self in history, thereby setting the bridge between eternity and time. Thanks to God’s gracious revelation in Jesus Christ, “[human beings] can say Thou to Him and pray to Him. This is what self-revelation is.”⁸⁵³ Here one may see that Barth’s theme of actualism has its goal in history in the form of personalism.⁸⁵⁴

The freedom, veiling, revealer, or Father appears to demonstrate God’s absolute transcendence from history.⁸⁵⁵ When God comes to and inhabits within the creaturely

⁸⁴⁸ *CD I/1*, 307. See also Barth’s biblical support for the root of the doctrine of the Trinity in *CD I/1*, 313.

⁸⁴⁹ *CD I/1*, 315.

⁸⁵⁰ *CD I/1*, 332.

⁸⁵¹ See *CD I/1*, 316; *CD I/2*, 45; *CD II/1*, 616; *CD IV/1*, 201.

⁸⁵² *CD I/1*, 316; *KD I/1*, 333.

⁸⁵³ *CD I/1*, 316

⁸⁵⁴ About the interrelatedness of these themes in Barth, see Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 27–42.

⁸⁵⁵ Pannenberg claimed that Barth’s emphasis upon the veiling of God’s revelation is one of main differences between them. He further criticized that Barth could not say that the immanent Trinity is somehow ‘dependent upon’ the process of history. See Pannenberg, “Introduction, 7; “Letter to the Author from Professor Pannenberg,” 402.

realm, God still has God's exclusive sphere. Thus, history cannot be identified with revelation. Nevertheless, for Barth, "It is the *Deus revelatus* who is the *Deus absconditus*."⁸⁵⁶ This implies that even God's act of veiling has something to do with history. According to Barth, especially, the discontinuity between eternity and time testifies in Scripture that "the history of His acts is a history of ever renewed beginnings."⁸⁵⁷ The dynamic nature of history and its openness towards the future are mainly rooted in the hiddenness of God. In the Old Testament this is the basis for the prophets and the psalmists' critical attitude towards institutional religions. In the New Testament, this idea is radically expressed as God's act of new creation, bringing a new thing into specific circumstances. Our knowledge of revelation, therefore, neither exhausts the holiness of God, nor domesticates history, nor forecloses the newness of the future.⁸⁵⁸ Rather, as Barth contended, "This His new self-giving [in hiddenness] remains man's only hope."⁸⁵⁹

The last mode of God in revelation is God's impartation of God-self through the Spirit to humanity in history. Barth investigated this pneumatological motif with special attention to the notion of 'particularity.' Barth wrote, "[Revelation] is... aimed at man, not just mythical man, man in general, but always a specific man occupying a very specific place, a specific historical place."⁸⁶⁰ According to the Bible, God does not reveal God-self in the form of abstract metaphysics, nor through a timeless and non-spatial truth of myth; rather, does the Bible testify that revelation is 'historical' as "a

⁸⁵⁶ CD I/1, 321.

⁸⁵⁷ CD I/1, 322.

⁸⁵⁸ Many scholars improperly critiqued Barth that his emphasis upon revelation and election in Christ marginalized the places for the coming future. In contrast, McDowell's intensive and well balanced study of Barth's eschatology underlines the importance of hope in Barth's overall theology. See John C. McDowell, *Hope in Barth's Eschatology: Interrogations and Transformations beyond Tragedy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000). I will also deal with this issue at the end of this chapter by analyzing the Spirit's redemptive work in history.

⁸⁵⁹ CD I/1, 324.

⁸⁶⁰ CD I/1, 324-325.

concrete relation to concrete men.”⁸⁶¹ Thus, revelation as ‘historical’ (*geschichtlich*), which “has taken place once and for all, i.e., in a more or less exact and specific time and place,”⁸⁶² is fundamentally different from what a spectator can apprehend as historical (*historisch*) information, which can be achieved by and approached through scholarly research.⁸⁶³

Here one may find that Barth utilized the distinction between *historisch* and *geschichtlich*.⁸⁶⁴ Many theologians have often attributed this differentiation to Kähler, but the use of the term *Geschichte* or *geschichtlich* over against *Historie* or *historisch* can be traced back to the 18th and the 19th century German thinkers, including Herder, Hegel and Dilthey.⁸⁶⁵ It was Kähler who brought these terms into the forefront of theological discourse. For him, *der historische Jesus* does not merely mean the earthly Jesus but a first-century Jew who has been an object of historical-critical research. In contrast, *der geschichtliche Christus* refers to the *real* Jesus as the object of faith, preached and confessed by the believing community.⁸⁶⁶ Kähler’s proposal has been appropriated by many theologians in different ways. Herrmann, for example, criticized Kähler’s implication that the biblical proclamation could meet modern needs.⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁶¹ CD I/1, 325.

⁸⁶² CD I/1, 325. See also CD I/1, 326-329.

⁸⁶³ English-speaking theologians and translators have utilized various pairs of terms to express the contrast between *Historie* and *Geschichte*, including ‘objective history’ and ‘existential history,’ ‘outer history’ and ‘inner history,’ ‘writing history’ and ‘making history,’ or ‘historical’ and ‘historic.’ See John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology: A Comparison of Heidegger and Bultmann* (London: SCM, 1955), 168–172; Richard H. Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 32–34; Rudolf Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology,” in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: SPCK, 1953), x–xii; Carl E. Braaten, “Introduction: Revelation, History, and Faith in Martin Kähler,” in Martin Kähler, *The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 21.

⁸⁶⁴ See Barth’s favorable review of Kähler’s *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche Christus* in CD I/2, 64.

⁸⁶⁵ See Michael J. Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell Reference, 1992), 118–120; Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 370–376.

⁸⁶⁶ Kähler, *The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ*, 57–71.

⁸⁶⁷ See Herrmann’s critique of Kähler quoted in Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 8.

However, Hermann's two most distinguished students, Bultmann and Barth, were deeply influenced by Kähler, and dismissed any attempt to base Christology upon the quest for the so-called historical (*historische*) Jesus. However, the ways in which they treated the historical (*geschitliche*) element in Christianity, especially Christ's resurrection, were strikingly contrasting.

Like Kähler, Bultmann rejected the possibility of understanding the biblical story in a historicist sense. Bultmann contended that the narratives of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament were written, taught and transmitted in and through the ancient language of myth, and thus that modern scientific analysis needs to reveal the true message of the text by distinguishing it from the mythical form. On the assumption that the resurrection belongs to the category of myth, Bultmann made the radical claim that it is not an objective-historical event but an existential-historical event, and its historical origin can be found in the crucifixion. He wrote "*Indeed, faith in the resurrection is really the same thing as faith in the saving efficacy of the cross.... This is the way in which the cross is proclaimed. It is always proclaimed together with the resurrection. Christ meets us in the preaching as one crucified and risen.*"⁸⁶⁸ Bultmann's demythologization of the resurrection arguably came from, and nourished, his existentialist appeal to Christianity, not as a sophisticated and universal philosophy, but as a religion with saving power. Nevertheless, he pushed Kähler's distinction to such an extreme that he risked destroying the historical element in Christianity.⁸⁶⁹

⁸⁶⁸ Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," 41.

⁸⁶⁹ As Macquarrie argued, this is one of the poignant challenges Bultmann posed to modern theology. However, Ogden suggested that, for Bultmann, the positive alternative of demythologization is existentialist interpretation *plus* analogy. See John Macquarrie, *The Scope of Demythologizing: Bultmann and His Critics* (London: SCM, 1960), 246, n. 1; Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology*, 191–192; Schubert M. Ogden, *The Reality of God: And Other Essays* (London: SCM, 1967), 171.

Barth also took Kähler's proposal seriously, denying a possibility of basing Christianity upon a historical-critical study of the Bible. His uneasiness with Pannenberg indeed came from the fact that Pannenberg dismissed Kähler too easily, thereby mistakenly starting his Christology with a historical-exegetical analysis of the resurrection.⁸⁷⁰ However, Barth did not merely repeat Kähler's distinction. He clarified two contrasting views of the term 'historical' (*geschichtlich*) in modern scholarship to counter against Bultmann on the one hand, and combined historical (*geschichtlich*) with non-historical (*unhistorisch*) together to offer his own unique view on the other.⁸⁷¹

First, alluding to Bultmann's theology, Barth argued that the attempt to hear revelation on the basis of a *general* concept of historical truth by conceiving of it as a myth is "necessarily an attack on the substance of the biblical witness,"⁸⁷² abstracting the particular message of the Scriptures as if it may happen in any time or place.⁸⁷³ In contrast, the historical element in the Bible should be judged in terms of "the special historicity" (*die besondere Geschichtlichkeit*) the Bible possesses.⁸⁷⁴ God's revelation in the biblical record refers to the special historicity of the divine act, which always engages with a specific person in a particular context. This animated Barth to defend the historicity of the resurrection against Bultmann's demythologization. Barth indeed conceived of the resurrection as a historical event in time, offering a thorough and extensive exegesis of the Easter narratives.⁸⁷⁵ However, unlike Pannenberg, he never

⁸⁷⁰ See Barth, "To Prof Wolfhart Pannenberg," 178; Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 2–6.

⁸⁷¹ Barth's use of the term 'non-historical history' can be found even in his commentary on Romans. See *Romans* II, 203.

⁸⁷² *CD* I/1, 327.

⁸⁷³ It should be noted here that Barth's notion of myth is largely influenced by Bultmann's unique conception. However, the category of myth has been used so variously in theological, philosophical, anthropological and scientific literature, and thus any definition of it has appeared to be inevitably provisional.

⁸⁷⁴ *KD* I/1, 345. The German term 'besondere' was translated into 'singular' in *CD* I/1, 327.

⁸⁷⁵ *CD* III/2, 442–447. See also the debate between Barth and Bultmann in Karl Barth, "Rudolf Bultmann - An Attempt to Understand Him," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate II*, ed. Hans-Werner

intended to ground his Christology upon his historical-critical analysis.⁸⁷⁶ The main function of exegesis is to point beyond the text to Jesus Christ as the Lord of time whose resurrection reveals eternity's embrace of history.

Second, Barth contended that a revelatory event, which took place in history and was attested in Scriptures, such as the creation or the resurrection, needs to be investigated in terms of a non-historical history (*unhistorische Geschichte*). It is historical (*geschichtlich*) in the sense that God reveals God-self in a specific time and space. It is non-historical (*unhistorisch*) in that its historical element cannot be exhausted by the judgement of the historicist. In his doctrine of creation, for example, Barth explained the significance of God's creation as a non-historical history, which was depicted in the form of saga, as follows:

We must dismiss and resist to the very last any idea of the inferiority or untrustworthiness or even worthlessness of a "non-historical" depiction and narration of history. This is in fact only a ridiculous and middle-class habit of the modern Western mind which is supremely phantastic in chronic lack of imaginative phantasy, and hopes to rid itself of its complexes through suppression.... [I]t is necessary and obligatory to realise the fact and manner that in genuine history the "historical" and "non-historical" accompany each other and belong together.⁸⁷⁷

In Barth's eyes, the modern historicists lack imagination, sympathy and humour, which might have allowed them to be both "open and cautious, critical and naïve, perspicuous and modest."⁸⁷⁸ Barth would not appreciate having his theology compared to a

Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: SPCK, 1972); Rudolf Bultmann, "Dear Mr Barth: 11-15 November 1952," in Barth and Bultmann, *Karl Barth-Rudolf Bultmann Letters 1922-1966*, 87-102.

⁸⁷⁶ Despite Barth's disagreement with Pannenberg's Hegelian view of history, he highly prized Pannenberg's critique of Bultmann's view of history. See Barth, *How I Changed My Mind*, 82.

⁸⁷⁷ CD III/1, 81.

⁸⁷⁸ CD III/3, 369.

postmodern appeal to narratives and metaphors, but his proposal certainly approaches the biblical text in a “second naïveté” way.⁸⁷⁹

Although Barth sought to overcome a historicist reading of the Bible, he was equally anxious about confusing two different pre-modern ways of reporting the past event – saga and myth. Both of them express the God-creation relationship, or the sacred-profane, in ancient linguistic forms. In contrast to myth, however, the category of saga witnesses God’s act throughout history (*Geschichte*) in specific time and space in a non-historical (*unhistorische*) way.⁸⁸⁰ The form and the content of saga are concretely rooted in a particular revelatory event in history, so they cannot be arbitrarily split by a modern reader. Revelation regarded as saga, thus, is not subject to demythologization.⁸⁸¹ Barth contended that this emphasis upon particularity undermines the distinction between the eternal content and its historical vehicle, which has been prevalent in theology and philosophy since Lessing.⁸⁸²

Conclusively speaking, for Barth, the category of history is essential for God to communicate with humanity in a trinitarian manner of freedom-form-historicity. Unlike Pannenberg, however, Barth did not take a historical-critical study as the ground for understanding the historical dimension of revelation. In contrast to Bultmann, moreover, Barth emphasized the particular historicity of revelation, refusing to demythologise it

⁸⁷⁹ Concerning the concept of second naïveté, see Paul Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 349–350.

⁸⁸⁰ As a biblical scholar, Barr severely criticized Barth for compromising the biblical doctrine of revelation on behalf of the extra-biblical view of history. It may be true that Barth arbitrarily utilized the terms *Geschichte* and saga, but Barr misunderstood and simplified Barth’s view of revelation. For Barth, the hearer of the divine Word is not in a vacuum but a historical being, and thus scriptural concepts function as witnesses to God’s act in history rather than tools for directly revealing God’s name or command. See Barr, “Revelation through History in the Old Testament and in Modern Theology,” 199.

⁸⁸¹ It is noteworthy that Ricœur prized Bultmann’s concept of demythologization very highly in the sense that Bultmann could see the intrinsic relationship between the content of the text and the understanding of the reader more accurately than Barth. In Ricœur’s eyes, however, Bultmann’s mistake lies in the fact that it is still a modern person who demythologizes the text. See Paul Ricœur, “Preface to Bultmann,” in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis Seymour Mudge, trans. Lewis Seymour Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 59–61.

⁸⁸² CD I/1, 329.

into a general existential truth. All this raises the question about how, for Barth, human beings can appropriate a revelatory event in their specific living context.

1.3. Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Particularity, Possibility and Freedom

In conversation with one of his American students in 1965, Barth called the new hermeneutics of the Bultmann School as a flat-tire theology (*Plattfusstheologie*): “The *pneuma* [Greek for ‘air’ or ‘spirit’] has goes out of it, and when the *pneuma* goes out of a tire, the automobile is likely to have an accident. Or at least it doesn’t go anywhere.”⁸⁸³ Barth charged the new hermeneutics, which was strongly influenced by Bultmann’s view of history, on the basis of its pneumatology.⁸⁸⁴ In other words, Barth’s emphasis upon the historicity of revelation is strongly connected to his Spirit theology.

As discussed above, Barth understood revelation as historical, resisting a non-temporal and non-spatial interpretation. In his eyes, “This is why the Bible lays such stress on chronology, topography and contemporary world history, i.e., on the contingency and uniqueness of the revelations recorded by it.”⁸⁸⁵ He further proposed that the Spirit’s redemptive work constitutes revelation as historical in specific contexts. To explore this theme, as Pannenberg mentioned, it is important to expound Barth’s theology of history against the backdrop of the antithesis between Hegel and Kierkegaard.⁸⁸⁶ Before moving on to Barth’s pneumatological vision of history, therefore, I will briefly outline Hegel and Kierkegaard’s philosophy of history.

⁸⁸³ Barth, *How I Changed My Mind*, 83.

⁸⁸⁴ For a brief summary of post-Bultmann (and post-Barthian) theological hermeneutics, see the following essay by Robinson, whom Barth also harshly critiqued. James M. Robinson, “Hermeneutic since Barth,” in *The New Hermeneutic*, ed. John B. Cobb and James M. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

⁸⁸⁵ *CD* I/1, 329.

⁸⁸⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie: gesammelte Aufsätze Band 2* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 121. See also Bradshaw, *Trinity and Ontology*, 331–332.

History for Hegel is a teleological system, in which infinite and finite are related in the Spirit's dialectical movement.⁸⁸⁷ The Spirit, or *Geist*, unfolds and returns to itself in and through history, and human beings can recognize and trace this process *rationally*.⁸⁸⁸ Moreover, history for Hegel is a science, which is metaphysical in its nature. It is a movement, not governed by human agency, but by universal principles directed by the *logic* of the Spirit.⁸⁸⁹ This means that only when one perceives the logic that stands behind history, and not merely its historical contingencies can one truly understand the course of history (albeit in a fragmentary way). One may ask, however, whether thereby freedom is not subsumed under necessity, as contingencies become the universal's transposition of itself into the relative, within Hegel's great historical movement of the Spirit.⁸⁹⁰

Roughly speaking, Hegel incorporated freedom within his system by understanding it as conformity to the plan of history. What he attempted to do was, in fact, to overcome the opposition between freedom and necessity. As Inwood rightly argued, for Hegel, "freedom internalizes, rather than supplants, necessity."⁸⁹¹ Freedom is neither a mere natural quality of humankind, nor an autonomous act of the self, nor an ideal status of human existence; rather, it is the purpose of history, which is none other than the essence of the natural law and the end of humankind. Hegel wrote, "As the

⁸⁸⁷ It is noteworthy here that Hegel's teleology can be read as being eschatological and thus a non-closed closure. According to Westphal, for example, an incomplete character of Hegel's thought can be found in the ever-recurring historical analyses and their adumbration in the structural analyses. See Merold Westphal, *History And Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), xii–xiv.

⁸⁸⁸ Spirit, or *Geist*, for Hegel does not refer to the third person of the Trinity, but to the absolute rational essence of all things. In contrast, Barth mostly used the term *Geist* to refer to the Holy Spirit.

⁸⁸⁹ See Hegel's view of the universal nature of philosophy in the preface of *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, which serves as a forepiece to his mature philosophical system. See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1.

⁸⁹⁰ This point has been well developed by a Danish Kierkegaard scholar Thulstrup in his claim that for Hegel necessity and freedom are synonyms. See Niels Thulstrup, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, trans. George L. Stengren (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 221–222.

⁸⁹¹ Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 112.

essence of Matter is Gravity, so... the essence of Spirit is Freedom.”⁸⁹² Because the purpose of humanity is to realize one’s freedom, and the goal of history is the realization of human freedom, freedom is not given to men or women as a reality, but as the essence which all human beings strive to achieve by participating in the structure of history. Thus, it is not at all contradictory for Hegel to understand freedom in terms of necessity.

How, then, does freedom emerge from this historical structure? According to Hegel, freedom as necessity is universal in its nature, arising from the recognition that “the individual in his particularity has the vision of himself as universal, that each man in his individuality knows himself as universal.”⁸⁹³ This recognition is possible when one moves out of oneself and acknowledges freedom in the other. Thus, freedom is realized not from one’s autonomous subjectivity but from one’s relation to and discovery of oneself in the other. Hegel articulated this *differentiated identity* of the other with oneself as follows:

The will is free by having something universal as what it wills... I am free only inasmuch as I allow the freedom of others and am recognized as free by them. Real freedom presupposes the freedom of many.... Thus is the relation of free men to free men established and thereby the laws of ethical life and justice... Thus, with these specifications, civil freedom, rational law, just political institutions are established.⁸⁹⁴

This quotation shows that the goal of history is realized eventually in the state, and that history is teleologically structured to achieve the perfect state, in which freedom can be truly acknowledged. Hegel’s thought leads us to see the freedom of the individual only in the context of the greater society. Hegel’s link between freedom and necessity,

⁸⁹² Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2007), 17.

⁸⁹³ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. Thomas M. Knox and Arnold V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 172.

⁸⁹⁴ Hegel, *Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 173.

therefore, is not an extinction of freedom but a redefinition of it as recognition of oneself in and through the other. Nevertheless, philosophers and theologians have charged that Hegel's view risks leaving no room for *true* freedom and that he undermines historical contingencies. Among them, especially, Kierkegaard provided an alternative to Hegel by conceiving of history in terms of actuality, possibility and freedom.⁸⁹⁵

As the commentator on Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* suggested, Kierkegaard's vision of history has a twofold goal: to show that God acts not out of necessity but from freedom,⁸⁹⁶ and to attack the speculative reconciliation between Christianity and idealism.⁸⁹⁷ In Kierkegaard's eyes, Hegel understood history as being structured by the logic of the Spirit, so that the inner content of freedom is, in fact, necessity. Accordingly, Hegel's proposal consequently marginalizes the value of the individual and the possibility of ethics.

Unlike Hegel, Kierkegaard began his investigation with the question "Can the necessary come into existence?"⁸⁹⁸ Coming-into-existence involves a change in being, not in essence. This kind of change in existence means a transition from potentiality to actuality that takes place with freedom. Whereas an object that has the possible can be 'actual' in many different ways, the necessary has only one actuality and thus has no

⁸⁹⁵ Pattison provided a comprehensive setting for understanding Kierkegaard's reaction to Hegel within the theological legacy of Hegelians. Carlisle also offered a study on the logic of becoming in Western philosophy and Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel within this wider context. See George Pattison, *The Philosophy of Kierkegaard* (Chesham: Acumen, 2005), 150–156, 164–167; Clare Carlisle, *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Becoming: Movements and Positions* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 23–44.

⁸⁹⁶ Niels Thulstrup, "Commentator's Introduction," in Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments, or, A Fragment of Philosophy: Is an Historical Point of Departure Possible for an Eternal Consciousness; How Can Such a Point of Departure Have Any than a Merely Historical Interest; Is It Possible to Base an Eternal Happiness upon Historical Knowledge?*, trans. David F. Swenson and Howard V. Hong, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 89.

⁸⁹⁷ Thulstrup, "Commentary," in Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 233.

⁸⁹⁸ Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 91.

room for possibility and for freedom. Kierkegaard beautifully explained this contrast as follows:

Coming into existence is a change, but the necessary cannot be changed, since it always relates itself to itself and relates itself to itself in the same way. All coming into existence is a *suffering*, and the necessary cannot suffer; it cannot undergo the suffering of the actual, which is that the possible (not only the excluded possibility but also the accepted possibility) reveals itself as nothing in the moment it becomes actual.⁸⁹⁹

Coming-into-existence is a possibility which occurs in freedom, and “everything that has come to existence is *eo ipso* historical.”⁹⁰⁰ For Kierkegaard, the primary predicate of ‘historical’ implies a way of existing, not out of essence, but in terms of possibility and actuality. History, therefore, does not have a point, or a destiny, as in Hegel’s teleological view. In contrast, the necessary is logical, timeless and not historical, thus belongs to a separate category.⁹⁰¹

Kierkegaard, then, turned his attention to the historical meaning of the ‘past’ in relation to necessity and to nature. On the one hand, the past is the result of the possible and does not admit of further change. The immutability of the past, nevertheless, differs from that of the necessary. The fundamental dissimilarity lies in the fact that the past is historical, but the necessary is timeless.⁹⁰² On the other hand, as with the past, nature has also come into existence in terms of a possibility. However, the natural phenomenon belongs to the spatial order, but the past as historical phenomenon to the temporal.⁹⁰³ At this point, Kierkegaard’s investigation of category of history enabled him to offer a unique dialectical thinking. Unlike the existence of nature, the higher-coming-into-

⁸⁹⁹ Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 91.

⁹⁰⁰ Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 93.

⁹⁰¹ Hegel’s use of the categories of necessity, possibility and contingency is more complex and nuanced than the way in which Kierkegaard presented them. Especially, in his *Science of Logic* and *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Science*, Hegel distinguished different levels of necessity, possibility and contingency. See Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 197–199.

⁹⁰² Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 96.

⁹⁰³ Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 95.

existence of the historical results from freedom, thus having within itself a possibility of subjecting to a dialectic with the temporal. This dialectic is the reason that the historical is not sealed from, but opens towards, the eternal.⁹⁰⁴

The elusiveness of coming-into-existence and its dialectical relation to the temporal bring the word *Tro* (faith or belief) to the forefront for Kierkegaard, for apprehending the historical in general, and the special historicity of the incarnation in particular. Because no one has direct relation to a past event, cognition or sensation cannot be a legitimate organ for perceiving it. Faith refers to the mind's relation to the historical, which presupposes a temporal distance between the past and the present.⁹⁰⁵ Faith begins with an act of the will exercised in freedom,⁹⁰⁶ overthrowing the indifference of the spectator or suspending the doubt of the sceptic. In the context of faith, therefore, one can speak about the historical with a unique certainty.

To clarify the role of faith, Kierkegaard further distinguished two levels of faith in relation to the historical.⁹⁰⁷ Ordinary past events belongs to the category of the historical, so they can be approached by faith in a normal sense. The unique historical event, the Christ-event, paradoxically falls in the category of the eternal as well as of the historical, so it must be acknowledged by faith in a special sense. In this event, the eternal becomes the historical and the object of faith in the dialectical determination of coming into existence.⁹⁰⁸ Just as this historical event results from the self-contradiction of the eternal, so it is perceivable only as self-contradictory, paradoxical. This theme of faith as the individual's reaction to the inherent paradox of Christianity results in Kierkegaard's profound insights into the manner in which there is no follower of

⁹⁰⁴ Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 94.

⁹⁰⁵ Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 101, 105-106, 108.

⁹⁰⁶ Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 104.

⁹⁰⁷ Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 108.

⁹⁰⁸ Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 109.

Christianity at second hand and that the condition of faith does not arise from the historical but is given by God.⁹⁰⁹

Barth's pneumatology, I suggest, is a place where his response to the dilemma presented by Hegel and Kierkegaard can be properly studied. His triadic structure of form-freedom-historicity, or veiling-unveiling-impartment, shows that revelation is primarily historical. The organic relation between God and history is established by God's unveiling, but revelation is still ineffable because of God's veiling. By concretizing God's relation to history and by bringing newness to each person, the Spirit includes and holds *this* antithesis in daily life.⁹¹⁰ In contrast to Hegel, thus, Barth did not seek a higher synthesis by transcending the antithesis.⁹¹¹ Rather, he suggested a rather *humble* theology of history in which human beings live in the Spirit with the dialectical tension: they remain God's creature, but always meet God, listening and answering to revelation, in every course of history. One can acknowledge historical contingencies in the form of possibility in one's life by being drawn by the Spirit into God's act of unveiling and veiling.⁹¹² Human beings cannot achieve or manipulate this dialectic for themselves, but they can still acknowledge its actuality owing to the Spirit's impartation. Despite their inability to fully grasp revelation, they can still follow and respond to God in their specific living contexts.⁹¹³

In effect, this dialectic binds together one's acknowledgement of revelation *hic et nunc* with one's ethical decision and act in the *Sitz im Leben*. In other words, the Spirit's impartation of revelation not only constitutes revelation as historical; it also

⁹⁰⁹ Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 124-138.

⁹¹⁰ CD I/1, 330.

⁹¹¹ About the difference between Hegel and Barth's dialectics, see Welker, "Barth und Hegel," 307-328; Gorringer, *Karl Barth*, 109-111; Oh, *Karl Barth's Trinitarian Theology*, 32-38; Torrance, *Karl Barth*, 83-84.

⁹¹² CD I/1, 330.

⁹¹³ CD I/1, 330.

structures the historical nature of humanity as dynamic and open for creatures who are constantly in movement horizontally in response to the vertical coming of God.⁹¹⁴ In this sense, those who are led by the Spirit and have thus encountered revelation in their life are called by Barth as “real men (*wirklicher Menschen*).”⁹¹⁵ This pneumatological theme is insightfully connected to divine calling within a wider context of election. The biblical concept of vocation demonstrates both divine calling in a specific historical situation and human resistance to it. Prophets and apostles could neither produce revelation by themselves, nor perceive contingencies as revelatory unless God came to them. It means, for Barth, THAT “[c]alling is a non-derivative fact, or derivative only from election.”⁹¹⁶ For those who are elected and called, revelation crosses into history and becomes an event. At this point, Barth observed an analogous triadic structure between Good Friday-Easter-Pentecost and freedom-form-historicity as follows:

As by unveiling we ultimately say no other than Easter, and as by veiling... we say no other than Good Friday, so now..., we say no other than Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. The *πνεύμα* is the miracle of the presence of real men at God’s revelation. ... The event of Good Friday and Easter can and does concern [real men], come home to them, call them. Not just Jesus Christ is there, but Jesus Christ is the Church of Jesus Christ, in faith in Jesus Christ.⁹¹⁷

God’s being historically revealed in the Spirit connects God and humanity, making the encounter effective and concrete in history. This theme is succinctly expressed in the event of the outpouring of the Spirit. By creating “our freedom to be the children of

⁹¹⁴ *CD I/1*, 329.

⁹¹⁵ *CD I/1*, 331. One may find Barth’s anthropology in *CD I* is rather more pneumatologically oriented than elsewhere. In his doctrine of creation in *CD III*, Barth based his anthropology upon Christology, arguing that the truth of ‘real man’ (*wirkliche Mensch*) is only revealed by the man Jesus. Nevertheless, this supposedly christo-centric anthropology has deep pneumatological implications in the sense that the Spirit is presented as the basis of spiritual-corporeal being. See *CD III/2*, 38-46.

⁹¹⁶ *CD I/1*, 331.

⁹¹⁷ *CD I/1*, 331.

God,”⁹¹⁸ the Spirit animates us to enter into the dialectic of veiling and unveiling, facilitating our prayerful attentiveness and responsible act.

Two theological implications of Barth’s proposal need to be briefly mentioned before moving on to his mature doctrine of history. First, Barth’s idea of the Spirit’s constitution of revelation as historical led him to ponder a possibility of revelation outside the Bible.⁹¹⁹ Since his radical break with liberalism Barth had attacked religion as the human attempt to grasp the divine.⁹²⁰ In *CD I/2*, most notably, he defined religion as unbelief, which should be judged by revelation.⁹²¹ Barth’s stark distinction between revelation and religion and his provocative rhetoric have often been misread as grounding his supposedly christocentric exclusivism.⁹²² In contrast, his theology of history demonstrates that he did not exclude a possibility that revelation can be ‘somehow’ found in other religions.⁹²³ Nevertheless, Barth gave primacy neither to the abstract notion of religion, nor to speculations about other belief systems, but to God’s self-manifestation.

⁹¹⁸ *CD I/1*, 203.

⁹¹⁹ *CD I/1*, 331.

⁹²⁰ See *Romans II*, 37.

⁹²¹ *CD I/2*, 280. The paragraph 17 in *CD I/2* is entitled, “The Revelation of God as the Abolition of Religion.” However, to render the German term *Aufhebung* by the English word ‘abolition’ is arguably misleading. This translation has distorted Barth’s own intention. Accordingly, he has been improperly regarded as an exclusivist theologian. Green’s new translation of the paragraph 17 utilizes the term ‘sublimation’ which avoids negative connotations of ‘abolition’ and embraces the dialectical implications of the original German word. See Karl Barth, *On Religion: The Revelation of God as the Sublimation of Religion*, trans. Garrett Green (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006).

⁹²² See charges against Barth as an exclusivist in Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name?: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1985), 80–87; Ken Gnanakan, *Proclaiming Christ in a Pluralistic Context* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 2002), 25–28.

⁹²³ *CD I/1*, 332. Recent scholarship tends to investigate Barth’s view of religion and of the religions within an inclusivist or pluralist context. See Chung, *Karl Barth*, 449–483; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Karl Barth and the Theology of Religions,” in *Karl Barth and Evangelical Theology: Convergences and Divergences*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press; Grand Rapids, MI, 2006), 236–257; J. A. DiNoia, O.P., “Religion and the Religions,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John B. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 243–257; Francis X. Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God: How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 131–138; Tom Greggs, “Bringing Barth’s Critique of Religion to the Inter-faith Table,” *Journal of Religion* 88, no. 1 (2008): 75–94.

Second, as shown above, Barth explicitly said that his dialectic is different from Hegel's. He was indeed very critical towards a Hegelian developmental view of revelation within history and, especially, within the church. His disagreement with both the Catholic Tübingen School and the Tübingen School of F. C. Baur, for example, came from his suspicion of their modified Hegelian framework. The Catholic Tübingen School, represented by J. S. Drey and J. Adam Möhler, understood the Church as a living organism, in which God's revelation and the historical development of the church are nearly identified.⁹²⁴ Moreover, Baur's view of history as the eternally clear mirror in which the Spirit contemplates itself provoked Barth's stark retort that the history of the church cannot be God's own self-contemplation.⁹²⁵ In Barth's eyes, these Hegelian legacies in theology risk reducing the freedom of God to the necessity of history.

In contrast, Barth's dialectics seems to be similar to that of Kierkegaard in the sense that the antithesis is never resolved by a higher synthesis but constantly presupposes and points to God's grace.⁹²⁶ Moreover, and most importantly, their dialectics play a vital role in subjectively appropriating the eternal within one's unique historical situation. Nevertheless, like Hegel, Kierkegaard still employed Aristotelian categories to conceive of the historical and of the value of temporal reality,⁹²⁷ whereas Barth intentionally evaded them. In addition, Barth eventually disagreed with Kierkegaard's dialectics because of its insufficiently theo-centric nature. The mature

⁹²⁴ See Barth's criticism in *CD* I/2, 280. It should be also noted that these Catholic Tübingen theologians were also deeply influenced by Schleiermacher's romantic view of religion. See James T. Burtchaell, "Drey, Möler, and the Catholic School of Tübingen," in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, ed. Ninian Smart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Wayne L. Fehr, *The Birth of the Catholic Tübingen School: The Dogmatics of Johann Sebastian Drey* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981).

⁹²⁵ *PT*, 493.

⁹²⁶ For further study on the similarity between Kierkegaard and Barth's dialectic, see Oh, *Karl Barth's Trinitarian Theology*, 32–38; Torrance, *Karl Barth*, 83–84. In my view, however, these studies laid too much emphasis upon similarities rather than dissimilarities.

⁹²⁷ About Hegel and Kierkegaard's study of Aristotle, see Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1–7; Carlisle, *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Becoming*, 11–12.

Barth, for example, charged that, despite Kierkegaard's attack on the 19th-century's naïve view of history, he offered in the end an anthropocentric, individualistic, existential and static dialectical system.⁹²⁸ Although Barth's comment may be unbalanced,⁹²⁹ his account of self-differentiation cannot easily fit into a Kierkegaardian framework. One may discover Barth's seminal criticism of Kierkegaard's dialectic in *CD I/1*, which overtly rejects two kinds of dialectics – Hegel's idealistic dialectic and “the immanent dialectic of this or that sphere of human life.”⁹³⁰ It is not clear whether the latter refers to Kierkegaard's, but the context certainly foreshadows Barth's later critique of this Danish philosopher. What Barth attempted to offer, in comparison with Kierkegaard, is a less anthropocentric and more theological dialectics of history in order to do justice to the freedom of God and to human freedom alike.

In short, despite Pannenberg's criticism of Barth's so-called theology of pure revelation, Barth himself claimed that “Without God's being historically revealed in this way, revelation would not be revelation.”⁹³¹ Barth had a strong sense of connecting revelation with history, and situated exploring the revelatory function of historical contingencies within the context of the Spirit's redemptive work. As Rowan Williams has rightly argued, therefore, Barth's link between historicity and pneumatology results

⁹²⁸ Karl Barth, “A Thank-You and a Bow: Kierkegaard's Reveille,” in *Fragments Grave and Gay*, ed. Martin Rumscheidt, trans. Eric Mosbacher (London: Collins, 1971), 99–101. Barth utilized nearly the same negative expressions to disapprove the immanent dialectic in *CD I* and to criticize Kierkegaard in Karl Barth, “Kierkegaard and the Theologians” in *Fragments Grave and Gay*.

⁹²⁹ Recent scholars demonstrated that the manners in which Barth used Kierkegaard's philosophy were significantly different from Kierkegaard's own intentions and approaches. Therefore, some have suspected that Barth did not engage Kierkegaard with academic rigour and meticulousness. See McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 235–240; Oh, *Karl Barth's Trinitarian Theology*, 32–33.

⁹³⁰ *CD I/2*, 330.

⁹³¹ *CD I/1*, 331.

in a deeply suggestive theology of history; by constituting revelation as historical, the Spirit enables individuals to respond to revelation in their specific contexts.⁹³²

In Williams's eyes, nevertheless, Barth's proposal is still too ambiguous in the sense that he paid more attention to the epistemological function of pneumatology in *CD I/1*. In addition, it is too sketchily argued to support "the actual continuing constitution of a human reality."⁹³³ It may also be true that this short section on the triadic form of revelation is not comprehensive enough to reflect on how the historical nature of revelation is connected to Christian's communal life. For example, when Barth examined the historicity of revelation in light of Pentecost, I would argue that he did not pay enough attention to the fact that disciples did not individually meet the historical Jesus, but encountered the Christ of faith who is also the Lord of the Church.⁹³⁴ Moreover, Barth did not say clearly how the Trinity's economic act in history is related to the intra-divine fellowship. These undeveloped motifs will be discussed in the following sections with special focus on God's election of human history.

2. Election and History I: History as the Christocentric Drama of Salvation

The above section reviewed Barth's theology of history against the backdrop of Pannenberg's challenge and of modern philosophical and theological reflections on history. However, to reflect on revelation with reference to history inevitably confronts us with the following dilemma: how can the eternal God connect God-self to temporality? How does this relatedness affect the divine freedom? Barth's doctrine of election, I suggest, is his answer to these questions. God's election implies an

⁹³² Williams, "Word and Spirit," 118.

⁹³³ Williams, "Word and Spirit," 118.

⁹³⁴ *CD I/1*, 331.

identification, not only of the triune God's immanent fellowship with economic mission, but also of the very life of God with contingent history in Jesus Christ.

Postmodern critiques of metanarrative and of the category of history question whether Barth's christological approach to history can make sense of our daily experience of fragmented realities.⁹³⁵ According to some notable postmodern thinkers, modern and Christian theories have mostly utilized metanarratives, teleologically structuring history from the beginning to the end. More problematic is that these grand narratives have often been misused to exercise power over others, to sustain hidden agendas serving particular interests and to justify violent actions in history. In this light, Barth's doctrine of election might be categorized as a Logos-centred grand narrative, within which history has been already set by God in God's engagement with humanity in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, I propose, Barth's theology interestingly shares some elements with the 'anti-metanarrative' discourse. Both are reacting together against, in Lyotard's words, "the crisis of the Enlightenment narrative, in which the hero of knowledge works toward a good ethico-political end —universal peace."⁹³⁶ Like postmodern critics, Barth also undermined the human capacity for manipulating a coherent, ordered and teleological narrative of history. In addition, he agreed with them that a proper category of history should do justice to diverse particularities or absurdities in everyday life rather than suppressing them. In this sense, Barth's doctrine of history is not a metanarrative in a general sense, but a biblically grounded grand narrative whose primary framework is composed by the person and work of Jesus Christ and our trust and hope in him. In this sense, for Barth, a rejection of metanarrative is not

⁹³⁵ About postmodern criticisms towards metanarrative and the teleological view of history, see Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiii-xxv; Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/Theology* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 52-73.

⁹³⁶ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xxiii-xxiv.

enough: what is needed is a robust theology of history; this theology should construe the alpha and the omega of history in the light of the triune God's eternal will and act; it can serve as an interpretive framework for conceiving of God's free and gracious encounter with humanity; it is also supposed to animate Christians to live free, responsible and joyful lives, as prayerful responses to God's coming to them.⁹³⁷

This section will study the way in which Barth's doctrine of election serves as the basis for constructing his mature theology of history. It will particularly show that Barth utilized dramatic motifs to explain God's relation to history and human responses to God. The doctrine of election is arguably one of the most academically rigorous, logically complex, exegetically creative, spiritually invoking and rhetorically nuanced parts in his entire theology. It is impossible for me, therefore, to expound its whole structure and argument. I shall simply make some points in connection with my own constructive intention, placing particular emphases and making some connections more explicitly than Barth may have done. I will first survey Barth's christological correction to the traditional doctrine of election, drawing out the implications of his bold statement that Jesus Christ is both the electing God and elected human being. I will then investigate the way in which his radical revision led him to see history in terms of theo-drama, a notion subsequently popularized by von Balthasar.⁹³⁸ Finally, I will examine

⁹³⁷ These points were well articulated in David Ford, *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 80–82; John B. Webster, "The Grand Narrative of Jesus Christ: Barth's Christology," in *Karl Barth: A Future for Postmodern Theology?*, ed. Christiaan Mostert and Geoff Thompson (Hindmarsh: Australian Theological Forum, 2000); Gerhard Sauter and John Barton, "Introduction," in *Revelation and Story: Narrative Theology and the Centrality of Story* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 4.

⁹³⁸ Along with von Balthasar's *Theo-Drama*, some notable scholars have paid interest in the connection between history and drama. See, for examples, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Ben Quash, *Theology and the Drama of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); N. T. Wright, "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative," *Vox Evangelica* 21 (1991): 7-32.

how the statement that Jesus Christ is the electing God animated Barth to see the intra-divine relation and the work of divine agency in a strikingly new way, in light of the eternal image of the *Lamb slain*. These studies will lead us to the next section's main question concerning how the Spirit establishes in history an organic relationship between divine and human freedom.

2.1. The Electing God and the Elected Human: Preliminary Survey of Key Concepts

Despite contrasting interpretations of Barth, most agree with one voice that Barth's treatment of election, as presented in *CD II/2*, is not only the most outstanding and well-grounded section in the entire *CD*, but also his most suggestive and valuable contribution to Christian theology.⁹³⁹ As with his other doctrines, it also starts from, and is based upon, what *Deus dixit* in the Bible. Nevertheless, it radically revises the traditional teaching in the end.⁹⁴⁰ He made this point clear as follows: "I would have preferred to follow Calvin's doctrine of predestination much more closely.... But I could not and cannot do so. As I let the Bible itself speak to me on these matters.... I was driven irresistibly to reconstruction."⁹⁴¹ In his view, the ways in which the doctrine of election had previously been presented were misconceived.

In Barth's eyes, the Calvinist teaching of double predestination had been significantly affected by modern individualism, thereby incorrectly stressing God's election of and reprobation of individuals in a dualistic manner.⁹⁴² It had also failed to show that this doctrine is not a mixture of joy and terror but a proclamation of God's

⁹³⁹ See following notable examples: McCormack, "Grace and Being," 92; Webster, *Barth*, 93; von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 174; Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, 8; Ford, "Conclusion," 201.

⁹⁴⁰ *CD II/2*, 3.

⁹⁴¹ *CD II/2*, x.

⁹⁴² *CD II/2*, 308.

grace.⁹⁴³ Moreover, and more importantly, its weak link between God's predestination and Christ's person and work reduced Christology to an instrument of God's salvation.⁹⁴⁴

Barth offered a corrective and constructive proposal by conceiving of election as integral to, and even constitutive of, the doctrine of God. God is the divine Subject who can be truly revealed in God's self-determination to be the electing God, as attested by the Bible and proclaimed in the church.⁹⁴⁵ In this decision, to put the matter in other words, God stands in a relationship *ad extra* to the other, and this distinctive attitude is in the very nature of God as the One who loves in freedom.⁹⁴⁶ This relationality is not something added to God in the act towards the world, but belongs to the reality of God before the world exists.⁹⁴⁷ It is impossible to speculate on any divine reality somehow prior to or in abstraction from God's self-determination in Jesus Christ to create, enter into, sustain and glorify a communion with the other.⁹⁴⁸ Barth claimed that the goal of this election is "the wonderful exaltation and endowment of man to existence in covenant with Himself."⁹⁴⁹ The doctrine of election is thus a doctrine both about God and about creation.

What is truly innovative in Barth's doctrine, as Webster succinctly articulated, is that "the theme of election [for Barth] is at one and the same time singular and two-fold."⁹⁵⁰ Singular, because it focuses on the reality of Jesus Christ; two-fold, because

⁹⁴³ CD II/2, 13.

⁹⁴⁴ CD II/2, 60-76.

⁹⁴⁵ CD II/2, 5, 77.

⁹⁴⁶ CD II/2, 5.

⁹⁴⁷ In this regard, Jüngel claimed that God's determination is an ontological category in Barth's theology. See Jüngel, *God's Being Is in Becoming*, 81.

⁹⁴⁸ As Hartwell rightly points out, Barth preferred to use the term 'reality' in his doctrine of God because of its comprehensive reference both to being and act. See Hartwell, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 102.

⁹⁴⁹ CD II/2, 168.

⁹⁵⁰ Webster, *Barth*, 90.

Jesus Christ as the God-man is both the electing God and the elected man.⁹⁵¹ This christological decision has at least two corollary consequences. First, in contrast to the Calvinist teaching of double predestination of individuals, Barth radically suggested that it is Jesus Christ who is the object both of election and of reprobation.⁹⁵² More strikingly, this proposal has a two-fold implication that, in this God-man, God chooses grace and mercy for the human race and suffering and death for Jesus. Some critics say that Barth's proposal inevitably results in the doctrine of universal salvation (*apokatastasis*).⁹⁵³ However, Barth's strong emphasis upon God's freedom prevented him from endorsing this doctrine, which risks making God's elective grace as an abstract metaphysical principle for expounding the salvation for all. He nevertheless emphasized that we should still hope, believe and pray in light of God's all-embracing grace that all beings might be saved.⁹⁵⁴ As McDonald succinctly articulated, Barth's main concern here is not "the issue of the extent of salvation," but "[the] question of how one is found to be in Christ."⁹⁵⁵ Barth did indeed shift the heart of this doctrine from the problem concerning who is determined to be saved to the great mercy and forgiveness of God.⁹⁵⁶ Other critics, nevertheless, still dismiss Barth's qualification as

⁹⁵¹ CD II/2, 7.

⁹⁵² About the development of Barth's christocentric doctrine of election, see Matthias Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election: A Systematic-Theological Comparison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 159-176; McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 455-463; McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern*, 215-216.

⁹⁵³ See, for examples, Gerrit C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. Harry R. Boer (London: Paternoster Press, 1956), 111-116; Sung Wook Chung, "A Bold Innovator: Barth on God and Election," in *Karl Barth and Evangelical Theology: Convergences and Divergences*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press; Grand Rapids, MI, 2006).

⁹⁵⁴ CD II/2, 418-419.

⁹⁵⁵ Suzanne McDonald, "Evangelical Questioning of Election in Barth: A Pneumatological Perspective from the Reformed Heritage," in *Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack and Clifford B. Anderson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), 254.

⁹⁵⁶ Moltmann called Barth's version of predestination 'open universalism.' See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1996), 248-249. Von Balthasar also offered an extensive study on this theme in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Saved"?: With A Short Discourse on Hell*, trans. David Kipp and Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988).

merely rhetorical, and thus claim that he could not successfully clarify his position.⁹⁵⁷ In contrast, I suggest, this controversial theme should be carefully examined with specific attention to his view of the Spirit's elective calling of the individuals, which I will discuss in the next section.⁹⁵⁸

Second, although Barth's view of Jesus as the object of election strongly challenges the traditional teaching, what is truly innovative is, as McCormack pointed out, his assertion that Jesus is the subject of election, or the electing God.⁹⁵⁹ It means that the Son of God pre-exists as the incarnate Word and, therefore, that the history of Jesus is not a mere role play of the eternal Son in time, but occupies a certain crucial role in the very life of the Trinity itself.⁹⁶⁰ According to Barth, the eternal election of God is grounded in, and particularized by the specific contingent history of Jesus Christ. In this regard, Barth dismissed the Calvinist teaching of a *decretum absolutum*, which seeks God's primal will prior to election or behind Jesus Christ. Barth's reading of John 1:1 shows how the name Jesus Christ replaces the idea of a *decretum absolutum*:

In Jn1:1 the reference is very clear: *ὁ λόγος* is unmistakably substituted for Jesus.... [Jesus] was not something other outside and alongside God. He was God Himself within the revelation.... The force of the threefold *ἦν* [In the beginning *was* the Word, and the Word *was* with God, and the Word *was* God (This KJV translation is added)] in Jn1:1 is more than axiomatic. It points to an eternal happening and to a temporal: to an eternal in the form of time, and to a temporal with the content of eternity.⁹⁶¹

⁹⁵⁷ See, for example, Walter Kreck, *Die Zukunft des Gekommenen: Grundprobleme der Eschatologie* (München: Kaiser, 1961), 144.

⁹⁵⁸ In his extensive research on universal salvation, Gregggs claimed that, while God's salvific plan in Jesus is open to universal salvation, the Spirit's work points to the 'reverse dynamic' in the sense that the all-inclusive effect of the Son's election is particularized by the Spirit in individuals and communities. See Tom Gregggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation: Restoring Particularity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Crisp also offered a thorough investigation of Barth's universalist tendency and Barth's own denial of it. See Oliver Crisp, "On Barth's Denial of Universalism," *Themelios* 29, no. 1 (2003): 18–29.

⁹⁵⁹ McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern*, 216–219.

⁹⁶⁰ This leads to the mature Barth's severe criticism of *Logos Asarkos*, which improperly deals with the eternal Son *in abstracto* or apart from the humanity of Jesus. See CD IV/1, 52.

⁹⁶¹ CD II/2, 96–97 See also, CD II/2, 103–104.

It follows that the election of the humanity of Jesus determines the whole work of God as Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer.⁹⁶² Moreover, it is God's risk-taking, for God makes room for the autonomy of the creaturely other. Thus, argued Barth, "There is a sure and certain salvation for man, and a sure and certain risk for God."⁹⁶³ Election is the doctrine of God, who embraces this threat for human beings in God's overflowing love in freedom.

In sum, Barth's incorporation of the doctrine of election into his doctrine of God invites us to see the traditional doctrine of predestination as fundamentally personalistic by showing both the humanity of God in Jesus Christ and the personal encounter between *this* God and human beings.⁹⁶⁴ For him, the humanity of God does not refer to God's assumption of an abstract humanity. If so, he would be hard to escape from Feuerbach's critique that God is a projection of an ideal and generic humanity. In contrast, for Barth, God's self-determination is particularized by the concrete and enfleshed person, Jesus Christ. This revolutionary claim endows a deeply suggestive meaning to history by interlocking the temporal life of Jesus with God's eternal being. Barth's discussion does indeed show that the history of Jesus is not accidental but intrinsic to God's life, and that God's self-determination excludes other possible options of divine economy God might have chosen.⁹⁶⁵ Furthermore, for Barth, even the

⁹⁶² CD II/2, 14.

⁹⁶³ CD II/2, 162.

⁹⁶⁴ Some scholars even argue that Barth's doctrine of the Trinity underwent significant modifications from a single self-communicating subject to a more christological, historical and even 'pluralistic' conception of the triune God due to his doctrine of election. See, for examples, Rowan Williams, "Barth on the Triune God," in *Karl Barth: Studies of His Theological Method*, ed. Stephen Sykes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979); Bruce L. McCormack, "Doctrine of the Trinity after Barth: An Attempt to Reconstruct Barth's Doctrine in the Light of His Later Christology," in *Trinitarian Theology after Barth*, ed. Myk Habets and Phillip Tolliday (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2011); Benjamin Myers, "Election, Trinity, and the History of Jesus: Reading Barth with Rowan Williams," in *Trinitarian Theology after Barth*.

⁹⁶⁵ McCormack, Hector, Myers and others also claimed that God's election of the humanity of Jesus underlies and precedes all other reality. In contrast, other scholars, such as Molnar, van Driel and

suffering and death of Jesus of Nazareth really matters for the triunity of God and, surprisingly, they turn out to be the eternal basis for God's dealing with the threat of evil and human sin. These themes will be explored in the following subsection with special attention to Barth's vision of history as the drama of divine salvation.

2.2. Dramatic Elements in God's Election: History, Creation and the Divine Theatre

In light of Barth's discussion of election, I will further examine his treatment of history as the *stage* for God's communion with the other in time. By asserting that the Word as *incarnate* is from the beginning within the triune fellowship, Barth closed the ontological gap between the eternal Son and the history of Jesus. This inseparability between the two serves as the basis for uniting history with the inner life of the Trinity. This tantalizing idea is deeply connected to Barth's preference of the category of historicity over the logic of metaphysical thinking.⁹⁶⁶ His creativity goes further and deeper to the extent that, instead of traditional metaphysical notions, he utilized dramatic motifs to explain how the life and fate of Jesus constitute the reality which

Hunsinger, say that God's triunity is natural and necessary and, therefore, God's being is complete in itself and prior to God's eternal decision to be the electing God. It follows that the economy of election is one possibility of divine freedom. See Paul D. Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (London: Continuum/ T. & T. Clark, 2002), 62-64; Edwin C. van Driel, "Karl Barth on the Eternal Existence of Jesus Christ," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60, no. 1 (2007): 45-61; George Hunsinger, "Election and Trinity: Twenty-Five Theses on the Theology of Karl Barth," *Modern Theology* 24, no. 2 (2008): 179-198; Kevin Hector, "God's Triunity and Self-Determination: A Conversation with Karl Barth, Bruce McCormack and Paul Molnar," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 3 (2005): 246-261; McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern*, 261-277.

⁹⁶⁶ As von Balthasar insightfully pointed out, the discovery of the category of history is one of distinctive trends in modern theology, but he claimed that a mere category of 'history' is not sufficient enough to properly conceive of a biblical view of revelation. Thus, he proposed the category of drama to grasp God's engagement with history. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, Vol 4: The Action*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 28-31.

embraces all other historical reality.⁹⁶⁷ These innovative insights offer a new teleological view of history without involving Hegel's dialectics.⁹⁶⁸

I should make it clear here that Barth had no intention to use the category of drama as an instrument for theological reflection in von Balthasar's way. From his earlier career, nevertheless, the whole history of God with humanity is to be understood as "a *drama*... in which there are dangers and turning points, surprises and discoveries, repulses and advances, victories and defeats, standings and fallings."⁹⁶⁹ He also underlined in *CD* that his difference from Hegel lies in his definition of the God-human relation in terms of drama.⁹⁷⁰ Moreover, and most notably, in his treatment of eternity, Barth argued that "Time is the form of creation in virtue of which it is definitely fitted to be a *theatre* for the acts of divine freedom."⁹⁷¹ God's freedom requires eternity for the sake of divinity, but God's overflowing love embraces time both *inwards* and *outwards* for the sake of creation. The issue is, then, how the eternal God can possess temporality. The doctrine of election answers to it by interweaving eternity with world history within a broader interpretive framework of God's unfolding of salvific drama in history.⁹⁷²

Barth's christological concentration resulted in the following presupposition that "[t]here is no such thing as a *decretum absolutum*. There is no such thing as a will of God apart from the will of Jesus Christ."⁹⁷³ It means that even "the drama of creation,

⁹⁶⁷ *CD* II/2, 116.

⁹⁶⁸ Bradshaw observed at this point that Barth's view of election has some similarities with Pannenberg's doctrine of history in the sense that God makes the cause of the created order his own cause in the history of Jesus, although their starting points differ. See Bradshaw, *Pannenberg*, 38.

⁹⁶⁹ *GD*, 180 (emphasis added). Barth argued that, while the reader cannot avoid this sort of allegorical interpretation of history, it is also improper to fix the message of the Bible within a cosmic drama of heaven and earth. See *GD*, 259.

⁹⁷⁰ *CD* I/2, 376-377.

⁹⁷¹ *CD* II/1, 465 (emphasis added). See also *DO*, 50.

⁹⁷² See also Hunsinger and Jones' lucid distinction between a primarily positive determination of eternity and the correlative positive relationship in George Hunsinger, "Mysterium Trinitatis: Karl Barth's Conception of Eternity," in *Disruptive Grace*; Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, 99-101.

⁹⁷³ *CD* II/2, 115.

reconciliation and redemption”⁹⁷⁴ is grounded in God’s primal self-decision to be the electing God in Jesus Christ. Barth’s grounding of creation upon the all-inclusive background of God’s election is not only a revolutionary redefinition of the organic relation between grace and nature. It also allows us to see the universe as “a *theatre* for God’s dealing with man and man’s dealings with God.”⁹⁷⁵ God’s act of creation may come before Christ’s incarnation in terms of temporal precedence, but the latter is ontologically and epistemologically prior because “in the beginning, before our time and our space... before there could be a *stage* for the acts of God’s freedom, God anticipated and determined as the goal and meaning of all God’s dealings with the as yet non-existent world.”⁹⁷⁶ Whereas creation forms the *theatre* of God’s free and gracious act in history, God’s elective will frames the main *plot of drama* for this stage.⁹⁷⁷ Here one may see that, although Barth disagreed with Calvin’s doctrine of double predestination, he incorporated his Reformed predecessor’s view of creation as the theatre of God’s glory into his own doctrine of election.⁹⁷⁸

The statement that Jesus Christ is the electing God informs that God really acted in and through this man within contingent history. God stands in an unbreakable relationship to the entire world, but its bond is only derivative, depending upon God’s special relation to Jesus. Thus, Barth ontologically differentiated “the oneness (*Einheit*) of the Son with the man Jesus” from “the communion (*Gemeinschaft*) of God with humanity.”⁹⁷⁹ God has been with humanity in diverse historical events since the creation

⁹⁷⁴ CD I/2, 253.

⁹⁷⁵ CD II/2, 94 (emphasis added).

⁹⁷⁶ CD II/2, 101 (emphasis added).

⁹⁷⁷ In this regard, McDowell claimed that “in 1942 (CD II.2), Barth discovers the tools to forge an eschatological understanding of... history through a dramatic christological perspective. McDowell, *Hope in Barth’s Eschatology*, 127.

⁹⁷⁸ About Calvin’s depiction of creation as a platform for God’s glory or of a theatre manifesting God’s glorious work, see Calvin *Institutions*, I.5.8; I.14.20; II.6.1.

⁹⁷⁹ CD II/2, 104; KD II/2, 111.

of the world, but God's particular relationship to Jesus constitutes the nature of the whole history in terms of God's togetherness with humankind. Barth called God's enclosure of the history of Jesus 'the primal history' (*Urgeschichte*) and explained its connection to general history as follows:

There is a history between God and the world. But this history has no independent signification. It takes place in the interests of the primal history which is played out between God and this one man and His people.... It attains its goal as the primal history attains its goal.... [E]verything which comes from God takes place "in Jesus Christ," i.e., in the establishment of the covenant which, in the union of His Son with Jesus of Nazareth.... The primal history which underlies and is the goal of the whole history of His relationship *ad extra*, with the creation and man in general, is the history of this covenant.⁹⁸⁰

This passage anticipates the basic presupposition of Barth's doctrine of creation: "The history of [the] covenant is... the goal of creation as creation itself is the beginning of this history."⁹⁸¹ Two crucial implications of this statement should be briefly mentioned here.

First, although the drama of salvation is produced solely by God's will and act, it is not a divine monodrama; rather, every historical being has a distinctive role in it by participating through the Spirit in Jesus Christ, who represents the entire creation. This inclusive vision mainly comes from Barth's definition of election as God's self-determination of co-existence inwardly and outwardly with the creaturely other. To make space for this utterly different being means "[God's] love in the form of the deepest condescension,"⁹⁸² accompanied by self-constraint. The goal of this divine humiliation is "to let heaven and earth, and between them man, be the witnesses of His glory."⁹⁸³ All created beings, thus, are invited to take part in "this heavenly-earthly

⁹⁸⁰ *CD* II/2, 8-9.

⁹⁸¹ *CD* III/1, 41.

⁹⁸² *CD* II/2, 10.

⁹⁸³ *CD* II/2, 11.

drama of Christ's priestly and kingly work,"⁹⁸⁴ sharing and attesting the divine glory in their particular historical circumstances.

Second, Moltmann severely charged Barth's view of creation as giving too much priority to the covenantal drama over its stage, thus marginalizing the place for nature in theology.⁹⁸⁵ Instead, Moltmann attempted to offer a robust theology of nature in relation to his doctrine of the panentheistic Cosmic Spirit.⁹⁸⁶ Despite Moltmann's contribution to this topic, in my view, his reading of Barth is misguided due to his failure to grasp the complexity of Barth's pneumatological thinking. Barth stated expressively that the biblical view of the Spirit is cosmological, relating it to his rejection of the *logos asarkos*. The Word *incarnate* pre-exists in the life of the Trinity through the Spirit, and "the intra-divine beginning of all things"⁹⁸⁷ is set in the Spirit by the unity of the will of the Father and the obedience of the Son. In this respect, for Barth, "[The Spirit] makes the existence of the creature as such possible, permitting it to exist, maintaining it in its existence, and forming the point of reference of its existence."⁹⁸⁸ In addition to this theologically rich proposal, Barth presented a new teleological and pneumatological framework for conceiving of history. Creation is not a mere beginning of the universe, but tied to salvation history, in which nature is always surrounded by and oriented towards grace, anticipating "the [Spirit's] consummation and redemption as the conclusion of God's works."⁹⁸⁹ This covenantal history becomes increasingly concrete as it moves from nature to the human race, from humankind to Israel, and from Israel to Christ. It illuminates not only that God desires this most specific person for the sake of

⁹⁸⁴ Karl Barth, *The Heidelberg Catechism for Today*, trans. Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr. (London: Epworth Press, 1964), 137. See also *CD* I/2, 498.

⁹⁸⁵ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 55-56.

⁹⁸⁶ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 98-103.

⁹⁸⁷ *CD* III/1, 56.

⁹⁸⁸ *CD* III/1, 56.

⁹⁸⁹ *CD* III/1, 60.

the general (the entire human race and the universe), but also that temporal existence is always surrounded by God's gracious time.⁹⁹⁰ As von Balthasar puts it, "From this vantage point, without getting involved in Hegel's *Weltgeist*, the question of the Holy Spirit as the soul of the world once again acquires contemporary relevance."⁹⁹¹ I agree with von Balthasar that being a creature outside God is far from being subordinated by the covenant; it is rather to find one's ground of being within a history of God's covenantal encounter with the creaturely other.

In short, Barth offered a tantalizing view of history as the drama of God's act, in which Christ's singular relation to God constitutes the internal basis for world history (and the entire creation). The above discussion showed that Barth's link of covenant with creation also provides a robust doctrine of creation with special reference to the Spirit's redemptive work. It should be noted that, although God and human beings coexist in history and have unique roles, one cannot merely say that they are equal co-players. In other words, to perceive history in terms of drama, it is a key issue that one makes room for human agency *within* the act of divine agency. The next subsection will investigate how God's freedom makes human freedom possible, opening contingent history towards eternity, despite human rejection of the elective grace of God.

2.3. The Action of Divine Agency: The Victory of the Wounded Love over Evil

By conceiving of creation as God's theatre, Barth understood history not only as the unfolding of God's salvific drama, but also as the field in which the tension between God and evil arises and is resolved. Since the doctrine of election in *CD II/2*, Barth's earlier interest in God's communication of the Word to sinful humanity became

⁹⁹⁰ *CD III/1*, 63-65.

⁹⁹¹ Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. 3: The Spirit of Truth*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 418-419.

somewhat diminished; in its place, he showed increasing concern for, as some scholars observed, “a dramatic picture of God engaging the tragic situation of man.”⁹⁹²

Accordingly, the apocalyptic language of struggle, defeat, conquest and victory came to add a theatrical tone to his mature theology. This subsection will explore the way in which God involves God-self in human agony and conquers evil for the sake of sinful humanity in Barth.⁹⁹³ More specifically, I suggest, Barth offered christological and trinitarian modes of explaining this dramatic theme,⁹⁹⁴ which also implies a deep pneumatological horizon.

In Barth’s eyes, the Johannine verse “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16, KJV)” is a key biblical passage for the doctrine of election. There are two important points to notice in it.⁹⁹⁵ On the one hand, the expression ‘so that’ refers primarily to the divine decision to encounter the human Jesus and through him the human race and the world. On the other hand, the phrase ‘may not perish’ indirectly illustrates that there is resistance to this divine love in history, and that the being of this world is characterized by this opposition.⁹⁹⁶ The biblical verse directly demonstrates, however, that the will and the power of God will eventually conquer this rebellion. The two questions may immediately follow: what is the source of this tension between God’s love and creation’s disobedience? How can God overcome this struggle, and how can humanity participate in this victory?

⁹⁹² Williams, “Barth on the Triune God,” 174. See also Myers, “Election, Trinity, and the History of Jesus,” 124-125.

⁹⁹³ CD II/2, 141.

⁹⁹⁴ See also McDowell’s extensive study of Barth’s doctrine of *das Nichtige* and the issue of theodicy from a theo-dramatic perspective in John C. McDowell, “Much Ado about Nothing: Karl Barth’s. Being Unable to Do Nothing about Nothingness,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 4, no. 3 (2002): 325.

⁹⁹⁵ CD II/2, 26-27.

⁹⁹⁶ CD II/2, 27.

Barth maintained that the realm of evil, from which creation's opposition to divine love arises, also belongs to election, albeit in a negative manner. God's self-determination to be the electing God has contrasting implications in the creaturely realm: according to God's positive will, the election of Jesus accompanies the gracious affirmation of creation. In contrast, it also has a negative sphere of damnation in the form of God's non-willing (*Nicht-Wollen*). He wrote, "Satan (and the whole kingdom of evil... which has its basis in him) is the shadow which accompanies the light of the election of Jesus Christ."⁹⁹⁷ Human resistance to God comes from human inclinations to negate the divine affirmation.⁹⁹⁸ The tension between God and evil, divine love and human disobedience, dramatically characterizes history as the field in which God personally engages in this tragic situation of humanity.⁹⁹⁹ One most important feature of our placement within this struggle is for us more "to see its divinely imposed limit than the horror which is peculiar to it within this limit."¹⁰⁰⁰

At this point, Barth's version of supralapsarianism appears to be vulnerable to the challenge of the classical dilemma of theodicy concerning how the all-powerful, all-loving and all-knowing God created, or at least allowed, evil and suffering. Those who support infralapsarianism have often charged that supralapsarianism includes evil within God's eternal will and thus offers a doctrine of the demonic God.¹⁰⁰¹ However, Barth never overlooked the seriousness of evil, nor undermined the goodness of God, but rejected evil's self-standing ontological ground. Both the traditional supralapsarian and

⁹⁹⁷ CD II/2, 122.

⁹⁹⁸ CD II/2, 27.

⁹⁹⁹ Barth's extensive discussion of evil can be found in his doctrine of creation. Barth, CD III/3, 289-368. See also following research on this topic. Rodin, *Evil and Theodicy in the Theology of Karl Barth*; Sung Min Jeong, *Nothingness in the Theology of Paul Tillich and Karl Barth* (Lanham, Md.: University Press Of America, 2003).

¹⁰⁰⁰ CD II/2, 453.

¹⁰⁰¹ See Barth's analysis of the strengths of infralapsarianism in CD II/2, 137-139.

infralapsarian theories, in his eyes, are misguided by their abstract and static notion of God's choice, and by their focus on selected or rejected individuals.¹⁰⁰² Nonetheless, Barth opted for supralapsarianism, because of its less anthropocentric tendency and more christological concentration, but only carefully so.¹⁰⁰³ In fact, what he attempted to offer was a "purified supralapsarianism."¹⁰⁰⁴ Election is God's self-determination before creation, illustrating the *twofold* will of God, which is fundamentally non-symmetrical. Barth preferred the healthy asymmetry to the unhealthy balance: "The Yes cannot be heard unless the No is also heard. But the No is said for the sake of the Yes and not for its own sake. In substance, therefore, the first and last word is Yes and not No."¹⁰⁰⁵ This joyful message can be heard from God's election of the particular history of Jesus.¹⁰⁰⁶ God's participation in the humanity of Jesus means God's self-determination to make the life, suffering, death and resurrection of this man the paradigmatic framework for dealing with humanity in history. What Barth suggested here is, as Ford succinctly expressed, "a metaphysics of the Gospel story, a thoroughgoing attempt to understand the eternal God through a temporal history."¹⁰⁰⁷

The relationship between Jesus' cross and resurrection is particularly important for Barth in making sense of God's struggle with evil in history. Evil is the negative aspect of God's primal decision, but election is the sum of the gospel. How can one resolve this contradiction within one doctrine? From eternity, for Barth, God determines to bring forward this opposition within God's own life, as revealed on Good Friday, and to conquer evil as demonstrated on Easter Day. God's elective action in Christ involves

¹⁰⁰² CD II/2, 133-135.

¹⁰⁰³ CD II/2, 135-136.

¹⁰⁰⁴ CD II/2, 142.

¹⁰⁰⁵ CD II/2, 13.

¹⁰⁰⁶ CD II/2, 121.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ford, "Barth's Interpretation of the Bible," 63.

God's total rejection of humanity's sinfulness; but God's elective grace also informs us that God decides not to punish individual sinners. Instead, God lays the full weight of sin upon the Son in order that "there is no condemnation – literally none – for those that are in Christ Jesus."¹⁰⁰⁸ In Jesus Christ human beings are elected to partake of the divine glory, but God decides that the Son will go towards suffering and death for their sake.¹⁰⁰⁹ Barth maintained, "The exchange which took place on Golgotha, when God chose as His throne the malefactor's cross, when the Son of God bore what the son of man ought to have borne, took place once and for all in fulfilment of God's eternal will, and it can never be reversed."¹⁰¹⁰ In this exchange, the righteousness of God confronts the depth of human sin by bringing rejection and humiliation into God's own life. God offers Jesus Christ to experience hell, facing the Father's judgement, wrath, rejection and death,¹⁰¹¹ whereas men and women are surrounded by love, grace and life even in the abyss of hell.¹⁰¹² This is the way God responds to human sinfulness and "that is how the inner glory of God overflows."¹⁰¹³ In this regard, God's 'risky' decision to expose God-self to the onslaught and grasp of evil constitutes the image of the *Lamb slain* within the triunity, which binds eternity with contingent history in God's self-humiliation. Barth wrote:

God from all eternity ordains this obedient One in order that He might bear the *suffering* which the disobedient have deserved and which for the sake of God's

¹⁰⁰⁸ CD II/2, 167.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Because of this radical claim, Barth was often quoted as a supporter for the doctrine of divine passibility. Barth's doctrine of election enabled him to say that the suffering of Jesus is not in conflict with divine nature; rather it corresponds to divine nature. Therefore, McCormack suggested that what Barth offered is neither divine impassibility, nor divine passibility, but divine constancy. See Bruce L. McCormack, "Divine Impassibility or Simply Divine Constancy?: Implications of Karl Barth's Later Christology for Debates over Impassibility," in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, ed. James Keating and Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2009).

¹⁰¹⁰ CD II/2, 167.

¹⁰¹¹ CD II/2, 164.

¹⁰¹² CD II/2, 27.

¹⁰¹³ CD II/2, 121.

righteousness must necessarily be borne.... And this checking and defeating of Satan must consist in His allowing the righteousness of God to proceed against Himself instead of them. For this reason, He is the *Lamb slain*, and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. For this reason, the crucified Jesus is the “image of the invisible God.”¹⁰¹⁴

The scar of the Lamb does not merely express the human Jesus’ suffering, but the wound of the overflowing divine love, which inwardly and outwardly determines God’s engagement with the disastrous human situation.¹⁰¹⁵ The history of Jesus is both the ways in which God eternally resists evil and in which God’s response to human sin is implemented in history, because “in the creaturely sphere and for man... this victory must take on historical form, thus becoming an event in time.”¹⁰¹⁶ Pre-sacrifice within the eternal life of the Trinity, moreover, reveals that history is not a self-enclosed existential framework; rather, it is the field created by the divine elective will, in which God fights against evil for the sake of humanity.

Considering the importance of the history of Jesus, Barth’s doctrine of election and theology of history appear fundamentally christocentric. Nevertheless, he acknowledged its trinitarian implications in God’s inner life and outer mission, securing some notable pneumatological insights within them. First, election is a trinitarian event in the immanent Trinity, in which the Spirit celebrates *ad intra* the Father-Son relation. Barth wrote:

In the beginning it was the choice of the *Father* Himself to establish this covenant with man by giving up His Son for him, that He Himself might become man in the fulfilment of His grace. In the beginning it was the choice of the *Son* to be obedient to grace, and therefore to offer up Himself and to become man in order that this covenant might be made a reality. In the beginning it was the resolve of the *Holy Spirit* that the

¹⁰¹⁴ CD II/2, 123.

¹⁰¹⁵ This eternal image of the *Lamb slain* was adopted by von Balthasar in his theology of history. For him, the Johannine apocalyptic drama shows that Christ, the Lamb as though it had been slain, is the Lord of history, and the expectation of the last judgement confirms this belief. See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, IV, 195.

¹⁰¹⁶ CD II/2, 141.

unity of God, of Father and Son should not be disturbed or rent by this covenant with man, but that it should be made the more glorious, the deity of God, the divinity of His love and freedom, being confirmed and demonstrated by this offering of the Father and this self-offering of the Son.¹⁰¹⁷

In God's inner life, the Spirit not only holds the Father and the Son together in their differentiation. The Father's will and the Son's obedience coincide in the Spirit, and this unity-in-difference is the source for overflowing love and glory towards others. The Spirit also mediates between divinity and humanity despite their ontological difference. Because of the Spirit, the distinction in the Godhead, and the inclusion of the creaturely other, cannot jeopardize the inner peace of triunity, but rather these glorify and enrich the intra-divine fellowship.

Second, the elective act of the Trinity *ad extra* is well illustrated in Barth's discussion of Jesus Christ as a human agent. As Jones rightly articulated, "the directive being-in-act constitutive of this person is the divine Son. The presence and prevenient direction of God qua Son define Christ's entire being."¹⁰¹⁸ God unites Jesus Christ with the Son in predestination, but this divine initiative does not make the humanity of Jesus a mere enfleshed puppet of the Son.¹⁰¹⁹ God's sovereign and prevenient choice does not eradicate the freedom of the human Jesus. At this point, Barth offered a crucial theological notion which continuously plays a vital role in his doctrine of agency – the unity of double steadfastness. Barth wrote:

On God's side, it is *the steadfastness of grace* even in the judgement to which He condemns the Elect. It is the constancy of love even in the fire of the wrath which consumes Him.... [O]n the side of the Elect, it is *the steadfastness of obedience* to God, and of calling only upon Him, and of confidence in the righteousness of His will. It is in *the unity of this steadfastness* both divine and human that we shall find the peculiar secret of the election of the man Jesus. In this twofold steadfastness there is to be seen both the glorifying of God and also the salvation of men The Word of the

¹⁰¹⁷ CD II/2, 101-102.

¹⁰¹⁸ Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, 85.

¹⁰¹⁹ CD II/2, 77. 178

divine steadfastness is the *resurrection* of Jesus from the dead, His exaltation, His session at the right hand of the Father....And the answer of human steadfastness is the *prayer* which is the assent of Jesus to the will of God as it confronts His own will. This prayer is His intercession with God on behalf of His people. And yet it is also a prayer which He teaches His people and places on the lips of His people.¹⁰²⁰

This quotation shows that the unity-in-difference between the Father and the Son in the Spirit takes a two-fold historical form of steadfastness – God’s awakening of Jesus from the dead and the human Jesus’ prayer to the Father, both of which have deep pneumatological implications.

On the one hand, the resurrection is the *historical* form of the Trinity’s steadfastness of grace, revealing God’s faithfulness to and affirmation of the covenantal relation. The cross is the historical event in which the exchange of the fate of sinners with that of the Son took place, and the resurrection is the event in which God manifested the fulfilment of the covenant and the conquest of death.¹⁰²¹ The importance of the resurrection and the role of the Spirit are not fully elaborated and connected here, but his brief statement undoubtedly anticipates his later discussion of the Spirit. In his doctrine of reconciliation, the Spirit is not only God’s power to raise Jesus from the dead, but also the risen Christ’s ‘awakening’ power in history continued and present in the church and in the Christian life.¹⁰²² Thus, the resurrection historicizes the intra-triune decision and act, making them effective here and now.¹⁰²³

On the other hand, the Son’s eternal obedience to the Father is fully actualized within contingent history in Jesus’ prayer, especially in his Gethsemane prayer: “not my

¹⁰²⁰ CD II/2, 125-126 (emphasis added).

¹⁰²¹ CD II/2, 57, 203.

¹⁰²² CD IV/1, 643, 740.

¹⁰²³ This point was well articulated by Adam Eitel in “The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: Karl Barth and the Historicization of God’s Being,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10, no. 1 (2008): 45.

will, but thine, be done” (KJV, Luke 22:42).¹⁰²⁴ Jesus of Nazareth, according to Barth, exercised his freedom to completely conform to the divine will “in the communion of the Holy Spirit who is none other than the Spirit of this act of obedience.”¹⁰²⁵ God constitutes human agents by electing them in Jesus and by outpouring “the Spirit of obedience itself... [which is] for us the Spirit of adoption.”¹⁰²⁶ Unlike Jesus, however, they risk misusing their freedom by choosing God’s non-willing. Nevertheless, God’s predestined victory has already ontologically excluded this impossible possibility,¹⁰²⁷ and, by being enclosed in the triune life, Jesus’ prayer is identified with the Son’s intercession for us.¹⁰²⁸ Analogous to Christ’s prayerful and obedient existence, Christians are invited to a new life characterized by their invocation of God and correspondence to the divine will.¹⁰²⁹ If the *alpha* of election is God’s self-determination to be with the creaturely other, therefore, the *omega* is the constitution of Christian agents, who live the life of God’s children under the direction of the Spirit.

In short, for Barth, neither is God’s love revealed in election a kind of cheap grace, nor is God’s freedom the utter transcendence over history. They are defined by God’s own risk-taking and battle over evil in Jesus Christ for the sake of sinful humanity. This is the victory of the *Lamb slain*, which both is beyond history and exerts continued influence in the Spirit throughout history. It is the basis for hope within the

¹⁰²⁴ For further study of the importance of Gethsemane in Barth’s view of Jesus as a human agent, see Jones, “Karl Barth on Gethsemane,” 148–171.

¹⁰²⁵ *CD* II/2, 106. This theme is not explicit enough in Barth’s doctrine of election, but his doctrine of creation clearly shows that Jesus’ special relation to the Spirit is the basis for his complete obedience to God. See *CD* III/2, 332–338. This pneumatological motif is intensified by von Balthasar. He claimed not only that Jesus’ prayer to the Father in and through the Spirit is the basis for the harmony between the Father and the Son in Jesus’ earthly life, but also that this prayerful obedience is the medium through which God reveals God’s triune nature. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prayer*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 189, 195.

¹⁰²⁶ *CD* II/2, 106.

¹⁰²⁷ *CD* II/2, 536.

¹⁰²⁸ *CD* II/2, 126.

¹⁰²⁹ *CD* II/2, 126–127.

penultimate, because for Barth “whatever evil is, God is its Lord.”¹⁰³⁰ This dramatic theme certainly involves crucial pneumatological implications, and the work of the Spirit becomes a more crucial and explicit theme when he discussed the election of the community and the individual.

3. Election and History II: The Spirit’s Calling of the Individual through the Community

Barth’s doctrine of election structures history as a dramatic field in which God’s elective action is conceived against the backdrops of the threat of evil and of God’s triumph over it in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. God’s elective grace eventually results in a new life for men and women, liberating them from the bondage of sin, and thus constituting them as free and responsible Christian agents. In this regard, as von Balthasar insightfully commented, it is not the category of beauty and/or of truth, but that of drama which can aptly demonstrate “the encounter, in creation and in history, between infinite divine freedom and finite human freedom.”¹⁰³¹ In some sense, I suggest, Barth’s incorporation of contingent history into the eternal life of God was an attempt to bring hope back into tragic situations and to make room for ethical decisions and acts against the backdrop of a violent totalitarian regime.¹⁰³² Barth’s treatment of history certainly points in these directions in the early 1940s, confronting the Nazi threat and experiencing the death of his mother and son.¹⁰³³

¹⁰³⁰ CD IV/1, 408.

¹⁰³¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Another Ten Years 1975,” in *The Analogy of Beauty: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. John Kenneth Riches (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 224.

¹⁰³² The preface of CD II/2 shows that Barth corrected some parts of this volume in a Federal guard room. See CD II/2, ix. Barth later mentioned that “Everything that was said in the lecture room in Basel had a wartime background.... It is a good thing that the properties of God and predestination and all the rest could be put on paper and printed in the middle of this.” Barth quoted in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 301.

¹⁰³³ CD II/2 began to be written in 1939. It was the year when WWII started as Germany attacked Poland. One year before its publication (1941) his mother and son died.

Despite intensive scholarly interest in Barth's christocentric reinterpretation of election, however, the way in which his pneumatology related election to historical contingencies has been less appreciated. However, his discussion of the election of Jesus is followed by his extensive treatment of its concretization by the Spirit in the community and in the individual. In *CD* II/2, moreover, approximately one fifth of the election chapter is devoted to the former, while more than three fifths to the latter. These facts hint at how it is only in light of the dynamic of Christ and the Spirit that the being and existence of humanity can be properly understood as covenantally structured and affected by God's elective grace. This section will investigate this crucial, but often overlooked, pneumatological motif. I will first examine Barth's notion of "the act of divine life in the Spirit" (*die Akt göttlichen Geistesleben*),¹⁰³⁴ which intimately connects God's eternal decision with temporal events, and divine freedom with human freedom. I will then turn to how God's primal election is historically mediated by the unity-in-difference of the elected community— Israel and the church. I will finally survey the ways in which human subjectivity is shaped within the community by responding to the calling of God, and in which the vocation of individuals involves social responsibilities as witnesses to God's Kingdom. My study will demonstrate that Barth's doctrine of election renews and enriches our conception of the Spirit's work by relating God with the world, covenant with creation, salvation history with general history, the elected community with the secular world, and theology with ethics.

3.1. From Christology to Pneumatology: Election as an Act of Divine Life in the Spirit

¹⁰³⁴ *CD* II/2, 184; *KD* II/2, 202.

In investigating the pneumatological implications of election, it is crucial to pay attention to Barth's questions as to how and by what right a created being acknowledges this pre-temporal event. His discussion of the knowability of God in *CD II/1* hints at his christocentric answer: "the only begotten Son of God and therefore God Himself, who is knowable to Himself from eternity to eternity, has come in our flesh, has taken our flesh, has become the bearer of our flesh, and does not exist as God's Son from eternity to eternity except in our flesh. Our flesh is therefore present when He knows God as the Son the Father, when God knows Himself."¹⁰³⁵ At this stage of Barth's theology, human knowledge of God is grounded upon Jesus' invocation of God the Father, and this intra-divine acknowledgement takes place in and with the humanity of Jesus.

Barth's christocentric doctrine of election surprisingly postulated a new pneumatological dimension at this point. Barth wrote, "As Jesus Christ calls us and is heard by us He gives us His Holy Spirit in order that His own relationship to His Father may be *repeated* in us. He then knows us, and we know Him, as the Father knows Him and He the Father. Those who live *in this repetition (in dieser Wiederholung)* live in the Holy Spirit."¹⁰³⁶ This quotation shows that the Spirit continuously makes the Father-Jesus relation our own relation to God. This relation is the reality ontologically constituted by God's eternal incorporation of Jesus' humanity into the very life of the Trinity. The gift of the Spirit actualizes and historicizes this reality in our living context, nourishing and celebrating the solidarity between Jesus and us. As a result, our everyday life bears the mark of God's elective grace, and we hasten to fully enter the

¹⁰³⁵ *CD II/1*, 151.

¹⁰³⁶ *CD II/2*, 780 (emphasis added).

loving relation with the Father. Thus, God's covenantal bond with the individual should be understood in the light of what Barth called 'an act of divine life in the Spirit.'¹⁰³⁷

As an act of divine life in the Spirit, God's eternal election unfolds throughout history, moving not only towards the human Jesus, but also towards the human race and the whole world. It is noteworthy that the idea of Jesus' representation of the entire creation in Barth's doctrine of election results in his equally tantalizing theme of the pre-existence of the creature in the doctrine of creation.¹⁰³⁸ Every being and event in the world is grounded upon God's primal decision to be their God, thereby somehow pointing to, albeit not proving, the divine being in their living circumstances. Although this logic may appear to support the doctrine of *analogia entis*, it is proper to see it as the Spirit's work of historicizing election.¹⁰³⁹ For Barth, this elective act of God outside God-self comes from the inner divine being, thanks to the unity established, sustained and glorified by the Spirit: "In Himself God is rest, but this fact does not exclude but includes the fact that His being is decision... His being and activity *ad extra* is merely an overflowing of His inward activity and being, of the inward vitality which He has in Himself."¹⁰⁴⁰ This shows that the structure of being set by God's election is not simply static or deterministic, but includes the possibility of alternations and developments as mirroring God's being in act. Nevertheless, it cannot be identified with a mere dynamic evolutionary worldview, because God does not elect God-self to be the abstract notion of cosmic causality; rather, God decides to be faithful to God's own elective will, as

¹⁰³⁷ This crucial theme has not been drawn enough scholarly attention. One of notable exceptions is Shin's doctoral thesis on Barth's pneumatology, in which he surveyed how the act of divine life in the Spirit links God's eternal election with God's act in history. See Joon Ho Shin, "Die Lehre vom Heiligen Geist in Karl Barths Kirchlicher Dogmatik: A Dissertation" (Heidelberg: University of Heidelberg, 1997).

¹⁰³⁸ See *CD* II/2, 7-9; *CD* III/1, 56.

¹⁰³⁹ In a similar manner, Jüngel claimed that Barth's mature doctrine of *analogia relationis* is already implicit in his doctrine of election. See Eberhard Jüngel, *Barth-Studien* (Zürich: Benziger, 1982), 223.

¹⁰⁴⁰ *CD* II/2, 175.

shown God's entering into fellowship with creation.¹⁰⁴¹ For Barth, this is election's spiritual nature (*Geistlichkeit*) that transcends a logical separation of the unchangeable from the changeable. It is both dynamic and consistent, taking place in the form of history (*Geschichte*), encounter (*Begegnung*) and decision (*Entscheidung*). For God's *ad extra* act in election is rooted in God's inner being, the divine *decision* of self-humiliation to *encounter* the creaturely other in *history* does not contradict God's own nature.¹⁰⁴² In this light, Barth criticized the traditional Protestant concept of the *decretum praedestinationis* whose inflexible framework cannot do justice to the living and contemporaneous act of God.¹⁰⁴³ It follows that, for Barth, election has:

the character not only of an unparalleled 'perfect' but also of an unparalleled 'present' and 'future'.... God's predestination is a complete work of God, but for this very reason it is not an exhausted work.... On the contrary, it is a work which still takes place in all its fullness to-day. Before time and above time and at every moment of time God is the predestinating God, positing this beginning of all things with Himself, willing and ordaining, electing and deciding, pledging and committing (us and first of all Himself) establishing the letter of the law which rules over all creaturely life.¹⁰⁴⁴

Knowledge of election comes from this *spiritual* movement from the electing God to the elected human, and again from the latter to the former. In this reciprocal relation, men and women confront God's gracious command, constitute their new identity, and conduct an obedient life in their analogous form of *encounter*, *decision* and *history*.¹⁰⁴⁵

In this regard, for Barth, the structure of election is geared towards the 'autonomy' of humankind in the truest sense.¹⁰⁴⁶ The exchange between God and humanity in Jesus destines human beings to participate in the overflowing glory of God

¹⁰⁴¹ CD II/2, 184.

¹⁰⁴² CD II/2, 187.

¹⁰⁴³ CD II/2, 181.

¹⁰⁴⁴ CD II/2, 183.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Jones claimed that Barth's use of history, encounter and decision has both the ontological and existentialist dimension, and they characterize Jesus' *covenantal* humanity. See Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, 102-116.

¹⁰⁴⁶ CD II/2, 177.

and, moreover, restores their royal dignity as the inheritors of God's Kingdom.¹⁰⁴⁷ For this, Barth showed that election is closely linked to human freedom in a negative and positive sense. On the one hand, negatively, election is God's determination for human beings to freedom both from the bondage of sin and from their wrong conception of God.¹⁰⁴⁸ This liberation is grounded upon God's election of humankind in Jesus, which reveals in the Spirit the gracious Father who predestines men and women to be God's children. Consequently, Barth redefined the Creator-creation relation in a strikingly new way: "In and with His lordship... God wills and decrees and posits in the beginning both His own fatherhood and also the sonship of the creature. This is more than mere kindness and condescension. It is self-giving."¹⁰⁴⁹ Apart from election, one's acknowledgement of God is hard-pressed to go beyond an abstract notion of monotheism, or a static conception of the Trinity.¹⁰⁵⁰

On the other hand, positively, election animates humanity to live a free, responsible and joyful life. This is a new existence, characterized by prayer and obedience to the Father, in accordance with the earthly existence of Jesus, under the direction of the Spirit. Especially, Barth paid attention to the intersection between pneumatology and election in Rom 8.¹⁰⁵¹ According to Paul, God predestined those who God foreknew to be conformed to the image of Son. Of particular importance is the Spirit's prayer in and for human pray-ers for their new creation as God's adopted children. Here pneumatic prayer is offered as a spiritual field in which the human

¹⁰⁴⁷ CD II/2, 173.

¹⁰⁴⁸ This twofold aspect of liberation, which is a crucial motif in Barth's pneumatology, had developed at least since his *Romans* II. However, his earlier concept was arguably influenced by existentialism in the sense that the notion of 'enslavement' was understood in terms of the existential term 'otherness' See *Romans* II, 297-298.

¹⁰⁴⁹ CD II/2, 121. See also CD II/2, 106.

¹⁰⁵⁰ CD II/2, 79.

¹⁰⁵¹ CD II/2, 60.

subjectivity is genuinely constituted and finite freedom can be truly exercised. This new being is perfectly illustrated in Jesus of Nazareth whose unique divine sonship is marked by his complete obedience, which was in turn possible due to his prayer.¹⁰⁵² The fact that the man Jesus prayed means that “he is not a mere puppet moved this way and that by God. He is not a mere reed used by God as the instrument of His Word.”¹⁰⁵³ It follows that prayer is a central practice, therefore, both on the divine and human level, for harmonizing individuality with the all-inclusive grace of God, and human faith with the divine sovereignty. Consequently, Barth maintained, God’s election is structured towards “the act of prayer (in which confidence in self gives way before confidence in God). This act is the birth of a genuine human self-awareness.”¹⁰⁵⁴ In prayer, a human agent conducts a truly autonomous and individual life, as justified, sanctified and glorified by God’s elective grace.

It is not difficult to see here Barth’s endeavour to retrieve a genuine meaning of autonomy and individuality, both of which were highly valued, but arguably misused, terms in modernity. Barth was well aware of the conflict between Christian and non-Christian visions of freedom since the Enlightenment.¹⁰⁵⁵ Whereas many Christian thinkers sought to define human freedom in relation to divine freedom, secular theorists tended to disrespect this attempt by calling it ‘heteronomy.’ Influenced by modernity, Barth had no intention to eradicate the place for the autonomous self in theology. Disillusioned by liberalism, however, he was severely critical towards “an independent individuality or autonomy [which] could be only devilish in character. It could belong

¹⁰⁵² CD II/2, 105.

¹⁰⁵³ CD II/2, 178.

¹⁰⁵⁴ CD II/2, 180.

¹⁰⁵⁵ See following examples both from Protestant and Catholic circles. Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought: From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 534; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Engagement with God: The Drama of Christian Discipleship*, trans. John Halliburton (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 5.

only to evil.”¹⁰⁵⁶ For him, human beings owe their freedom to God’s freedom, as they develop to the status of true personhood by being associated with Jesus Christ in the Spirit.¹⁰⁵⁷ Insofar as they are drawn into God’s grace and endowed with the gift of freedom, theonomy and autonomy are not antithetical; rather, the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Spirit reinforces human freedom. Thus, as Busch succinctly put it, the Christian doctrine of election can provide a more appropriate and comprehensive context for acknowledging and exercising freedom.¹⁰⁵⁸ Far from becoming a futureless determinism, for Barth, election “cuts off our retreat and drives us forward,”¹⁰⁵⁹ thereby overcoming false necessity and making room for possibility in human existence. This unique view of God’s elective grace constitutes a deeper logic of Barth’s fundamental assumption that “[t]here is no dogmatics which is not also and necessarily ethics,”¹⁰⁶⁰ thereby making his *CD* a monumental moral theology.¹⁰⁶¹

In short, although Barth’s doctrine of election is certainly christocentric, election as an act of divine life in the Spirit is always connected to the contingencies of human existence. This pneumatological motif culminates in the claim that election is historically actualized by its shaping of human agents, who are predestined to be partakers of the divine glory. This structural openness of humanity towards grace, which Barth called “a simple but comprehensive autonomy of the creature,”¹⁰⁶² originates in God’s eternal self-decision to be in fellowship with the other. In contrast to the

¹⁰⁵⁶ *CD* II/2, 178.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Barth provided a succinct summary of the nature and qualities of finite freedom in Karl Barth, “The Gift of Freedom: Foundation of Evangelical Ethics,” in *The Humanity of God*, trans. John Newton Thomas (London: Collins, 1960), 77-78.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Busch, *The Great Passion*, 114–121.

¹⁰⁵⁹ *CD* II/2, 31.

¹⁰⁶⁰ *CD* II/2, 12.

¹⁰⁶¹ Webster contended that Barth’s *CD* is an intrinsically ethical dogmatics. *CD* offers a moral ontology which situates human action in God’s grace, as constituted by it. See Webster, *Barth’s Ethics of Reconciliation*, 1.

¹⁰⁶² *CD* II/2, 177.

Enlightenment's ideal of individuality, this new being is not insulated from the intrusion of the other, but always hastens to expose itself to the ever renewing coming of God. It should be emphasized at this point that Barth did not abstract this divine act in the Spirit as a pure anthropological theory. Despite his vision of God's eternal victory, moreover, he did not simply blind himself to the misuse of human freedom and the threat of evil in daily life. These led him to understand history in terms of God's mercy and judgement reflected by the concrete elected community.

3.2. The Historical Mediation of Election: The Spirit and the Chosen Community

For Barth, God's action in the world is not isolated from God's inner being, although the way in which he explained their relation underwent some modifications and alterations. The doctrine of election is especially significant in this regard, because the statement that Jesus Christ is both the electing God and the elected human interlocks God *pro se* with God *pro nobis*. Moreover, his earlier idea of the Spirit as the historicity of revelation is complemented by another suggestive pneumatological proposal – the community as an indispensable historical medium of God's election. Israel and the church constitute one community under God's single covenant in a twofold form, providing “the natural and historical environment”¹⁰⁶³ for God's elective act throughout history.¹⁰⁶⁴

¹⁰⁶³ CD II/2, 196.

¹⁰⁶⁴ At this point, Barth modified Calvin's vision of the old and new covenant as a single covenant of grace, adapting it to the historical mediation of God's election through the elected community. See Calvin, *Institutions*, II.10.2.

Barth's theology of Israel, as presented in his discussion of election, is a controversial issue among scholars.¹⁰⁶⁵ Some highly prize his attempt to restore the status of Israel and the dignity of the Jews against the tragic backdrop of the Nazi's persecution. Others explicitly express their dissatisfaction with Barth's abstract notion of Israel, which fails to do justice to post-biblical Judaism.¹⁰⁶⁶ In addition, although the doctrine of election offers a more robust view of the community than his earlier theology, it cannot exhaust the depth and breadth of his mature ecclesiology, insightfully presented in his doctrine of reconciliation.¹⁰⁶⁷ It is beyond the purpose and scope of this thesis to tackle these problems, so this subsection will focus on the community's historical mediation of election and the unity-in-difference of Israel and the church in the Spirit.

The election of the community is not a separate or additional divine act apart from the election of Jesus; rather, for Barth, "The election of grace, as the election of Jesus Christ, is simultaneously the eternal election of the one community of God by the existence of which Jesus Christ is to be attested to the whole world and the whole world summoned to faith in Jesus Christ."¹⁰⁶⁸ This statement shows that, in contrast to the Calvinist teaching, Barth was not primarily concerned with elected/rejected individuals but with a human person within the concrete community. At this point, like

¹⁰⁶⁵ Barth did not clearly define the terms, such as Jews, Israel and Judaism, and it inevitably caused his ambiguity. For him, however, the term Synagogue has a definitely negative implication over against the church, like the notion 'religion' against revelation. For example, see *CD II/2*, 204, 216.

¹⁰⁶⁶ See following critical studies of Barth's view of Israel. Bertolt Klappert, *Israel und die Kirche: Erwägungen zur Israellehre Karl Barths* (Münch: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1980); Katherine Sonderegger, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew: Karl Barth's "Doctrine of Israel"* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992); Rogers, "Supplementing Barth on Jews and Gender," 43-81; Eberhard Busch, "Indissoluble Unity: Barth's position on the Jews during the Hitler Era," in *For the Sake of the Word: Karl Barth and the Future of Ecclesial Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger (Grand Rapids, Mich. and Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004); Friedrich W. Marquardt, *Die Entdeckung des Judentums für die christliche Theologie: Israel im Denken Karl Barths* (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1967).

¹⁰⁶⁷ See *CD IV/1*, 643-739; *CD IV/2*, 614-726; *CD IV/3*, 681-901.

¹⁰⁶⁸ *CD II/2*, 195.

Schleiermacher, who notably rejected the Calvinist notion of double-predestination and closely linked election with the historical development of the community,¹⁰⁶⁹ Barth distinguished the inner circle from the outer and paid attention to the dynamic between them. The elected community mediates between the election of Jesus and the election of those who have believed, believe and will believe in him.¹⁰⁷⁰ In this light, the classical expression *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* obtains a new meaning: there is no individual election outside the community, because “the community is the human fellowship which in a particular way provisionally forms the natural and historical environment of the man Jesus Christ.”¹⁰⁷¹ This inner circle is summoned by the Spirit to witness God’s grace for the whole world. At this point, it may be easy to assume that the outer circle is under God’s reprobation. For Barth, however, it also belongs to the all-inclusive grace of God, reflecting the divine election in a different manner: it mirrors the divine mercy by virtue of its turning to faith in God.¹⁰⁷² If so, then, who bears the witness of human disobedience and the divine punishment upon it?

The comparison between Schleiermacher and Barth may help us capture Barth’s distinctive voice on the rejection motif. Although both of them attempted to overcome the classical Reformed teaching of election, their divergences become apparent in their different reinterpretation of God’s rejection. They relativized the classical Calvinist implication of the eternal punishment, conceiving of it as provisional within the actualizing process of election, and hoping for the salvation of all.¹⁰⁷³ This led

¹⁰⁶⁹ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 543; 546-549

¹⁰⁷⁰ *CD II/2*, 196-197.

¹⁰⁷¹ *CD II/2*, 196.

¹⁰⁷² *CD II/2*, 197.

¹⁰⁷³ Pannenberg pointed out that one of Schleiermacher’s important and lasting contributions was his link between human history and God’s eternal election, to which Barth also paid special attention. Pannenberg further claimed that Schleiermacher and Barth revised the Reformed view of double predestination by relativising the doctrine of eternal damnation. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology, Vol 3*, trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 450–453.

Schleiermacher radically to emphasize that there is only one election of God.¹⁰⁷⁴ In contrast, Barth not only took the category of rejection more seriously by grounding it upon the cross of Jesus as *the* event which alters the destiny of the entire human race and affects the entire course of contingent history; he also maintained a basic structure of double predestination by applying it to the difference-in-unity of the elected community. It turns out that for Barth it is not the outer circle but the inner that reflects the depth of human sin and the wrath of God.

Just as Jesus is the object of reprobation and election, so the elected community itself bears the witness to God's judgement and mercy.¹⁰⁷⁵ The twofold determination of Jesus is the basis for the differentiation between Israel and the church, but the fact that he is both the crucified Messiah of Israel and the risen Lord of the church constitutes their solidarity. Barth explained this unity-in-difference as follows: "Israel is the people of the Jews which resists its election; the Church is the gathering of Jews and Gentiles called on the ground of its election.... We cannot... call the Jews the 'rejected' and the Church the 'elected' community. The object of election is neither Israel for itself nor the Church itself, but both together in their unity."¹⁰⁷⁶ Both Israel and the church participate in the covenant, so it is improper to say that Israel is replaced by the church; rather, the former anticipated the latter in the hope of the fulfilment of God's promise.

If one is allowed to simplify Barth's complex and nuanced argument, the relation between Israel and the church can be summarized as follows: Israel is elected for witnessing God's *judgement*, and the church for witnessing God's *mercy*.¹⁰⁷⁷ Israel

¹⁰⁷⁴ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 550.

¹⁰⁷⁵ CD II/2, 195.

¹⁰⁷⁶ CD II/2, 199.

¹⁰⁷⁷ CD II/2, 205-233.

is determined for *hearing* the promise of God, whereas the church for *believing* it.¹⁰⁷⁸

Israel represents the *passing* of the old humanity, and the church the *coming* of the new.¹⁰⁷⁹ All these pairs are followed by Barth's deeply insightful and quite extensive exegesis of Rom 9-11,¹⁰⁸⁰ where Paul talked about the divine judgement and mercy within God's covenant, the work of the law and that of faith and, finally, the inclusion of the remnants of Israel and the elected Gentiles into God's salvation.¹⁰⁸¹ Israel's witness to the shadow of election, accordingly, plays a vital role within the covenantal structure. It makes room in history for the readiness for the church's witness to the light of election, which in turn invites the Jews to turn to their glorified Messiah. In this respect, the solidarity and contrast between Israel and the church are not historical but covenantal, so it is nearly impossible to make a division between the two. Because of their unity, "the secret origin of the church"¹⁰⁸² can be found in Israel, and Israel can see the fulfilment of God's promise in the church.¹⁰⁸³ Therefore, the difference between Israel and the church eventually points to their complete unity, which is the eschatological consummation of the covenant. Barth paid special attention to Paul's doxology as this appeared in the conclusion to Rom 9-11, taking it as the key to the whole argument as follows:

Both are shut up by God in the same prison. But the prison opens and again they are all together. For God has determined the Gentiles for the mercy in which they now participate, and the Jews for future participation in the same mercy. Everywhere we begin with human disobedience and everywhere we end with the divine mercy –

¹⁰⁷⁸ CD II/2, 233-259.

¹⁰⁷⁹ CD II/2, 259-305.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Barth's exegesis of Rom 9-11 is up to 84 pages in CD II/2, occupying nearly three quarters of his treatment of the election of the community.

¹⁰⁸¹ In a similar vein to Barth's exegesis, some biblical scholars argue that Rom 9-11 has strong pneumatological implications, although Paul did not explicitly mention it. See, for example, N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 125–128.

¹⁰⁸² CD II/2, 199.

¹⁰⁸³ CD II/2, 207-209.

everywhere and for all. i.e., for ‘all Israel,’ in the whole sphere of the election of the God whose majesty consists in the fact that He is merciful.¹⁰⁸⁴

This revolutionary redefinition of the Israel-church relation marks a notable departure from the conventional supersessionism and anti-Semitism of Barth’s own time.¹⁰⁸⁵ However, his depiction of Israel and its relation to the church is accompanied by ambiguity as well. His theology of Israel is more or less coloured by his possibly anti-Semitic language, such as “disobedience,” “legalism,” “idolatry,” “judgement,” “punishment,” “wrath,” “the enemy of God,” “empty future” and so on. Moreover, his twofold structure may not be flexible enough to unveil that the divine judgement is always bound to grace. If borrowing Hunsinger’s word, therefore, Israel’s relation to the church remains in Barth as “a real yet still painfully imperfect unity.”¹⁰⁸⁶ As some scholars have noted, this ambiguity may come from Barth’s attempt to frame the history of Israel within the Reformed doctrine of double-predestination (or his christocentric structure of the covenant), and from his intention to fix the concept of Israel to the biblical image of the Jews.¹⁰⁸⁷ Accordingly, in my view, it is hard to deny that he failed to appreciate the vividness of Jewish practice and the richness of Jewish thought. However, it should be kept in mind that, as Barth himself noted, his interest does not lie

¹⁰⁸⁴ CD II/2, 305.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Busch argued that Barth’s view of the unity-in-difference under one covenant is related to his rejection of the conceptual frameworks of the two-kingdom doctrine and of the order of creation, both of which were improperly utilized to justify the Nazi’s oppression of Jews. See Busch, “Indissoluble Unity,” 60.

¹⁰⁸⁶ George Hunsinger, “Introduction,” in *For the Sake of the Word*, 5.

¹⁰⁸⁷ In this regard, Sonderegger has challenged whether Barth’s fundamental assumption of the unity-in-difference under one single divine covenant is a plausible way to understand the Jewish-Christian relation. Instead, she proposed a more flexible structure of the twofold covenant, in which both Jews and Christians wait the coming of the Messiah alike, but in their own faithful way to the divine covenant. Otherwise, any discussion of Israel will be inevitably subsumed under that of the church. See Katherine Sonderegger, “Response to Indissoluble Unity,” in *For the Sake of the Word*.

in rabbinic Judaism but in the biblical history of Israel.¹⁰⁸⁸ Furthermore, his theology of Israel is not written in a time of inter-religious dialogue but in that of the Third Reich. In 1940s, he ‘theologically’ stood up for solidarity with the victimized Jews, arguing that their suffering mirrors the fate of Jesus Christ and that we should see in the persecution of the Jews the sinfulness of the human race, not exclusively that of Jews.¹⁰⁸⁹

Among the various criticisms that have been levelled at Barth’s doctrine of the elected community, of particular significance is Rogers’ link between Barth’s weak pneumatology and his doctrine of Israel. According to him, Barth threw a ‘christo-centric conceptual screen’ onto the history of Israel, hiding actual human beings (Jews) behind his abstracted notion of Israel, and overlooking the Spirit’s concrete work among these people.¹⁰⁹⁰ I have no intention of defending Barth against this charge, but Rogers could not fully see that Barth in fact developed different pneumatological motifs – a pneumatological ground for the church’s solidarity with Israel and the Spirit’s accompaniment of the suffering of the elected people.

First, Barth had to show how history witnesses Israel and the church’s incorporation into God’s covenant without diluting their differences. It is true that a superficial reading of Barth may result in Israel’s seeming to be identified with the rejected rather than in an emphasis on Israel’s solidarity with the church.¹⁰⁹¹ However,

¹⁰⁸⁸ See Barth’s letter to Marquardt, in which Barth highly prized Marquardt’s critical study of his doctrine of Israel, entitled *Die Entdeckung des Judentums für die christliche Theologie*. Karl Barth, “To Dr. Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt: 5 Sep 1967,” in Barth, *Letters 1961-1968*, 262.

¹⁰⁸⁹ It is a controversial issue as to whether Barth had real interest in the Jewish problem and the Confessing Church struggle while engaging with his ‘pure’ dogmatics. Scholarly debate on this topic and Barth’s view on Jews during the Hitler era were succinctly summarized by Busch in “Indissoluble Unity,” 54-59.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Rogers, “Supplementing Barth on Jews and Gender,” 45.

¹⁰⁹¹ Three weeks after the Crystal Night, Barth raised the voice that “Anti-Semitism is a sin against the Holy Spirit.” In his treatment of election, however, he mentioned a sin against the Spirit in a totally different context: biblical Jews’ disobedience to “their Messiah who appeared to and was crucified to them.” Why, then, did Barth accuse anti-Semites and Jews alike as committing the same sin (especially when Jews were persecuted by the Nazis)? Beneath this seemingly politically incorrect statement, Barth

the following text hints at a subtler view: “The decisive factor in [the case of Israel] is *human turning away from* the electing God, and in [the case of the church] *the turning of the electing God towards* man. These are... the two poles between which its history moves (in a *unilateral* direction, from here to there), but in such a way that the bow of the one covenant arches over the whole.”¹⁰⁹² Here Barth aptly offered a much needed distinction between the divine election and human faithfulness to it, which witnesses to the unity-in-difference of Israel and the church on a deeper level. This gap is not filled by human effort, but by the Spirit’s redemptive act. If this distance and the Spirit’s mediation are not properly conceived, one may fail to see in Barth that “the fire of [God’s] love...consumes and yet does not destroy, but rather purifies and saves,”¹⁰⁹³ and misleadingly encounter an anti-Semitic Barth. For Barth, the twofold covenantal structure of Israel and the church is not static but dynamic, one-sidedly moving in history from judgement to mercy, from hearing to faith, from the old humanity to the new.

In this historical process, the Spirit allows the church to concretize its solidarity with Israel by entering into the fellowship with the fathers of Israel – including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and Elijah.¹⁰⁹⁴ The Spirit radically widens and enriches the church’s communion of the saints by including a wider horizon of the history of Israel. In addition, on the ground of the Spirit’s calling, or by the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh, the Jews and the Gentiles together form the church, i.e., “vessels of mercy at the end and goal of the history of Israel..., recipients and

illustrated that these two types of sins converge on a deeper level – human resistance to God’s faithfulness to the covenant. See Busch, *Karl Barth*, 234; *CD II/2*, 304.

¹⁰⁹² *CD II/2*, 200 (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁹³ *CD II/2*, 212. Von Balthasar’s *Theo-Drama* also offers the image of apocalyptic fire as the background against which the God-human relationship is addressed. See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, IV, 63.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *CD II/2*, 203.

instruments of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰⁹⁵ It turns out, therefore, that it is the Spirit who nourishes the unity within the elected community and continuously invites Israel into the fulfilment of the covenant.

Second, there is another suggestive pneumatological motif, which Barth realized but did not fully develop. Barth observed that the suffering of Israel (Rom 11:1) is implicit in Paul’s agony caused by his own people (Rom 9:3).¹⁰⁹⁶ It was not the torment of the majority Jews but that of the existing remnants, who actually represented the whole *Israel*.¹⁰⁹⁷ The remnants recognized Jesus as the Messiah, while most Jews rejected him. The distress of the remnants, thus, was the result of their faith in Jesus God and their participation in his fate. In this sense, they are also the *church* in Israel that truly testifies God’s faithfulness by bearing the mark of rejection and the hope of the fulfilled promise alike.¹⁰⁹⁸ Surprisingly, Barth further contended that the Spirit shared Paul’s anguish, which is in fact Paul’s own testimony and repetition of the crucified Messiah’s life.¹⁰⁹⁹ Here Barth briefly suggested that the Spirit does indeed accompany and sustain the elected people in their suffering and struggle, which are caused by God’s election and their corollary ecclesial life. Despite agitating circumstances, therefore, they still hasten to see the consummation of the covenant in the Spirit. N. T. Wright succinctly captured this Pauline motif as follows: “The Spirit is the one who enables God’s people to endure suffering without illusion but also without despair.”¹¹⁰⁰ In light of the Spirit’s accompaniment of the elected people, the

¹⁰⁹⁵ CD II/2, 228. About the Spirit’s calling of both Israel and the church, see also CD II/2, 228, 230, 249.

¹⁰⁹⁶ CD II/2, 202.

¹⁰⁹⁷ CD II/2, 270.

¹⁰⁹⁸ CD II/2, 271-273.

¹⁰⁹⁹ CD II/2, 202.

¹¹⁰⁰ Wright, *Paul*, 149.

contingencies of daily life acquire a new theological importance, for they somehow reflect God's elective grace by partaking of the elected community's witness.

In sum, Israel represents the shadow of God's election in Jesus Christ, through which Barth attempted to see the suffering of the world and God's dealing with the dark side of human existence. The church reflects the light of election which shines upon creation and brings hope back to the tragic human condition. Accordingly, for Barth, a long-standing historical, social, racial and ideological difference between Israel and the church is blurred by God's election, and it is eventually replaced by the covenantal solidarity-in-distinction. It is hard to deny that his understanding of Israel remains rather obscure and needs to be complemented by a more explicit discussion of Israel's history and of the concrete life of Jews.¹¹⁰¹ Whether these weaknesses come from his christological dialectic, from his excessive interests in the biblical image of the Jews, from his unique interpretation of Rom 9-11, or from his undeveloped pneumatology is an issue which cannot be pinpointed easily and thus requires further investigation. Nevertheless, Barth's connection of election with the community as its historical medium postulated a broader pneumatological context for his theology. In contrast to his earlier theology, in which the outpouring of the Spirit is mainly associated with the life of God's children in the church,¹¹⁰² he brought the history of Israel within the elected community where Jews and Christians await together God's fulfilment of promise in their witness to election for the sake of the entire world.

3.3. Particularization of Election in the Individual: The Spirit and Human Agency

¹¹⁰¹ The mature Barth slightly revised his view of the Israel-church relation, but still maintained his covenantal dual structure. About Barth's renewed view, see Rogers, "Supplementing Barth on Jews and Gender," 45-47.

¹¹⁰² *CD* I/2, 371.

After discussing the election of the community, Barth finally investigated the election of the individual, which is the *starting point* of the classical doctrine of predestination, but the *telos* of his ‘revised’ view.¹¹⁰³ Barth wrote, “Men have an ‘individuality’ in relation to the human group: the family, the nation, the state, society, the total complex of human nature and history... The event that stands under the sign of divine predestination [however] does not take place between God and one of these groups, but between God and human beings.”¹¹⁰⁴ This statement certainly echoes the biblical view of election according to which God’s calling relates the individual with the specific community without dissolving the former into the latter.¹¹⁰⁵ In other words, God’s elective act holds together the individual’s connectedness to and independence from the community in the Spirit.

In Barth’s eyes, however, the traditional doctrine of election, distinctively articulated by Augustine and Aquinas, mostly focuses on the predestination of individuals. This tendency had become more apparent, and even problematic, as its development since the Reformation had been aligned with the emergence of modern individualism since the Renaissance.¹¹⁰⁶ To overcome this individualistic proclivity, a twofold strategy is employed by Barth. One is to begin with the objective and concrete basis of election, Jesus Christ, and then to mediate between Jesus and the individual through the elected community. The other is to examine the term ‘individuality’ in its truest sense, theologically investigating the deeper structure of its formation.

First, the election of the individual is for Barth not an additional divine act, following those of Jesus Christ and of the community, but one act of the electing God

¹¹⁰³ CD II/2, 306.

¹¹⁰⁴ CD II/2, 313.

¹¹⁰⁵ See von Balthasar's analysis of the biblical view of God's election of individuals through the elected community, in von Balthasar, *Engagement with God*, 20.

¹¹⁰⁶ CD II/2, 306-308.

which is geared towards each person in relation to Jesus Christ and to the community.¹¹⁰⁷ God's primal decision in Jesus is historically concretized through the community, whose double witness of the divine punishment and mercy becomes visible and effective in the lives of elected people. Just as the Spirit constitutes Israel and the church as the elected community, so the Spirit consummates election by *calling* individuals into the community.¹¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, what Israel and the church eventually attest is none other than God's election of individuals by God's rejection of their sinfulness and God's restoration of their dignity. It follows that, as McDonald contended, "Humanity is not divided into the elect and the rejected. It is divided into the called and the uncalled,"¹¹⁰⁹ although Barth still held the dynamic and structure of the Reformed doctrine of double predestination of individuals.

Second, it is not a philosophical or scientific anthropology but God's election that discloses the true nature of individuality. As discussed before, Barth was highly critical of modern liberalism's dissociation of the individual from social relation and responsibility. In God's gracious act of election, however, one's isolated individuality is negated by Jesus Christ, in whom the divine forgiveness grounds an ontological basis of true humanity, and this christological determination is actualized and historicized by the Spirit in each person's life. Thus, for Barth, "Predestined man is man (according to the election of Jesus Christ and the community) is he who... is not met by honour and approval, but by *justification by grace* alone, by forgiveness... not with a natural Therefore, but with a *miraculous Nevertheless*.... Predestined man is *made usable* to

¹¹⁰⁷ CD II/2, 309-310.

¹¹⁰⁸ CD II/2, 314.

¹¹⁰⁹ McDonald, "Evangelical Questioning of Election in Barth," 260. However, it should be noted that Barth did not conceptually distinguish the elect and the rejected from the called and the uncalled. The ambiguity of this distinction, as it stands, prohibits readers from clearly grasping his view.

God by the Holy Spirit.”¹¹¹⁰ This quotation outlines what may be called an ontology of justification, because God’s act of justification, which is external and alien to sinners, is made the basis for constituting the relational structure of humanity.¹¹¹¹ This ontology is also eschatological in the sense that this anthropological determination happens not *in* human nature but *to* men and women as promise, from which new possibilities of existence arise.¹¹¹² Accordingly, whereas in *Romans* he almost identified individuality with evil,¹¹¹³ Barth now claimed that “Individuality in this primary sense is not itself sin which can be answered only by the grace of God.”¹¹¹⁴

Why, then, did Barth attempt to recover a true meaning of ‘individuality’ despite his awareness of its destructive effect.¹¹¹⁵ For Barth, God’s elective act has ultimately ethical consequences, constituting an ontological basis for constituting human agency.¹¹¹⁶ It follows that individuality should not be abandoned but radically redefined. According to Barth, the elected people are distinct by “a peculiar signalling (*Auszeichnung*) of God’s relation to them and their relation to God.”¹¹¹⁷ By hearing God’s second-person address that “[i]t is thou who art elect with [Jesus Christ] and

¹¹¹⁰ CD II/2, 315 (emphasis added).

¹¹¹¹ About the ontological dimension of the doctrine of justification, see Eberhard Jüngel, “The World as Possibility and Actuality: The Ontology of the Doctrine of Justification,” in *Theological Essays I*, trans. John Webster (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989); Hans Küng, *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection* (London: Burns & Oates, 1964), 79-85.

¹¹¹² CD II/2, 321.

¹¹¹³ See, for example, Barth’s critique of individualism as evil or sin in *Romans* I, 200; *Romans* II, 114, 199.

¹¹¹⁴ CD II/2, 315.

¹¹¹⁵ Considering the fact that Barth observed the rise of the Nazis while writing his doctrine of election, it is important to see his linking of the vision of the godless individual with the emergence of authoritarianism and collectivism. See CD II/2, 318.

¹¹¹⁶ See Webster, *Barth’s Ethics of Reconciliation*, 99; Nimmo also demonstrated the explicit link between Barth’s doctrine of election and his moral ontology. See Paul Nimmo, “Barth and the Christian as Ethical Agent: An Ontological Study of the Shape of Christian Ethics,” in *Commanding Grace: Studies in Karl Barth’s Ethics*, ed. Daniel L. Migliore (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010).

¹¹¹⁷ KD II/2, 375. The English translator of CD II/2 utilized the term ‘distinction’ for ‘*Auszeichnung*.’ See CD II/2, 340.

through Him,”¹¹¹⁸ each person is distinctively made *usable* by the Spirit in faith. This signalling is not limited to the salvation of individuals, but it is also the ‘official calling’ of the Spirit for “the ongoing of the reconciling work of the living God in the world.”¹¹¹⁹ The constitution of ethical agency, therefore, is neither determined by judgement of what is right or wrong, nor by capacity for conducting moral behaviours, but by calling to service for the Kingdom of God. Barth wrote:

The election of each individual involves, and his calling completes an opening up and enlargement of the (in itself) closed circle of the election of Jesus Christ and His community in relation to the world.... The existence of each elect means a hidden but real crossing of frontiers, to the gain of the kingdom of God as the kingdom of grace. It is the concern of God that there should be these frontier-crossings.... It is His concern what is to be the final extent of the circle.¹¹²⁰

The electing God allows and wants Christians to have a certain kind of creaturely existence, and this is bestowed by the Spirit as a *task* in this world. Thus, Barth wrote, “We are caught up in responsibility.”¹¹²¹ Resisting modern tendencies to probe the self-consciousness of the ethical subject, Barth concerned himself with human agency as the whole person to whom God’s command is addressed and, thus, through whom God’s ongoing salvific work takes place in society.¹¹²²

¹¹¹⁸ CD II/2, 324.

¹¹¹⁹ CD II/2, 417. In this respect, Barth defined theological ethics as the reflection upon the divine call to human action. See Barth, “The Gift of Freedom,” 83–88.

¹¹²⁰ CD II/2, 417.

¹¹²¹ CD II/2, 185.

¹¹²² For Barth, the divine command is defined in terms of permission and freedom. Thus, it is a way of God’s sanctification of the human being. Seen from the perspective of this unique vision of God’s command, obedience as human response is far from uncritical submission to God’s arbitrary will. This point is well illustrated by Christopher Holmes in “‘A Specific Form of Relationship’: On the Dogmatic Implications of Barth’s Account of Election and Commandment for His Theological Ethics,” in *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology*, ed. Michael T. Dempsey (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), 184–185. See also Nigel Biggar, “Barth’s Trinitarian Ethic,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 215–216.

In this respect, an individual's response to the divine calling leads to his or her *active* and *reflexive* responsibility for God and for the secular world alike.¹¹²³ In his careful and nuanced treatment of conscientious objectors, for example, Barth proposed four factors which should be taken into consideration when making an ethical decision – God, the individuality, the state and the church.¹¹²⁴ He conceived of the complexity that lies behind this controversial issue, saying that it is not a straightforward decision of listening *either* to one's conscience *or* to the state's command. The individual's pacifist conviction cannot simply nullify the duty imposed by the state, because "[h]is relation to God will not absolve him from his obligation to the state."¹¹²⁵ The state cannot merely ignore the citizen's private conscience, because "The state is not God, nor can it command as He does."¹¹²⁶ The decision and act of a person can be truly free, ethical and thus prophetic when they rest neither on the abstract principle of radical pacifism, nor on blind national loyalty, but on the concrete command of God. At this point, the church's mediatory role is critical, providing guidance and direction, "which are not legalistic, but evangelical... concerning the understanding and keeping of the command of God which is really at issue."¹¹²⁷ The church acknowledges that war is against God's command, but it may be permitted only in *unavoidable* situations when the survival of one's country, or of an allied nation, is endangered by *unjust* attack. The church (and the individuals in this community), nevertheless, should always work for preserving peace "that makes war superfluous and unnecessary instead of inevitable."¹¹²⁸ It follows that the ethical decision concerning whether to take up weapons can only be properly made,

¹¹²³ CD II/2, 313.

¹¹²⁴ CD III/4, 466-470.

¹¹²⁵ CD III/4, 467.

¹¹²⁶ CD III/4, 467.

¹¹²⁷ CD III/4, 469.

¹¹²⁸ CD III/4, 459.

not by a general idea of human nature or of the state sovereignty,¹¹²⁹ but in light of the dynamic of the individual, God's command, the state and the church.¹¹³⁰ It led Barth to take neither conscription nor conscientious objection as a normative principle, but to admit the validity of both stances insofar as it is the individual's reflexive decision by hearing God through the church's proclamation for the good of the state (It is well-known that Barth in his mid-fifties served as a Swiss soldier in the armed auxiliary during WWII). At this point, a shrewd reader may discover that four crucial factors in Barth's doctrine of election – God, the elected individual, the elected community as the inner circle and the secular world as the outer circle – form a multi-layered matrix for making ethical decision. This not only shows that, as some Barth scholars have already demonstrated, the doctrine of election played a vital role for constituting his moral ontology, but it also hints at how the theological structure of Barth's doctrine of election can serve as a basis for ethical reflection and action.

In short, Barth's treatment of the Spirit's role in election offers a refreshing perspective on the Trinity's act in history, the unity-in-difference between Israel and the church and the individual Christian as ethical agent. What this section sought to demonstrate was that Barth's radical remodelling of the doctrine of election cannot make sense if the Spirit's work is not properly addressed. I also underlined that his pneumatology can appropriately capture the nature of God's freedom in relation to human freedom, thereby offering a theologically rich account of human agency. Without these fundamental assumptions, the Spirit's calling of the individual through

¹¹²⁹ For example, many conscientious objectors quote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, originally created in 1948, whose article 18 declares everyone's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

¹¹³⁰ In a similar manner, Biggar proposed that the individual Christian has three immediate sources (or authorities) through God's command is heard in Barth's ethics – Scripture, church and world. See Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits*, 97–161.

the community risks being conceived as a mere addendum to what Jesus Christ did or an epistemological function for acknowledging one's salvation. However, as McCormack argued, "Our own calling in time... is not the realization of a possibility, but the completion of a reality."¹¹³¹ Indeed, for Barth, the Spirit's calling is the *consummation* of God's eternal decision to enter into fellowship with humanity. By actively engaging with God's ongoing reconciliatory work in the world, Christians are drawn into the process of unfolding and perfecting this divine plan in history. If one fails to acknowledge these pneumatological insights, Barth's doctrine of election risks being conceived as a christological metaphysics, which nullifies the importance of faith and marginalizes eschatological hope, or as an amalgam of Reformed and Arminian soteriology, which eventually opts for the doctrine of universal salvation.¹¹³²

4. Conclusion

As discussed earlier, Pannenberg's criticism of Barth has animated us to re-examine Barth's theology within a changed intellectual situation – especially, in relation to the emergence of the category of history in modern theology and philosophy. Critics have often said that Barth's top-down approach and his corollary neglecting of history result in his failure to deal with contingencies and to secure the place for eschatological hope. Let me conclude by briefly answering these two challenges from a pneumatological perspective.

First, as shown above, Barth's earlier connection of the Spirit with historicity is a place where we look at his theological interpretation of contingencies. Just as his

¹¹³¹ Bruce L. McCormack, "So That He May Be Merciful to All: Karl Barth and the Problem of Universalism," in *Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack and Clifford B. Anderson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), 245.

¹¹³² See Chung's accusation that Barth is partly Arminian in Chung, "A Bold Innovator," 74–75.

christology connects the Trinity with history, so pneumatology links the very life of the Trinity with our everyday life. Barth's doctrine of election adds a more ontological and structural tone to his vision of God's eternity as being not determined by timelessness but rather by God's gracious togetherness with humanity. As a result, a person can conceive of and live with the contingencies of history within the wider context of God-with-humanity. This sheds new light into the twofold nature of human freedom from a theological perspective.¹¹³³ Barth primarily defined human freedom in terms of human freedom for God in the Spirit.¹¹³⁴ Human freedom is also freedom in society where a person needs more or less to restrict his or her own freedom in order to cope with varied happenings and relations. For Barth, this second dimension of human freedom should be conceived and exercised on the basis of the first. This allows us not to reduce created freedom to a possibility of choice, but instead to recognize it as a certain mode of creaturely existence in the Spirit, living in this world of contingencies with humour, joy, gratitude and obedience.¹¹³⁵

Second, in my view, the charge against Barth that he is a backward-looking theologian may come from insufficient reflection upon the relationship between revelation and history that Barth sets up within an eschatological context. Wolter's careful and informative study on apocalyptic literature can guide us in how to approach this complicated topic. According to Wolter, Israel's history had been characterized by the intersection of two different stories - the *remembered story*, which constituted Israel's identity, and the *story being experienced* in the course of history, whose ambiguous and fragmentary nature seriously questioned the certainty of the former.

¹¹³³ This distinction is clearly made and textually supported in Busch, *The Great Passion*, 120–121.

¹¹³⁴ See, for examples, *CD* I/2, 457; *CD* II/1, 209; *CD* II/2, 29–30.

¹¹³⁵ See the link between election and human freedom as the existence of joy in Barth, "The Gift of Freedom," 78–80.

When the conflict between two stories culminated, the third story – *revealed story* in apocalyptic literature – functioned as “a hermeneutical *extra nos*, something which comes outside ourselves.”¹¹³⁶ The eschatological nature of the third story disclosed that God is still the author of their story, despite the crisis of divine promise, and thus served as the basis for hope.

In a similar manner, Barth treated at least three different levels of ‘stories’ – God’s togetherness with humanity in Jesus Christ, our present reality overshadowed by godless power, and the future fulfilment of God’s promise – all of which form the historical (and narrative) dimension of human existence. Moreover, and more importantly, for Barth, the narrative of the Spirit’s consummation colours the tension between the other two stories with an eschatological tone, unveiling the true nature of history and of human life in history. This complex matrix of stories constantly demonstrates that God is the Lord of history, albeit fragmentally. It also creates possibilities of perceiving this world as incomplete and, thus, makes Christians hasten for the Kingdom. In this regard, I propose, Barth may be called a theologian of hope,¹¹³⁷ not in terms of adopting the category of hope as the principle of theology,¹¹³⁸ but in the sense that hope saturates the present reality in the Spirit’s redemptive act in history. This eschatological vision allows Christians to live freely, responsibly and prayerfully in accordance with Jesus Christ, who is the content of hope, despite the constant threat of evil and the ambiguity of their existence.

¹¹³⁶ Michael Wolter, “‘Revelation’ and ‘Story’ in Jewish and Christian Apocalypse,” in *Revelation and Story: Narrative Theology and the Centrality of Story*, ed. Gerhard Sauter and John Barton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 142.

¹¹³⁷ About the extensive treatment of this topic, see McDowell, *Hope in Barth’s Eschatology*, esp. 119.

¹¹³⁸ Barth warned Moltmann’s danger of reducing hope to an eschatological principle. In Moltmann’s theology, for Barth, “the eternally rich God” seems “to be rather a pauper.” See Barth, “To Prof. Jürgen Moltmann: 17 Nov 1964,” in Barth, *Letters 1961-1968*, 174–176.

VI. Conclusion: A Prayerful Seeking for the Fulfilment of God's Promise

In the preceding chapters, I have tried to argue that Barth had a robust pneumatology by proposing two distinctive ways of reading his theology. One is that Barth's doctrine of redemption is the main context where the distinctiveness of the Spirit can be properly examined, although this doctrine remains 'unfinished.' Another is that his pneumatology is not an autonomous doctrine, and thus it ought to be examined by exploring how it enriches and helps to make sense of other doctrines. This is because, for Barth, theology is not primarily a human construction or projection; rather each doctrine uniquely witnesses the triune God's act of election, creation, reconciliation and redemption in their unity. These investigations have illustrated that Barth's theology eventually points to the perfection of God's work *ad extra* – the Spirit's new creation of God's children and the eschatological reframing of their life. This dogmatically tantalizing and ethically suggestive vision of redemption is beautifully described in one of Barth's mature sermons:

[God] is above, in *heaven*.... In the vocabulary of the Bible..., this 'heaven' is nothing but the sign of an even higher reality. There is a realm *above* and *beyond* the world of man, which is lost to our sight, to our understanding.... In biblical language heaven is the dwelling place, the throne of God. It is the mystery encompassing us everywhere. *There* Jesus Christ lives... Therefore: Look up to him... Look up to him and *your face will shine*!... People, very ordinary human beings, with illumined faces! Not angels in heaven, but men and women on earth!¹¹³⁹

For Barth, Christians are those who actualize the heavenly existence in the present reality, albeit fragmentarily, not because they have capacity for transcending their creaturely boundary, but because God's grace unites divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ and draws them into *this* reality through the Spirit. The life of Christians,

¹¹³⁹ Karl Barth, *Deliverance to the Captives*. trans. Marguerite Wieser (London: SCM, 1961), 44–46.

therefore, mirrors the splendour of God by inheriting the Son's glory and witnessing to it in the world. This results in a distinctively theological way of construing human identity, seeing the deeper level of human dignity and responsibility as *derived*, rather than autonomously constructed or exclusively self-reflexive, from the triune God's act of creating, entering into and glorifying fellowship with humanity. This does not mean that Barth's doctrine of the Christian life is fundamentally passive simply because it is initiated by what God has already determined and accomplished; rather, he attempts to go beyond the linguistic and logical impasse between active and passive. What is 'predetermined' in Jesus is human freedom to think and act in the Spirit for the goodness of personal and communal life, within the comprehensive context of God's creation, reconciliation and redemption.

Barth could maintain this vision of what it is to be a Christian by turning upside down what transcendence means in the light of his trinitarianism. Consider, for example, Nussbaum's severe, but remarkably plausible, criticism of transcendence. She diagnosed that there is a deep-rooted desire for transcendence in Western philosophy and religion, whose characteristic tendency is to define goodness in terms of its immunity to changes, vulnerability and conflicts.¹¹⁴⁰ Traditional philosophical and theological explanations therefore threatened to dehumanize, and even destroy, the human self. Against this bleak view, Taylor suggested that Judaeo-Christianity's vision of transcendence affirms and endorses the value of ordinary human life.¹¹⁴¹ Nussbaum responded that Christianity may add crucial insights into this discourse, because it

¹¹⁴⁰ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 368–378; *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1–22, 85–234.

¹¹⁴¹ Charles Taylor, "Critical Notice of *The Fragility of Goodness* by Martha Nussbaum," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 18 (1988): 813.

imagines a transcendental god who is also a vulnerable human.¹¹⁴² In contrast to her early work, moreover, she saw that the aspiration to transcendence is deeply rooted in human nature and thus cannot be simply left aside. Accordingly, she offered a rather more humble version of transcendence – internal transcendence:¹¹⁴³

Particularity and historical context are not visible to the godlike intelligence... and the importance of context and particularity for us as we are is inseparable from the fact that we are bodily finite beings of a particular sort, beings who go through time in a particular way. In short, it is only when one focuses on the human and the differences between the human and the bestial, the human and the divine, that we begin to understand why particularity and history... matter to us as they do.¹¹⁴⁴

Here our daily life, finite history and the particularity of body are presented as the boundaries and context with which our desire is sought, cultivated and educated.

Barth's vision of the Christian life can be understood as an attempt to mediate this contrast.¹¹⁴⁵ Like Nussbaum, Barth called the longing for transcending the human condition "an abstract desire for life, life hungering for life and never satisfied, but always beating angrily against the barrier set up by the fact that its time is allotted."¹¹⁴⁶ In agreement with Taylor, Barth argued that, in light of the incarnation of Christ, one can see that this limitation is embraced and justified by God. The vulnerability and restriction of human life is not God's curse or the result of original sin, but God's gracious affirmation of creaturely existence which should be received with joy and gratitude.¹¹⁴⁷ As the preceding chapters have showed, Barth's reflection on the subject-matter of theology – the triune God's dealings with humanity in creation, reconciliation and redemption – results in this deeply suggestive vision of the Christian life. In

¹¹⁴² Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 370.

¹¹⁴³ Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 378.

¹¹⁴⁴ Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 391.

¹¹⁴⁵ Kerr offered an illuminating interpretation of Barth's anthropology against the backdrop of Nussbaum's challenge to the Western philosophical tradition. See Kerr, *Immortal Longings*, 23.

¹¹⁴⁶ *CD* III/2, 556.

¹¹⁴⁷ *CD* III/4, 567.

addition, Barth's view of the Spirit's redemption underlines one crucial aspect of the aspiration to transcendence: this longing frames our thinking and acting, not by leaving behind hope of seeing 'the Wholly Other' face to face, but by invoking us to wait for and hasten God's coming. Thus, wrote Barth, "in this supreme form of prayer the whole Christian attitude, although it has its place below as a creaturely movement within all creaturely occurrence, does also point upwards, above all the immanence of the creaturely subject, above all the supposed transcendence within this immanence."¹¹⁴⁸ This is Barth's unique version of transcendence which defines the Christian life in terms of both one's affirmation of this worldly existence and one's radical openness to the reality beyond it.

A crucial aspect of Barth's proposal is its increased appeal to the Spirit and to prayer in this respect. From the perspective of the Spirit's redemption, the human condition is ambiguous, fragile and complicated, not merely because it inescapably belongs to finite reality, but primarily because God's future relativizes its significance by revealing its penultimate nature and its eschatological perfection alike. This is the reason why the brokenness and unintelligibility of human existence – which may appear to be contradictory to God's promise – cannot be the source of illusion or despair; rather, for those who prayerfully seek and await God's coming, the fragments of life can be perceived as the concrete, but as yet painful, witnesses to God's glorification of creation. This thesis has surveyed this significant and enduring theme of Barth with special attention to Christians' prayerful participation in the Spirit's sigh, which mediates between the divine and human reality and, thus, brings hope back into the creaturely realm. The last section of Barth's Münster ethics succinctly articulated what I have

¹¹⁴⁸ *CD* III/3, 284.

sought to argue and suggest in my lengthy treatment of the Spirit's redemption and its application to other doctrines. I would like to conclude this study by quoting it:

Hope is the orientation of our thought and will beyond the present to the prefect that is coming. In hope, we are citizens of the future world in the midst of the present.... But when we pray, confessing that we have no control of our own over this future of ours, but that we have to seek it...with God, *hope becomes wisdom*.... Christian hope, then, is *this prayerful seeking with God for our own future and for the goodness of our conduct* therein enclosed. Like faith and love, hope bridges the gap between God and man without removing it, but rather in such a way as to affirm it and thus to give the glory to God.¹¹⁴⁹

¹¹⁴⁹ *Ethics*, 514 (emphasis added).

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