

**Icons of Grace:
Covenant and *Gestalt* in the Theology of
Karl Barth and Paul Tillich**

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I, William F. Stevens, do attest and certify that the research and writing of this dissertation is entirely my own and that none of this work has been submitted for the purpose of attaining any other academic degree.

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Date 23.2.06

This dissertation focuses on the aspects of grace in the theologies of Karl Barth and Paul Tillich. Following the phenomenology of Jean-Luc Marion, the threads of both the iconic and the idolic will be investigated as to their influence in Barth's exposition of the doctrine of the Covenant and Tillich's development of the *Gestalt* of grace. A chronological approach will be taken, showing both the similarities and differences between Barth and Tillich and the theological developments in their lives. The phenomenological analysis of the *given*, will show that Barth and Tillich were nearer in concepts of grace than is often accounted, but it will also be demonstrated that they were not compatible on that which manifests itself as the *iconic*. The covenant, as espoused by Barth, will be seen not to have a sufficient iconic presence in comparison with Tillich's *Gestalt* of grace symbolized by the cross. However, it will also be shown that Marion's *eucharistic* symbology is not completely adequate as a corrective to either Barth or Tillich.

The introductory chapter will state Marion's thought on the "givenness" of the phenomenon of grace, both as concept and icon. Chapter 2 will focus on the theological and philosophical backgrounds of Barth and Tillich. In Chapter 3 and 4, the early careers of Barth and Tillich will be narrated and their early meetings recounted. In Chapter 5, Barth's developing theology will be discussed, especially his shift from dialectical thought to an analogy of faith following his study of Anselm. Tillich's career as a philosopher will be analyzed with special emphasis on his theological essays. Chapter 7 will focus on Barth's early dogmatic thought leading up to his doctrine of election and the covenant. Tillich's mature theology in his systematic writings of the fifties will be the topic of Chapter 8. The final notions of Barth's doctrine of the covenant in the last two volumes of his dogmatics will reveal his theology of the cross, and his understandings of the secular parables of grace. The conclusion will summarize and critique Barth and Tillich's ideas on the divine initiative of grace and Marion's icon of grace in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

This study uses an approach not done before which will illuminate various understandings of Barth and Tillich's theology and seeks to provide a fresh reading of their respective doctrines of grace.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

“*Tillich trat hier auf.*”¹ Paul Tillich came to visit Karl Barth in Göttingen at the end of March in 1922, beginning a lifelong friendship that in spite of intense theological differences would continue more than forty years. What had transpired in their lives to bring them to this meeting? What theological affinities and prior assumptions did they bring to the table; and why at this time did they believe there was agreement only to go their separate ways in the future? In 1964, toward the end of both their theological careers, Barth contributed an “Introductory Report” to Alexander McKelway’s book on Tillich stating that the “biblical sense of ‘covenant’” was an “application . . . unknown in Tillich.”² He would later write these striking words to McKelway’s wife:

I like to hear, that Paul Tillich is satisfied about the manner your husband treated him. This is exactly what I wished: that that necessary attack on Tillich’s abominable theology should be made in the indirect way of an absolutely fair representation of its trend

¹ Karl Barth to Eduard Thurneysen, 2 April 1922, in *Karl Barth-Eduard Thurneysen: Briefwechsel Band 2, 1921-1930* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1974) 64. (Hereafter cited as *BT*).

² Karl Barth, “An Introductory Report” in Alexander J. McKelway, *The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich: A Review and Analysis* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964) 13.

and particularities.³

Barth seemed to be overstating his position concerning Tillich's "abominable theology"; but what of his concern over the possibility of the sense of biblical covenant as a corrective to Tillich's correlational theology? Was Barth correct in assuming that Tillich had not applied the basic concepts of this doctrine in either explicit or implicit fashion? Exactly how important is the doctrine of the biblical Covenant to a proper understanding of the notion of grace? The basic *aporia* between Tillich and Barth may be found in their particular theological traditions, Lutheran and Reformed respectively. Yet, there may be more similarities between their theologies of grace than has been acknowledged in the secondary literature. There is also a striking difference in their expositions of grace and covenant. This dissimilarity is found in their symbolic and iconic interpretations of the cross of Jesus Christ. What I propose to undertake is an investigation into both Barth's doctrine of the covenant and its relation to his *theologia crucis*, in comparison with Tillich's *Gestalt* of grace and his symbolic interpretation of the cross. A phenomenological approach will be taken which will illuminate in new ways both the similarities of their doctrines of grace and the disjunction in their understandings of the import of the symbol of the cross in their respective theologies.

The validity of such an approach has been implied in the important work of

³ Karl Barth, *Letters 1961-1968*, ed. J. Fangmeier & H. Stoevesandt, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981) 123.

Simon Fisher on Barth's writings before World War One. Fisher finds elements of the phenomenology of the "given" (*geben*) and "givenness" (*gegebenheit*) in Barth's early work. "The whole process of giving and receiving could be termed 'revelation', which was responsible for establishing the Christian consciousness and its unique kind of faith-knowledge."⁴ Barth established a form of "revelatory positivism" in Fisher's estimation, an *Offenbarungspositivismus* that came from his theological and phenomenological background in Marburg. Yet as time would tell, Barth would refute his philosophical legacy from Marburg as well as his preoccupation with Schleiermacher. This led to the confrontation with Paul Tillich whose method of "correlation" owed much to the dialectic of Schleiermacher. For Tillich, in *nuce*, the given could manifest itself in both sacred and profane culture, for Barth this manifestation could only occur in the inner life of the elect Christian and be exhibited in the ethics of the believer. Icon and idol, exhibition and disposition, lie in the *diastasis* between the two theologians, close in notions of grace but disparate in regards to cultural and religious manifestation. To elucidate this diastatic problem, the phenomenological work of the theologian Jean-Luc Marion will be utilized as a heuristic approach to their theologies and an understanding of that which is *iconic* in Barth and Tillich's theologies.

Marion describes that notion which he names the *iconic*:

The only concept that can serve as an intelligible medium for the icon is one that lets itself be measured by the *excessiveness of the*

⁴ Simon Fisher, *Revelatory Positivism?: Barth's Earliest Theology And The Marburg School* (Oxford University Press, 1988) 333.

invisible that enters into visibility through infinite depth, hence that itself speaks or promises to speak this infinite depth, where the visible and the invisible become acquainted.⁵

An adequate symbol for the iconic is what Marion seeks to find, a conceptual “intention” that is the product of a hermeneutical process which reflects a notion of *distance*; for, as he explains, a “valid icon”

is the concept or group of concepts that reinforces the distinction of the visible and the invisible as well as their union . . . Every pretension to absolute knowledge therefore becomes the domain of the idol.⁶

As a theological concept, the idea of grace (as a result of a divine initiative) would be such a “valid icon.” Any claim to absoluteness with such a concept might be deemed an idolatry, a false icon (or idol) that would not reflect the gaze of infinity back to the viewer, but only, as Marion avers, consigning the “divine to the measure of a human gaze.”⁷ The idol is limited to that which the human aspiration brings to it;⁸ a self-reflection of the gazer, a finitely bounded phenomenon that cannot allow progress to the *invisible*.⁹ What is being sought is an iconically valid concept that reflects the divine, a phenomena that is “saturated.” Marion contends:

The saturated phenomenon will be described as *invisable* according to quantity, unbearable according to quality, absolute according to relation,

⁵ Jean Luc-Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. T. A. Carlson (The University of Chicago Press, 1991) 23. My italics added for emphasis, (Hereafter abbreviated as *GWB*).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸ For Marion, “Feuerbach’s judgement stands: ‘it is *man* who is the *original model* of his idol.’ *Ibid.*, 16, author’s italics.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 26. My italics.

irregardable according to modality.¹⁰

Following Husserl, Marion continues down the path of phenomenology by asking if there is a possibility that the phenomenon might carry an excess of intuition, a ‘givenness’ that would “give *more, indeed immeasurably more*, than the intention would ever have aimed at or foreseen?”¹¹ This excess, or surplus of meaning is reflected in the Cartesian notion of “amazement” as its “coming forward precedes our apprehension, rather than resulting from it.”¹² Such is the character of grace described by Karl Barth as:

the distinctive mode of God’s being in so far as it seeks and creates fellowship by its own free inclination and favour, unconditioned by any merit or claim in the beloved, but also unhindered by any unworthiness or opposition in the latter. It is in this distinctive characteristic that we recognize the divinity of God’s love.¹³

Exactly what is in the symbolic that gives an adequate representation of this concept of grace as “saturated phenomenon”? For Marion, the process of a “reduction” of the phenomenon, in the format of Husserl, will disclose the intentionality and quality of “givenness” that reveals the character of the infinite, in the gaze of the icon which “regards us---[for] it *concerns* us, in that it allows the intention of the invisible to occur visibly.” This consideration, that which Tillich

¹⁰ Jean Luc-Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. J. L. Kosky (Stanford University Press, 2002) 199, (Hereafter cited as *BG*).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 197, author’s italics.

¹² *Ibid.*, 201.

¹³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, Vol. II, Part One: The Doctrine Of God*, trans. T. H. L. Parker *et al* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957) 353, (Hereafter abbreviated as *CD*).

called our “ultimate concern”, manifests itself :

in a face, where man’s sight envisages nothing, but goes back infinitely from the visible to the invisible by the grace of the visible itself: instead of the invisible mirror, which sent the human gaze back to itself alone and censured the *invisible*, the icon opens in a face that gazes at our gazes in order to summon them to its depth.¹⁴

Therefore, any symbolic icon of grace, divine initiative, election or predestination, must exhibit itself in terms of its giving that which is *invisible*; any theological system that is derived from the premise of free, or unmerited grace, must also reflect this sense of infinite concern *pro nobis*. It might well be wagered that both Tillich and Barth accomplished such descriptions of the given in their respective theologies. If so, then why such disputes between them over their religious beliefs? Are Barth’s suspicions about Tillich founded when he censures the method of correlation that starts with the philosophical questions regarding human meaning and existence and applies Christian answers to them? “Will these theological answers allow themselves to be pressed into this scheme without suffering harm to what in any case is their biblical content?”¹⁵ By the same token was Tillich justified in his criticizing Barth for the:

mistake . . . to start his Prolegomena with what, so to speak, are the Postlegomena, the doctrine of the Trinity. It could be said that in his system this doctrine falls from heaven, the heaven of an unmediated biblical and ecclesiastical authority.¹⁶

¹⁴ *GWB*, 19, Author’s italics.

¹⁵ Barth, “Introductory Report”, 13.

¹⁶ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Vol. III: Life and Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God* (The University of Chicago Press, 1963) 285, (Hereafter abbreviated as *ST*).

This reflected Tillich's concern with Barth's theology from the early days of their involvement with the 'dialectical theology' movement of the twenties. Tillich acknowledged Barth's "protest" and fears that "any kind of divine-human correlation makes God partly dependent on man." However, God in "his abysmal nature"¹⁷ is not contingent on that which is human and finite, "God in his self-manifestation to man is dependent on the way man receives his manifestation." This, for example, allows the doctrine of predestination to be seen as correlative in a sense, "namely that this way is foreordained by God and entirely independent of human freedom." Correlation takes on a cognitive aspect for "[s]ymbolically speaking, God answers man's questions, and under the impact of God's answers man asks them." This is Tillich's refutation to Barth's accusations of the questions coming from the philosophical realm only:

Theology formulates the questions implied in human existence, and theology formulates the answers implied in divine self-manifestation under the guidance of the questions implied in human existence.¹⁸

The answer to this problem of misunderstanding may lie in Tillich's use of the word "implied." He is well aware that his theological task will show that:

The biblical and ecclesiastical character of the solutions to theological problems presented in this volume will not be difficult to recognize, although it is more *implicit* than *explicit*.¹⁹

It seems obvious that Barth found the implicit nature of Tillich's use of

¹⁷ Tillich's footnote reads: "Calvin: 'In his essence'."

¹⁸ *ST I*, 61.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vii. My italics.

dogmatic and biblical concepts to be less than recognizable. And herein lies the query of this paper; can Marion's use of phenomenological procedures regarding 'givenness' and the 'gaze of the icon' be applied to Tillich and Barth's understanding of grace and election to clarify whether they adequately reflect the *invisible*? Put in another way, does the concept of Barth's *explicit* doctrine of the Covenant and the more *implicit* notion of Tillich's *Gestalt of Grace*, provide the sufficient horizon of gift and gifted-ness, icon over idol, as asserted by Marion?

Jean-Luc Marion's Theology of *Donation*

Marion's theological statements have a strong phenomenological background connected to them. His research in Descartes, Nietzsche, Heidegger and other philosophers have informed his understanding of the nature of God and the iconic and the pervasive character of idolatry in human reflection. Before we are to proceed to the thought of Barth and Tillich, Marion's methodology must be explicated to establish the parameters of grace that will be used in any comparison between the two. The reductive procedure of the Austrian philosopher Edmund Husserl has provided the most impetus to Marion's determination of the *givenness* of religious phenomena. How was this notion of *Gegebenheit* postulated in Husserl's thought?

Husserl believed that philosophy had erred in asserting that "cognition is a thing apart from its object" and had introduced a false sense of transcendence and

therefore immanence as well.²⁰ Therefore, philosophy needed to lie “in a wholly new dimension” that would distinguish itself from any “natural science.”²¹ Husserl proposed an entirely new method which required an *epoche*, a “bracketing” or more literally an “abstention.”²² Husserl adumbrated:

At the outset of the critique of cognition the entire world of nature, physical and psychological, as well as one’s own human self together with all the sciences which have to do with these objective matters, *are put into question.*²³

This procedure allows the “things-in-themselves” to be perceived, not as psychological processes, but “in terms of their essential natures as meaning intentions²⁴ and their interconnected meaning-fulfillments,²⁵ essential structures involved in all understanding.”²⁶ Phenomena were to be dealt with only as *given*, as the *ding-an-sich*, in the sense of their appearance to consciousness in the manifestation (*Wie*) that it appears. What remains is a *philosophical residuum* after the act of reduction as “pure consciousness” alone “but not as another region of being but rather as the absolute ground of all positing of being.”²⁷ That which is

²⁰ Richard Cobb-Stevens, “The beginnings of phenomenology: Husserl and his predecessors” in Richard Kearney, ed., *Twentieth-Century Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1994) 18.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

²² Barry Smith & David Woodruff Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) 11.

²³ Cobb-Stevens, “The beginnings of phenomenology”, 19.

²⁴ *Bedeutungsintentionen.*

²⁵ *Bedeutungserfüllungen.*

²⁶ Dermot Moran, *Introduction To Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000) 108.

²⁷ J. N. Mohanty, “The development of Husserl’s thought” in *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl*, 61.

transcendent is important for it is “given to consciousness” and thereby is, in Husserl’s words from his *Ideas I*:

an object for phenomenological investigation not only with respect to the consciousness of it . . . but also, though this essentially involved with the former, as what is given and accepted in the modes of givenness.²⁸

What is ‘given’ reveals itself as an *a priori*, for consciousness becomes aware, through the act of reduction, that any object or concept has aspects not instantly apprehended. “The notion of grasping the essence is to grasp something which has transcendence in immanence.”²⁹ It is to this transcendent *noumenon* that Marion is acutely concerned with in his understanding of that which is *étant donné*.

Gift and Givenness as Grace

Grace as a transcendent *noumenon* can be analyzed (or reduced) under the rubrics of gift (*don*) and its phenomenological matrix, givenness (*donation*). Marion does not make an analogical equation between the gift and grace, as he prefers the concept of *charité* as love. He does, however, open up the possibility of new phenomenological understandings to occur because of the existence of divine love. Marion, following Pascal, sees love as providing “a way beyond metaphysics.”³⁰ Love serves as a “hermeneutic principle that opens onto a new world” and allows for a “new phenomena [to] appear among the things of this world to an eye that is

²⁸ As quoted in Jaakko Hintikka, “The phenomenological dimension”, 80.

²⁹ Moran, *Introduction*, 133.

³⁰ Robyn Horner, *Jean-Luc Marion: A Theo-logical Introduction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) 67.

initiated in charity.”³¹ *Mutatis mutandis* grace itself stands in the category of gift to be reduced in the phenomenological process of *epoche*, and epistemically evaluated in terms of the categories of icon and idol. Still to be considered is Marion’s understanding of the phenomena of gift and its function as a conceptual icon. The sacramental event of the Eucharist becomes, for Marion, like an “obligatory site where every somewhat consistent theological attempt must come in the end to be tested.”³² This attempt can be formulated in the question:

can the eucharistic presence of Christ as consecrated bread and wine determine, starting from itself and itself alone, the conditions of its reality, the dimensions of its temporality and the dispositions of its approach?³³

The Eucharistic present must first be understood “as a gift that is given.” So also, the event of grace, as a necessary site, can be apprehended as a theological doctrine of the “gift that is given.” Tillich’s summary of “Divine Love as Grace and Predestination” is instructive here as it manifests this phenomenological determination in the manner of the “paradox of grace” for “it gives fulfillment to that which is separated from the source of fulfillment, and it accepts that which is unacceptable.”³⁴ In its separation (*distance*) and in its modal impossibility (*invisible*), grace seeks to define itself in the conditions of the reality of Christ,

³¹ Marion’s citation from “Christian Philosophy and Charity,” *Communio* XVII (1992): 469, quoted in Horner, *ibid.*, 68.

³² Marion, “The Present And The Gift” in *GWB*, 161.

³³ *Ibid.*, 171.

³⁴ *ST I*, 285.

its abiding presence in the sacraments and the common faith of the Church and in its disposition of freedom though the efficacy of divine initiative. But these conclusions are discovered only *after* the phenomena of gift is reduced.

Marion's procedure of reduction to the 'gift as given' not only derives from Husserl's methodology but also from Martin Heidegger's extension of it. Postmodern dialogues are taken into account as well, especially the approach of Jacques Derrida regarding the gift in its un-reduced economic and reciprocal character.³⁵ Horner summarizes the controversy in this way:

For Derrida, there cannot be a phenomenology of the gift because for him phenomenology attempts to reduce to presence, and a present gift, losing its essential characteristic of freedom, would no longer be a gift.³⁶

Marion attempts to remove the notion of gift from the causal scheme of this metaphysical reciprocity as it takes its saturated form not from the nexus of relational commodity, but from the character of *givenness*, "that is to say, from itself, without depending on any extrinsic relation . . . The gift gives 'itself' intrinsically in its *self-giving*."³⁷ A phenomenological outline of such 'self-giving' is proposed by Marion and will serve as the methodological schema in the examination of Barth and Tillich later in this essay; i.e., "the *anamorphosis*,

³⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Given Time. I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. P. Kamuf (University of Chicago Press, 1992).

³⁶ Horner, *Marion*, 119.

³⁷ Jean-Luc Marion, "Sketch of a Phenomenological Concept of Gift", from M. Westphal, ed., *Postmodern Philosophy and Christian Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999) 137.

the unpredictable landing, the *fait accompli*, the incidence and eventness.”³⁸

“*Autant de réduction, autant de donation*” (As much reduction, as much givenness)³⁹ provides the phenomenological impetus for Marion and his description of gift. Husserl had asserted that “Absolute givenness is an ultimate term”⁴⁰ leading Marion to question the lack of a phenomenological approach in theology (with the exception of Hans Urs von Balthasar) and, instead, to privilege the “ontic, historic, or semiotic” hermeneutic. A second question is posed to phenomenologists themselves; “what does *to be given* ultimately signify?”

Put more exactly:

Why has phenomenology always practiced givenness as if it were self-evident and always studied the reduction as problematic, when it could be that givenness, being more essential, might also remain the most enigmatic?⁴¹

The spontaneous character of intrinsic phenomena have been, by Marion, thematized in the following pattern:

- (a) They cannot be repeated identically and reveal themselves in this way precisely identical to themselves alone: unrepeatability, thus irreversibility.
- (b) They cannot be accorded [*se voir assigner*] a unique cause or exhaustive explanation, but demand an indefinite number of them, enlarged to the measure of the hermeneutic of historians, sociologists, economists, and so on, being able to develop for their purposes: surplus of effects and

³⁸ Homer, *Marion*, 120. This outline is the basic schema used by Marion in *Being Given*, *ibid.* Book III.

³⁹ Robyn Homer & Vincent Berraud, “Translator’s Introduction” in Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002) x.

⁴⁰ As quoted in Marion, *In Excess*, 20. see footnote 26 for the German text, “*Absolute Gegebenheit ist ein Letztes*”.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

of *fait accompli* over every system of causes.

- (c) They cannot be foreseen, since their partial causes not only remain insufficient but are only discovered once the fact of their effect has been accomplished. Whence it follows that their possibility, not being able to be anticipated, remains, strictly speaking, an impossibility with regard to the system of anteriorly indexed causes.

Marion continues:

Now --a decisive point--these three features of the event do not concern only collective phenomena but also characterize certain private or intersubjective phenomena.⁴²

Compare this with Barth's description of the "experience" of grace:

This is the crux of the matter, for grace, breaking through both mysticism and morality, transforms the indicative into an imperative, and we encounter the absolute demand that the impossible shall become possible.⁴³

The phenomenological *non sequitur* aspect of grace reconstructs the *I* by its excess and by its intentionality for "Grace is the freedom of God by which men are seized."

However, this seizure does not lie in the realm of the 'natural' or deductively metaphysical, Barth continues:

Within the sphere of psycho-physical experience this seizure is, however, nothing but a vacuum and void and blankness. The seizure, therefore, lies on the other side of the abyss.⁴⁴

Grace is never far from Marion's conception of the 'given' and its corresponding event, for this event:

⁴² Ibid., 36-37.

⁴³ Karl Barth, *The Epistle To The Romans*, trans. from the sixth edition by E. C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933) 211. (Hereafter cited as *Romans II*).

⁴⁴ Ibid., 240.

can take the figure of the miracle, the given becomes election and promise, the resistance of *l'adonné* is deepened in conversion of the witness, the transmutation from the *self*-giving into *self*-showing requires theological virtues, its progressiveness is prolonged in eschatological return of the eternal beginning, and so on.⁴⁵

The enigmatic phenomenon of the event of grace is included in this “so on.” This “so on” manifests no *Gestalt* and in this way can reveal itself only in the excess of givenness, for as Tillich noted, “Grace is always a paradox; it breaks through the immediate form but has no form of its own.”⁴⁶ Marion seeks to overcome this problem in his notion of icon and idol as the models of phenomenological givenness as will be seen. How exactly, does the reduction of gift to the horizon of *donation* illicit a premise for the “saturated phenomena” in non-metaphysical terms?

Marion makes no claim that Husserlian phenomenology is non-metaphysical. as Horner has pointed out, there is an “ambiguity” that allows for “givenness” as the reductive horizon. Noting that the Cartesian method “eventually shows itself incapable of self-constitution” leads to conclusion that:

The exception of the I from being and its incapacity to constitute itself suggest to Marion that objective presence for a constituting intention need not be the ultimate horizon of phenomenology. That horizon instead, he claims, is properly givenness.⁴⁷

Asserting the phenomenological principle “So Much Reduction, So Much

⁴⁵ Marion, *In Excess*, 53.

⁴⁶ Paul Tillich, “The Philosophy of Religion” in *What Is Religion?*, trans, James Luther Adams (New York: Harper & Row, 1969) 84.

⁴⁷ Horner, *Marion*, 110.

Givenness”⁴⁸, permits Marion to observe that:

The reduction separates what appears from what does not appear, from what renders its apparition deceptive and mimics appearing by fraudulently attaching a fundamental obscurity to it--in short, for what brings into phenomenality that which remains foreign to it--unregulated objectification, ‘absurd theories.’⁴⁹

To facilitate a proper reductive explication of the “given” in accordance with the five categories already listed,⁵⁰ Marion engages in a conversation, a “determination” by “assigning the gift the immanent and intrinsic characteristic of givenness.”⁵¹ To avoid objectifying the phenomena as exchange and a human instrument, reduction must start from “elsewhere” that “betrays no transcendence, but rather attests the irreducible makeup of the self of what shows itself in that it gives *itself*.”⁵² The crossing of this distance from “elsewhere” is the *anamorphosis*.

Anamorphosis

This term represents the phenomenon’s journey from the ‘out there’, its surrender to the gifted (*l’adonné*), and in its self-abandonment its movement to ‘somewhere’, which appears to the *l’adonné* as a present, a ‘now here’.

“*Ana-morphosis* indicates that the phenomenon takes *form* starting from itself.”⁵³

⁴⁸ “*D’autant plus de réduction, d’autant plus de donation*”, *ibid.*, 111, fn. 13.

⁴⁹ *BG*, 16.

⁵⁰ see *supra*, p. 10.

⁵¹ *BG*, 119.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 123.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 124.

This resembles Tillich's "affirmation of the presence of the Unconditioned-Beyond, the 'speaking' or 'expression' of a form (*Gestalt*) of grace", as summarized by James Luther Adams.⁵⁴ Any concept of grace as solely contingent on divine initiative would seem to be a description of its *anamorphic* character "from elsewhere", however. This leads, of course, to a basic concern in any iconic depiction of grace itself, whether it be sacramental (Marion), covenantal (Barth) or prophetic principle as *Gestalt* (Tillich). A formulation must occur for an *anamorphosis* to be recognized, as Marion states:

The phenomenon therefore succeeds in appearing only by passing from a first form--unformed--to a second form, which informs it as such because it fixes a figure of apparition for it.⁵⁵

Contingency

Marion characterizes this term as a determination of the "unpredictable landing" (*arrivage*) of the phenomena "according to discontinuous rhythms, in fits and starts, unexpectedly, by surprise, detached from the other, in bursts, aleatory."⁵⁶ The phenomenological horizon of givenness is unfolded in the spontaneity of the "unpredictable landing" by "delivering the ineluctability of the arising and, inseparably, its unforeseeable and unproducible initiative."⁵⁷ Barth's recognition of the unpredictability and non-contingent nature of grace

⁵⁴ James Luther Adams, *Paul Tillich's Philosophy Of Culture, Science, And Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965) 50.

⁵⁵ *BG*, 123-24.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.

is exemplified in his statement that, regarding the graciousness of God:

His inclination, good will and favour which He turns toward His partner in this act of condescension is a sheer gift which something necessarily called forth by it can neither precede nor follow, for, whatever follows it has its ground in this prevenient cause. It is thus a gift in this strictest sense of the term.⁵⁸

The spontaneous quality of the phenomenon of grace, and its irruption into our phenomenological realm has a personal dimension about it as Marion observes:

for us, extrinsic or not, the contingency of what touches me remains necessary with an essential necessity, *for us*, every phenomenon appears as if the contingency of its appearing characterized it intrinsically.⁵⁹

Tillich recognized this in his elucidation of the center of Protestant doctrine; faith as a “divine structure of reality.” He wrote, “Faith is the faith of man. It does not come *from* man, but is effective *in* man. And in so far as faith is in a community or personality, they are embodiments of grace.” The “Word” creates faith, and this Word is “said from *beyond* us, *to* us.”⁶⁰ The uniqueness of grace carries its own *a priori* of contingent and modal possibility as Tillich wrote:

The reality of grace is the *prius* of all speaking and hearing about it; being moved by the Spirit is the *prius* of faith, not the reverse. But to be moved by the Spirit or to be grasped by the unconditional means to be drawn into the reality and the life of a Gestalt of grace.⁶¹

Notice that both Barth and Tillich had similar notions about the “seizure” and the

⁵⁸ *CD III*, 355.

⁵⁹ *BG*, 134.

⁶⁰ Paul Tillich, “The Formative Power of Protestantism” in *The Protestant Era*, trans. James Luther Adams (The University of Chicago Press, 1957) 210.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 211.

being “grasped” by grace. The “unpredictable landing” of grace has both an existential and ethical character about it, for it destabilizes the receiving self, or “transcendental I” with its own reality, and by its *Gestalt* reorientates (or recreates) that same self with that which is *given* “as election and promise.” Analogically compared to human birth, “pure phenomenological necessity” gives itself in the “event” already given, “from a done deal (*une donne révolue*)”, in a manifestation of “the *self* of what gives itself.”⁶² Therefore, the phenomenon of grace creates its own paradigm derived from its inner necessity to be known and received.

The Fait Accompli-- “The Factum par Excellence”

More problematical for a theological assertion of grace as ‘saturated phenomenon’ resides in Marion’s use of the category of the *fait accompli*. He quotes Schelling’s reference to Revelation as *the factum*, as the irrefutable event that “cannot be revived any more than rendered a nonhappening.”⁶³ Can the doctrine of grace be ever perceived as such an irrefutable fact? Tillich realized that grace “was not tangible”, but a “possible object of ‘imaginative intuition’.” This is demonstrated in the New Testament *Bild* of Jesus as the Christ which is “open to nonsensuous intuition.” This Christological opaqueness is the “transparent” *Gestalt*. The symbol or *Bild* is the phenomenon *par excellence*,

⁶² Marion, *In Excess*, 44.

⁶³ *BG*, 141. Original quote in Schelling’s *Philosophie de la mythologie*, modified by Marion.

for “[s]omething shines through it which is more than it.”⁶⁴ Intuition validates the reality of grace in the very act of its grasping the receiver in the moment of apperception. By contrast, Marion contends that the character of divine *agape* manifests itself as that beyond being, as pure gift, seen in and as the corporeally visible elements of the Eucharistic sacrament. Its *fait accompli* assaults the security of the self-centered ‘I’, for the Eucharist “requires of whoever approaches it a radical conceptual self-critique and charges him with renewing his norms of thought.”⁶⁵ Autonomy is therefore superseded by the *fait accompli* of theonomy, a paradigmatic concept for Tillich as he stated in 1925:

Theonomy itself uncovers and identifies the paradoxical character of the Holy and of ecstasy, the inner transcending character, the quality of breaking through immediate forms and of interpreting them symbolically. Grace is always a paradox; it breaks through the immediate form but has no form of its own.⁶⁶

This paradox comes to full expression in the symbol of the “divine mediator.” As an iconic representation (*Bild*) it can be found even in the finite (or “idolic”)⁶⁷ as the purveyor of the Unconditioned and “for whose sake it surrenders itself (in the notion of “*abandon*”) as the finite, in the vision of the figure of the incarnate, lowly and dying God” which is the religious “*mysterium*.”⁶⁸ Jesus the Christ,

⁶⁴ Tillich, “Formative Power”, 212.

⁶⁵ *GWB*, 163.

⁶⁶ Paul Tillich, “The Philosophy of Religion”, 84.

⁶⁷ “The idolic” -- a neologism that I will use in a semantic balance to the “iconic”.

⁶⁸ Tillich, “The Philosophy of Religion”, 95-96.

symbolized in his appearance as the New Being, is the appropriate symbol of the religious *mysterium* for Tillich as will be seen in his later writings.

The Incident and the Event

Marion proceeds to define the aspects of the incident as that which “comes upon me in such a way that it consists of nothing other than this first and last coming upon, without existing or making itself visible prior to this.” Therefore, the incident “resides entirely in the fact of its initiating accomplishment, without any background, foresight, or forewarning reduced to its fact.”⁶⁹ The phenomenon also has in its own *self-giveness* as incident without precedent an implication of its unique *self* as “marked in its determination as event.”⁷⁰ This determination may be seen in terms of a metaphysical excess which defies causal definitions. Marion notes that the character of God gives an example of:

uncausability by excess, infinite essence, who is excepted from every univocal relation with his always finite effects, a fortiori with the least antecedent, unrepeatability of the unique, unavailability of the unforeseeable because the invisible, incomprehensibility by surplus, even of qualifications, therefore of evidence.⁷¹

To retreat to such transcendental magnification does not provide a satisfactory answer to the *self* of the phenomenon. This answer, for Marion, is adumbrated in his question of intuition giving more, as an excess, than the intention of the

⁶⁹ BG, 151.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 159.

⁷¹ Ibid., 160.

phenomenon as originally projected. This hypothesis is explicated in more detail in his notion of the “saturated phenomenon.”

The Saturated Phenomenon

Marion describes this category in terms given by Immanuel Kant. However, his notion of the saturated phenomenon “exceeds these categories (as well as principles), since in it intuition passes beyond the concept.”⁷² What is brought to light in this procedure is the sense of horizon and the transcendental sense of the I. This occurs because Kant’s initial order of the categories of understanding is reversed by Marion. The saturated phenomenon cannot be predicted as to its quantity, for it exceeds the sum of its finite parts. Quality, measured in terms of intensity, cannot be conceptually perceived for it “bedazzles” the recipient with its magnitude.⁷³ It stands absolute in relationality for it is “disconnected from all analogy with any object of experience whatsoever.”⁷⁴ In fact, for Marion the lack of intuition in regard to the phenomenon itself, and in its superfluity provides the paradoxical tenet that, in its constitution there is encountered “an intuitive givenness that cannot be granted a univocal sense in return.”⁷⁵ As the “symbol gives rise to thought” (Ricoeur) so the saturated phenomenon gives rise to an “endless hermeneutic.” Yet, an important question remains; how can the “saturated

⁷² Horner, *Marion*, 113.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ *BG*, 209.

⁷⁵ Marion, *In Excess*, 112.

phenomenon” appear or ever be apperceived?

Marion provides the answer in the relational *consequence* of the phenomenon on its recipient. “What I see of them, if I see anything of them that *is*, does not result from the constitution that I would assign them in the visible, but from the effect that they produce on me.”⁷⁶ What remains is the proper depiction of that effectual experience of the infinite horizon of the saturated phenomenon. By taking the experience of grace as such an event, any representation must reflect the character of this horizon to avoid becoming an idol of finite offering, as opposed to an icon capable of infinite interpretation, infinite *distance*.

The Icon: Finding the Proper De-Piction of the Concept of Grace

“Name your idol, and you will know who you are.”⁷⁷ The inverse might also apply, “Find your icon and you will know who God is.”⁷⁸ This brings us to the thesis of this paper; do Paul Tillich and Karl Barth have adequate conceptual icons for the doctrine of grace? Such an investigation would lead to three possible clarifications for an understanding of their respective theologies: 1. a clarification over terminology, i.e., in what referential ways do Tillich and Barth differ in their writings about grace, and; 2. are their differences (if any) constitutive of their theologies as a whole, and; 3. does Marion’s iconography supersede their own

⁷⁶ Ibid., 113.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 61.

⁷⁸ Know God in part. Any iconic depiction must be less than divinity itself. St. Augustine’s dictum must be borne in mind, “If thou comprehendest, then it is not God.”

definitions of the depictions of grace?

This essay will follow a chronological path in the main for both Barth and Tillich's theological concepts were greatly influenced by their contexts and the flow of history as it developed in Germany. However, in chapter 2 we will trace the philosophical and theological influences of both Barth and Tillich apart from a chronological narrative. In chapter 3 Barth's early career as pastor, his commentary on *Romans*, and his career involvement in the Socialist movement will be investigated. Chapter 4 will focus on Tillich's military chaplaincy and his Weimar republic teaching experiences. Chapter 5 will concentrate on Barth's early teaching career at Göttingen and his deliberations on Church doctrine. In chapter 6 Tillich's Frankfurt years and his leaving Germany will be covered. Chapter 7 will examine Barth's early *Church Dogmatics* and various other writings as his doctrine of Covenant reaches its zenith. In chapter 8 the focus will be on Tillich's writings after his emigration to America, most especially his three-volume *Systematics*. Chapter 9 will explore Barth's later *Dogmatics* and the concluding chapter will bring together the three threads of the iconic valuation of grace in the final summaries of Marion's eucharistic emphasis, Barth's covenantal explication of elective grace, and Tillich's picture of the New Being as symbolized in the cross of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 2

THE EARLY PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL INFLUENCES ON BARTH AND TILLICH'S THOUGHT

The intellectual backgrounds of Tillich and Barth show many similarities and not a few differences. To be reviewed in this chapter are not only the theological influences on their early theologies, but philosophical ones as well. This will help set the stage for their development as theologians and what effect, if any, the phenomenological method of Husserl had on their concepts. And, as will be seen, the differing theological backgrounds and appropriation of Enlightenment philosophy will definitively influence their understanding of that which is iconic as opposed to expressions of human idolatry and the religious manifestations of these concepts. This iteration of their philosophical and theological education is important for, to understand Barth, one must understand what he was to come to reject later in his theological development. For Tillich, a different appropriation of his intellectual tradition would lead to an eclectic and tendentious combination of philosophical and theological strands.

Karl Barth's Early Years

Both Barth and Tillich's biographical details are well known from both their autobiographical statements as well as secondary biographical information. Barth was born May 10, 1886, in Basel, Switzerland. His father Johann Friedrich ('Fritz', who died in 1912) was a Professor of New Testament studies and Early Church History at the university in Bern, the city where Karl grew up. Barth remembered his father's influence fondly as:

The man who without question laid the foundation for my later involvement in theology . . . By virtue of the quiet seriousness with which he studied Christianity, whether as scholar or teacher, he became and remained my model.¹

Karl's brothers Peter and Heinrich made their marks in academic work as well as an editor of Calvin's works and a professor of philosophy, respectively. After a normal (if somewhat bellicose) childhood in which he began a life-long love of Mozart, Barth became a confirmand in the Nydegg church at the age of 16. He wrote later:

On the eve of the day of my confirmation (March 23, 1902) I made the bold resolve to become a theologian: not with preaching and pastoral care and so on in mind, but the hope that through such a course of study I might reach a proper understanding of the creed in place of the rather hazy ideas that I had at that time.²

As a young student of theology Barth went off to study in Bern "with my father's kind but earnest advice"³ and then to Germany in Berlin, Tübingen and Marburg where he stayed for three semesters. While in Bern young Karl attended

¹ As quoted in Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His life from letters and autobiographical texts*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1976) 32.

² *Ibid.*, 31.

³ *Ibid.*, 33.

Fritz's lectures in New Testament studies and, though respecting his father's scholarship, "I could not adopt what was then called his (moderately) 'positive' . . . theological attitude and tendency."⁴ Fritz was concerned about his son's theological influences in these various universities, approving of Tübingen (which Karl disliked) and only reluctantly allowing him to attend Marburg, (which Karl referred to as 'my Zion').⁵ There Barth fell under the influence of Wilhelm Herrmann who was "the theological teacher of my student years."⁶ Herrmann aroused Barth's interest in the writings of Friedrich Schleiermacher which initially guided him into deeper theological reflection and also whom he eventually felt compelled to repudiate.⁷ This repudiation was a long way in off in Barth's future for in his early years he grappled seriously with the claims of the current philosophies in vogue at that time. These philosophies and educational challenges were quite similar to those of Paul Tillich, as we shall see, but would ultimately be appropriated in quite different ways.

The Early Years of Paul Tillich

Paul Tillich was born in the village of Starzeddel in the Brandenburg region, now part of modern day Poland, on August 20, 1886. His father Johannes was the pastor in the Prussian Territorial Church there. On the day of his birth infant Paul

⁴ Ibid., 34.

⁵ Ibid., 44.

⁶ Karl Barth, "The Principles Of Dogmatics According to Wilhelm Herrmann" (1925) in *Theology And Church: Shorter Writings 1920-1928*, trans. L. Pettibone Smith (London: SCM, 1962) 238.

⁷ see Karl Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1982) and also, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background & History* (London: SCM, 1972) 411-459.

nearly died which lead his biographer to write, “In this first experience of his existence, Paul Tillich’s lifelong dread of death--this melancholy preoccupation--may have had its beginning.”⁸ Both the sad death of his mother and Tillich’s experiences during the First World War contributed to his ongoing question of existence, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” When a child the young Paulus moved to the hamlet of Schönfliess where its rustic beauty and simplicity of life contributed to his well being as a growing youth. Like most German boys of that time Tillich was imbued with a loyal patriotism to the Kaiser with whom his father was chosen to travel to Palestine for the consecration of an evangelical church in Gethsemane. A piece of olive wood that his father brought back always stayed on Tillich’s desk.⁹

In 1898 the entire Tillich household moved to Berlin as his father had been appointed minister and superintendent of the *Bethlehemgemeinde* to examine ministerial candidates in the field of philosophy. As an adolescent growing up in the big city Tillich longed for the lure of the country and his visits to the sea became formative for him. “The sea was a significant inspiration for him, for he found in its contemplation the suggestion of the infinite bordering on the finite.”¹⁰ For Tillich the sea breaking in on the beach was as “the Eternal breaking in on the Temporal.” This borderline or boundary imagery he later said provided a

⁸ Wilhelm & Marion Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life & Thought, Volume I: Life* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989) 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰ John Heywood Thomas, *Tillich* (London: Continuum, 2000) 3.

“true propitious place for acquiring knowledge.”¹¹ John Heywood Thomas

surmises:

Ideas such as his theory of the ‘dynamic mass’ and the Absolute as the ground and abyss of dynamic truth were conceived under the influence of the constantly moving sea.¹²

Undoubtedly all Tillich’s life experiences contributed to his mystical relation to nature. Tillich himself has related that his romantic notions were accentuated by his love of poetry and literature (especially *Hamlet*) and his Lutheran background. His love of the natural world led to “the tremendous emotional impact that Schelling’s philosophy of nature made upon me” and his religious sensitivities led Tillich into the conflict between the Lutheran and Reformed doctrine of the *Extra Calvinisticum*. The dispute over this doctrine resided in the notion of whether the finite was capable of the infinite (*non capax infiniti*) in the Reformed position as opposed to the *Infra Lutheranism* which espoused the view that the finite *is* capable of the infinite and “consequently that in Christ there is a mutual indwelling of the two natures.”¹³ This dogmatic difference would fuel much of the disagreement between Barth and Tillich in the future.

As a young student Tillich studied philosophy “privately” becoming acquainted with Kant, Fichte, Schleiermacher, Hegel and especially Schelling.¹⁴

¹¹ As quoted in George H. Tavard, *Paul Tillich and the Christian Message* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1962) 4.

¹² Thomas, *Tillich*, 3.

¹³ Paul Tillich, “Autobiographical Reflections” in Charles W. Kegley & Robert W. Bretall, eds., *The Theology of Paul Tillich* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1956) 4-5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

Both Tillich's doctoral dissertation from the University of Breslau and his thesis for his Licentiat of Theology from the Berlin Cathedral Seminary concentrated on Schelling's philosophy of religion.¹⁵ After his graduation in 1908 Tillich became an assistant pastor in the village of Lichtenrade where he taught the confirmation class and preached occasionally. The next year he returned to Berlin and entered the Berliner *Domstift* to complete his seminary training. His ordination brought Tillich to serve as a vicar to the church district of Nauen, a suburb of Berlin, as well as Moabit in the workers' section of the city.¹⁶ However, by 1912 Tillich had decided to become a professor although he remained in parish work. At this time he also married his first wife Grethi just before the outbreak of the war. Like the war itself, the marriage was doomed and both would bring Tillich some considerable heartache.

Barth and Tillich's Philosophical and Theological Backgrounds

The academic world in which both Barth and Tillich were immersed was based on theological interpretations of the German idealist philosophers, especially Immanuel Kant and G. W. F. Hegel and their followers. In this next section, a comparison of these philosophical and theological influences will be described.

¹⁵ Paul Tillich, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Konstruktion in Schellings positiver Philosophie, ihre Voraussetzungen und Prinzipien* (Breslau, Fleischmann, 1910). English translation by Victor Nuovo (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974) and *Mystik und Schuldbewusstsein in Schellings philosophischer Entwicklung* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1912) English translation by Victor Nuovo (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974).

¹⁶ Pauck, *Life*, 35.

Immanuel Kant

“*Sapere aude!* Have the courage to make use of your own understanding”¹⁷

for Kant was the “watchword” of the Enlightenment, but Barth never accepted this as an adequate starting point for the true knowledge of God. While studying in Berne Barth read Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason* and later, in Berlin, the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant’s influence on the current climate in Berne was profound as Barth later related, “in my Berne semester I was earnestly told, and I learnt . . . that all God’s ways begin with Kant, and if possible, must also end there.”¹⁸ Barth’s suspicion of Kant lay in the problem of Subject-Object relationships, for an empirically verifiable God, intuitible to human thought, would become an Object-God inculcated in human categories. How can God remain wholly other in essence, and yet apprehensible in and by mere human cognition? God, in Christ, has spoken in human history to be sure, yet the initiative of this salvic historical event is grounded in the *prior* determination of God understood in the biblical doctrine of election. For Barth, metaphorical change was needed in Kant’s epistemology, for the Unintuitable (*das Unanschauliche*) must become that which is *Anschauliche*, the Intuitable, without substantial change in the Unintuitable.¹⁹ Kant’s metaphysics could not postulate a doctrine of grace resting solely in the initiative of God but only a “vulgar Pelagian doctrine of justification” reminiscent of the teachings of the Roman

¹⁷ As quoted in Barth’s, *Protestant Theology*, 269. This is a compendium of Barth’s lectures in Bonn in the early thirties.

¹⁸ Busch, *Barth*, 34.

¹⁹ Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936* (Oxford University Press, 1997) 249, (Hereafter cited as *CRDT*).

Catholic Church.²⁰ This epistemology would then be an idolatry and worship of the human intellect, with its innate possibility of perceiving the divine within its own reference.

In spite of his misgivings about Kantian categories, Barth continued to engage with “Father Kant, who had provided the initial spark for me once before, also spoke in a remarkably new and direct way to me” as he wrote later in 1924.²¹ Barth was to continue to promulgate Kant’s ethical doctrines especially in the second edition of *Der Römerbrief*, in which he stated, “Pure ethics require--and here we are in complete agreement with Kant--that there should be no mixing of heaven and earth in the sphere of morals.”²² Barth, of course, did not uncritically appropriate Kant’s philosophical ethics *in totus*, as Nigel Biggar explains:

Christian ethics cannot share Kant’s concept of moral autonomy [in] that it contradicts the phenomenon of moral obligation, that is, of being absolutely subject to the imperative, and he [Barth] contends that an adequate concept of obligation must see it as something which is immediately (though not ultimately) heteronomous, something which confronts our will with an absolute authority that is not our own.²³

The true ‘categorical imperative’ Barth later wrote, was “revealed and grounded in the person and work and lordship of Jesus Christ” not merely “in name, but in fact.”²⁴ Ethics are grounded in the response of God’s love revealed in the Covenant of Grace that defines the highest good in the antecedent primal decision of God, not in the moral conscience of subsequent human thought. “Grace . . . is the indicative

²⁰ Busch, *Barth*, 289.

²¹ Barth, *Theology of Schleiermacher*, 265.

²² *Romans II*, 432.

²³ Nigel Biggar, *The Hastening that Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 155.

²⁴ *CD II/2*, 652.

which carries with it a categorical imperative: it is the call the command, the order, which cannot be disobeyed.”²⁵ This places grace within the divine initiative alone, ethics can never *be* a way to grace, only a covenantal response as Barth would later discern. Therefore, Barth adjudged Kant’s ethical doctrines “to be anthropology and nothing but anthropology” and as such were autonomous, and the idea of God merely a thought in the mind of rational human endeavour. This “Absolute Man”, generated by the ‘Copernican revolution’ particularly of the Cartesian ego-subject in the Enlightenment, was to be eventually recast in Barth’s thinking by the ‘Absolute God-Man’, Jesus Christ. This “God-Man” is more than a moral exemplar for he is the ultimate paradigm of authentic humanity. “The reality of the human being (‘real man’) is likewise known in the humanity of Christ.”²⁶ Yet Barth, in many ways, remained a Kantian as “All of his efforts in theology may be considered . . . as an attempt to overcome Kant by means of Kant, not retreating behind him and seeking to go around him, but going *through* him.”²⁷

In the same manner Paul Tillich once remarked, “Of course I am a Kantian-- scratch any German and you will find a Kantian”²⁸ for both Kant and Hegel were the “driving force”²⁹ behind his theology. Tillich had started his study of Kant in the last of his *Gymnasium* training by purchasing *The Critique of Pure Reason* for fifty pennies, as well as Schweigler’s *Geschichte der Philosophie* and Fichte’s

²⁵ *Romans II*, 207.

²⁶ Daniel Price, *Karl Barth’s Anthropology In Light of Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2002) 18.

²⁷ *CRDT*, 465-66. Emphasis mine.

²⁸ Thomas, *Tillich*, 28.

²⁹ Tillich, “Autobiographical Reflections”, 10.

Theory of Sciences.³⁰ It became a wry piece of gossip in his *Gymnasium* that he had actually read *The Critique*, and one of his young acquaintances, Ernst Rhein, whose most vivid recollection of Tillich was his carrying the Kant editions around with him.³¹ Indeed, Tillich's first public lecture was delivered to the *Kant-Gesellschaft* in 1919 where he introduced the concept of theonomy along Kantian principles. Later in 1936 he remarked: "I nurtured German Idealism, and I do not believe that I can ever unlearn what I learned there. Above all I am indebted to Kantian criticism."³²

Tillich's lectures on Christian thought in the fifties explicated his understanding of Kant and his immense status as *the* Protestant philosopher. He underscored Kant's criticism of "a philosophy which assumes that the religious ideals of God, freedom, and immortality can be established by rational arguments."³³ However, the essential finitude of humanity was overlooked which made it impossible for the finite to apprehend the infinite. There was no theologian or philosopher, in Tillich's view, who did not accept this as a basic presupposition. "Even a man like Karl Barth who is so firmly rooted in the classical tradition has fully accepted the Kantian criticism of natural theology." The categorical structure of the human mind can only produce understandings of finite entities and one cannot make God a "first cause or a universal substance."³⁴ This finiteness is likened to a bondage that reason cannot

³⁰ Pauck, *Life*, 15.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

³² Paul Tillich, *The Interpretation of History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936) 60.

³³ Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought: From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, ed. C. Braaten (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968) 360.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 361.

accept yet: "The only point at which the prison of finitude is open is the realm of moral experience, because in it something unconditional breaks into the whole of temporal and causal conditions."³⁵ But this point is where Kant fails, in Tillich's estimation, and can only produce "an unconditional command, a mere awareness of the depth of reason." This 'Unconditioned' is vital in Tillich's thought for it cannot be attached to any *object* and is connected to what he calls 'the ground of our being'. The question that Tillich sought to answer is how the Unconditioned manifests itself to humanity in an identifiable way. Tillich would go farther than Kant in asserting that an essential ontology of finitude is possible. Barth would argue that there is no finite point of the Unconditioned save that of Jesus Christ whereas, Tillich sought to prove that the Unconditioned could be found in religious and cultural expressions of autonomous life. This was expressed in the new 'religious socialist movement', the "imminent formation of a new theonomous unity of cultural beliefs and values."³⁶ These differences over Kantian ideals would lead to Barth and Tillich parting ways in 1923. Tillich sought a way out of the Kantian *impasse* with his invocation of the 'Protestant Principle' in "that we can come to God only through God, that only grace can overcome guilt, sin, and our estrangement from God, and not we ourselves, and no good works can help us, this idea can be extended also to the realm of thought."³⁷ In this Barth and Tillich were in agreement as both were seeking to understand Kant by transcending him, but differing in the value of philosophy providing for both

³⁵ *ST I*, 82.

³⁶ John Powell Clayton, *The Concept Of Correlation: Paul Tillich And The Possibility Of A Mediating Theology* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1980) 37.

³⁷ Tillich, *Christian Thought*, 362.

theology and any possible cultural or ecclesial manifestation of the icon of grace.

G.W.F. Hegel

Tillich was often asked if he was an existentialist theologian as opposed to being an essentialist and he always replied that he was “fifty-fifty”. Tillich noted:

This means for me that essentialism and existentialism belong together. It is impossible to be a pure essentialist if one is personally in the human situation and not sitting on the throne of God as Hegel implied he was doing when he constructed world history as coming to an end in principle in his philosophy. This is the metaphysical arrogance of pure essentialism. For the world is still open to the future, and we are not on the throne of God, as Karl Barth has said in his famous statement: ‘God is in heaven and man is on earth.’³⁸

Tillich was both attracted to and repelled by Hegel’s philosophy. He saw a real danger in Hegel’s system in that it “attempted to interpret the arbitrary acts of human self-determination as the bearers of an all-embracing meaningful necessity.”³⁹ This is the tragic flaw in Hegel’s system that sought to combine the concept of an ‘Absolute Spirit’ in the historical existence of humanity. Tillich, however, believed that modern humanity had been deprived of ‘spirit’ by modern science leading to a “mutilation of the doctrine of man . . . making almost impossible a sound doctrine of man.”⁴⁰ If a spirit anthropology is re-introduced into the philosophical dialogue it must be defined as “the unity of mind and power, the unity of creativity--which makes human culture possible--and vitality--which is the life-power of man. Spirit is a dynamic concept.” In Tillich’s description of Hegel this human spirit “the absolute Spirit which is present and works through every

³⁸ Ibid., 541.

³⁹ Paul Tillich, “The Protestant Principle And The Proletarian Situation” (1931) in *The Protestant Era*, ed. J. L. Adams (The University of Chicago Press, 1957) 173. (Cited hereafter as *PE*).

⁴⁰ Tillich, *Christian Thought*, 415.

finite spirit.”⁴¹ A point of contact exists between God and humankind “insofar as God comes to self-consciousness in man, and insofar as man in his essential nature is contained together with everything in the inner life of God as potentiality.”⁴²

For Hegel the essential nature of man as being lies in the dialectic of ‘Logic’, i.e. the notions of being, nothing and becoming. These are indeterminate concepts that only have reality “in the synthesis of becoming.”⁴³ This triad can also be stated with another form; essence-appearance-actuality. This character of being as essential potentiality and its concomitant nothingness allows Tillich to combine the existential with the essential in his anthropology. Essence and *ousia* are perceived as potentiality, a structure of existence that is both open to growth and its existential limitation of nothingness in death. Existential thought cannot synthesize these concepts of essence and nothingness as humans are estranged from their *ousia* and can only be restored to wholeness by an act of reconciliation. Both Hegel and Tillich acknowledged the innate inability of human attempts at reconciliation, for only God could effect it in an act of self-negation. In what way then, do Tillich and Hegel differ on the place of Jesus in this synthetic act of negation and reconciliation? Tillich, in his description of Anselm, asserted that he followed him and deviated from Hegel.⁴⁴ The Incarnation, “the *Logos* becoming flesh”, is more than “dialectical reason” but a mystery, a paradox. In Hegel’s Jena lectures we find important statements of his christology in that the grief of a dismembered human race prompted the entrance

⁴¹ Ibid., 417.

⁴² Ibid., 418.

⁴³ Adrian Thatcher, *The Ontology Of Paul Tillich* (Oxford University Press, 1978) 101.

⁴⁴ Tillich, *Christian Thought*, 160.

(as an act of Triune differentiation) of the Logos into history:

In this way Christ became the founder of a religion, because he uttered the suffering of his whole world from the inmost depths, he raised the force of the divinity of the spirit above it, the absolute certainty of reconciliation, which he bore in himself: and by his *confidence* he awoke the confidence of *others*.⁴⁵

Tillich adjudged Hegel to have reduced Christ to a “personified ideal.”⁴⁶

In an early sketch of a dogmatic system in 1913, Tillich stressed that Jesus of Nazareth is the theological paradox, the “unity of the Absolute and the Relative in the sphere (*Boden*) of the Relative, in an actuality of a single essence (*in einem Einzelwesen verwirklicht*).”⁴⁷ The Incarnation must be seen as paradoxical and cannot be distilled into an all-embracing dialectical system as in the formula of Hegel. And, unlike Hegel’s conquered Christ, Tillich believed that the “basic Christian assertion [is] that Essential God-Manhood has appeared within existence and subjected itself to the conditions of existence *without being conquered by them*.”⁴⁸ The being of Jesus as the Christ is not one of unrealized potentiality, but of completed power over the reality of alienation and death. “If there were no personal life in which existential estrangement had been overcome, the New Being (in Jesus as the Christ) would have remained a quest and an expectation and would not be a reality in space and time.” Therefore, in the crucifixion of Christ, existence has been conquered in reality and in power, a power of sacrificial love that breaks the bonds of estrangement and guilt. The cross of Jesus Christ becomes, for Tillich,

⁴⁵ Peter Hodgson (ed.), *G. W. F. Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997) 88.

⁴⁶ Clayton, *Correlation*, 229.

⁴⁷ Paul Tillich, “Systematische Theologie” (1913/14) in his *Theological Writings*, ed. G. Hummel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992) 72.

⁴⁸ *ST II*, 98, emphasis mine.

the iconic point of grace and reconciliation, a saturated symbol based on the historical event of Golgotha.

Hegel's dialectic (thesis-antithesis-synthesis) was echoed by Tillich, "the trinitarian symbols are dialectical; they reflect the dialectics of life, namely the movement of separation and reunion."⁴⁹ This is a description of the "inner movement of divine life as an eternal separation from itself and return to itself."⁵⁰ Although Tillich was often critical of Hegel's dialectical system, he seems to use it often himself though not with such intellectual rigor. But, as Thatcher has pointed out, "Tillich has fallen into the *error of confusing the triadic structure of dialectical thinking with the triadic structure of Trinitarian thinking.*"⁵¹ This would run counter to any Trinitarian assertion in Barthian thinking, for to ascribe a trinitarian ontological structure (even in the mode of Augustine) would distort the mystery of God to a human construct.⁵² Barth showed a distaste for triune analogies, for they might end up as in Hegel's thought as replacements of the traditional doctrine "by a logical and metaphysical Trinity and by the relegation of the Christian Trinity to the sphere of naive, symbolical, and inadequate conceptions."⁵³ This would lead to cultural reductionism in Barth's opinion and in the future Tillich would be accused of this very error in his appropriation of Schelling's potencies in his own Trinitarian

⁴⁹ *ST III*, 284.

⁵⁰ As quoted in Thatcher, *Ontology*, 90.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵² Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, trans. G. W. Bomiley (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans, 1991) 104. "Then Hegel discovered the Trinity of the subjective, objective, and Absolute Spirit, in itself, for itself, and in and for itself. This was simply a variation on Augustine's ancient insight." (Hereafter cited as *GD*).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 105.

notion of the symbol of the New Being, that is Jesus *the* Christ. Ian Thompson draws this succinct conclusion, “To Barth’s *either-or*, Tillich offers an Hegelian *both-and*.”⁵⁴ Barth, on the other hand, expressed little of a direct literary dependence on Hegel. It has been estimated that he only had read about two hundred pages of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Religion*.⁵⁵ Even so, Barth admitted having a “certain weakness for Hegel and am always fond of doing a bit of ‘Hegeling’.”⁵⁶ However his respect for the depth of Hegel’s thought did not allay his theological criticisms. Translation and transformation of Hegel’s ideas was the task of a respectful and serious theological reflection on his concepts. Barth therefore translated Hegel’s “living God” as actually “the living man.”⁵⁷ He also surmised that Hegel’s trinitarian dialectic revealed “the basic principle of Hegelian anthropology.” This anthropology was summed up this statement, “God is this: to distinguish oneself from oneself, to be object to oneself, but to be completely identical with oneself in this distinction.”⁵⁸ Barth saw this as a statement not about God but actually about man, a thinking man to be sure, but one who would also think up a god and “stand as before an idol, or as before a nothing.”⁵⁹ Barth lamented:

A divine God in this sense would lead to an apotheosis of man, Hegel

⁵⁴ Ian E. Thompson, *Being And Meaning: Paul Tillich’s Theory of Meaning, Truth and Logic* (Edinburgh University Press, 1981) 15.

⁵⁵ John Macken, *The Autonomy Theme In The ‘Church Dogmatics’: Karl Barth And His Critics* (Cambridge University Press, 1990) 135.

⁵⁶ Busch, *Barth*, 387.

⁵⁷ Barth, *Protestant Theology*, 405.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 404.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 405. See also See also *CD II/1*, “This is indeed a forceful and profound description of the movement of nature and spirit which proceeds from ourselves and returns to ourselves.” 338.

explains that the divine likeness in man means that the genuine being of man in himself, the idea of man in his truth, is an element of God Himself in His eternal being, so that the nature of man is divine.⁶⁰

This principle of Hegelian philosophy violated the basic principle of Barth's theology that God was God and man was man, a supremely qualified distinction. Hegel's dialectical principle, the *Aufhebung*, was appropriated by Barth especially in his later *Epistle to the Romans* in the 'No' and 'Yes' of God that finds its synthesis in Jesus Christ.⁶¹ However, Barth was seeking to establish a dialectic of grace:

Hegel, in making the dialectical method of logic the essential nature of God, made impossible the knowledge of the actual dialectic of grace, which has its foundation in the freedom of God.⁶²

Barth went on to explicate that Hegel had failed to recognize the freedom as "the failure to recognize double predestination." The Covenant of God was grounded in the sovereignty of God, not the self-confidence of human rational thought as espoused by Hegel. Sin has not been considered in the existential reality of man. But dialectical thought, if not pressed too far, can still be of use in Barth's notion. So what was the exact nature of the dialectic that Barth employed?

Barth had demonstrated a Kierkegaardian dialectic in *Der Römerbrief* but his dialectic took on a threefold character in the trinitarian deliberations in his *Church Dogmatics*. Unlike Hegel, (and arguably Tillich), Barth's dialectical (or trilectical) thinking about God never proposed a synthesis at the human level.

⁶⁰ *CD III/1*, 193.

⁶¹ Price, *Anthropology*, 56. See also McCormack, *CRDT*, 266-274, for an instructive discussion of the dialectics found in Barth's *Römerbrief*.

⁶² Barth, *Protestant Theology*, 406.

Even in this anthropological dialectic the human relationship and reality is totally defined by God, who, in turn, is never defined *in toto* by the necessity of a relationship with us.

This emphasis on God's freedom and priority means that all statements about the relationship between God and man are based by Barth in God rather than in a reciprocal relationship in which neither side would have priority. Man had his being only in union with God, he becomes a subject only in the act in which God reconciles himself with him. That is the constitutive moment in Barth's anthropology.⁶³

Kierkegaard's "infinite qualitative distinction" would govern every dialectical model that Barth would choose to use for "God is in heaven, and thou art on earth."⁶⁴ To proceed from any other starting point would be an idolatrous move.

Friedrich Schleiermacher

During his studies in Berlin Barth had decided to emulate Schleiermacher's theology "blindly all along the line."⁶⁵ Although Barth was to later sever his dependence on Schleiermacher, both were seeking to establish an anthropology based on a theology of encounter. Schleiermacher had developed a piety which was "neither *knowledge* nor *action* but a determination of *feeling* or of *direct self-consciousness*."⁶⁶ This assertion Barth took to be a reduction of the role of theology to the field of philosophical psychology, a dangerous move to solipsistic anthropology. Barth was also suspicious that Schleiermacher's "chief motivation

⁶³ Macken, *Autonomy*, 136.

⁶⁴ *Romans II*, 10.

⁶⁵ As quoted in Gary Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology: Theology without Weapons* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000) 15.

⁶⁶ Barth, *Schleiermacher*, 212.

was to be a defender of modern Western European civilization.”⁶⁷ Though Barth never believed that Schleiermacher would have gone down the road of acquiescence to the Kaiser at the onset of World War One, the seeds had been sown of an en-cultured Christianity that had “unmasked itself in that manifesto and everything which followed after it (even in the *Christliche Welt*) was grounded, determined, and influenced decisively by him.”⁶⁸ Eventually Barth believed that the Barmen Declaration itself was a protest against Schleiermacher, Ritschl and the “basic tendencies” of the Enlightenment.⁶⁹ He discerned that the great weakness of Schleiermacher’s understanding of humanity lay in his deficient Christology. The “composite life” an “ellipse with two foci” as opposed to “the form of a circle with one centre” in Schleiermacher’s thought provided a “fundamentally self-sufficient” anthropology in which Jesus plays a small role as an “archetypal image”⁷⁰ Barth asserted that he had changed faith into mere knowledge:

Schleiermacher’s representation of faith certainly rests, however, upon the basis of a highest knowledge of human feeling or immediate self-awareness in its correlation to God, upon the basis of a highest knowledge of the nature and value of faith and the diversity of ways of believing together.⁷¹

This attitude is in direct opposition to Barth’s developing theology of encounter, a covenantal establishment of a real humanity residing in the initiative of God, not in the projection of religious feeling or cognitive self-awareness of transcendent need.

⁶⁷ Price, *Anthropology*, 66.

⁶⁸ Barth, *Schleiermacher*, 264.

⁶⁹ *CD II/1*, 175.

⁷⁰ Barth, *Protestant Theology*, 418, 456.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 435.

Barth wrote:

Under redemption, Schleiermacher in the last analysis understood only an empowering, and under Redeemer only a strong helper or helping power. Therefore there could not be any word of a *founding* of communion in the strict sense, but only of confirming it and continuing the fulfillment of an already existing communion.⁷²

Barth felt that the emphasis on ‘personal feeling’, even ‘utter dependence’ and a paradigmatic but still deficient Christology, had relegated Schleiermacher’s anthropology to a place where “man is not poor and miserable and naked and empty” but instead “we are led to the pinnacles of humanity.”⁷³ In his opinion this led to Schleiermacher’s notions being misappropriated by the later Existentialist theologians (especially Bultmann and Tillich) who believed that theology *had* to begin with anthropological questions to have any mediatory validity to the modern consciousness. Barth quoted Martin Redeker in this regard, who wrote in 1961 in an introduction to a reissue of Schleiermacher’s *Der christliche Glaube*:

The feeling of absolute dependance thus means being engaged by the transcendent as something infinite and unconditioned. If one wanted to interpret the concept of feeling and of immediate self-consciousness in contemporary terms as to rule out psychologistic misunderstandings, then perhaps this primal act of human existence could be characterized through modern existentialist philosophy in terms of care for being, for the foundation and meaningfulness of existence, as Tillich has already suggested in his dogmatics. The theology of the experience of faith thus means connecting all theological utterances to these basic questions of human existence.⁷⁴

Yet, in spite of all his theological misgivings about Schleiermacher, Barth always maintained a great respect for his piety and the rigor of his thought, however different.

⁷² Karl Barth, “Schleiermacher” in *Theology And Church*, 189.

⁷³ *GD*, 183.

⁷⁴ Barth, *Schleiermacher*, 269.

Tillich always believed himself to be in the line of Schleiermacher, and wrote an essay in 1915 on the philosopher's concepts of naturalism and supernaturalism.⁷⁵ He also, of course, acknowledged the great insights and theology of Schleiermacher, with his combination of piety and philosophical thought. Tillich was quick to point out the misuse of Schleiermacher's "feeling of absolute dependence" as more than a psychological function, "Rather, it is the impact of the universe upon us in the depths of our being which transcends subject and object."⁷⁶ This could be thought of as an "intuition of the universe", an immediate awareness of the divine. He focused on Schleiermacher's expression 'feeling of unconditional dependence'⁷⁷ as more than a mere subjective feeling, but a transcending of the emotive realm.

Tillich elucidated:

'Dependence' in Schleiermacher's definition was, on the Christian level, 'teleological' dependence--- a dependence which has moral character, which includes freedom and excludes a pantheistic and deterministic interpretation of the experience of the unconditional. Schleiermacher's 'feeling of absolute dependence' was rather near to what is called in the present system 'ultimate concern about the ground and meaning of our being'.⁷⁸

Tillich also criticized Schleiermacher's derivation of all the contents of the Christian faith from "religious consciousness", and "[e]xperience is not the source from which the contents of systematic theology are taken but the medium through which they are existentially received." However, Tillich's corrective phrase "ultimate concern" seems

⁷⁵ Paul Tillich, *Der Begriff des Über natürlichen, sein dialektischer Charakter und das Prinzip der Identität, dargestellt an der supranaturalistischen Theologie vor Schleiermacher* (Königsberg: H. Madrasch, 1915).

⁷⁶ Tillich, *Christian Thought*, 392.

⁷⁷ "das Gefühl der schlechthinigen Abhängigkeit", *ibid.*, 393.

⁷⁸ *ST I*, 42.

to leave an openness to that concern which might not be God; while Schleiermacher's 'dependence' is always focused on the divine. As John Clayton remarks, "It is a *phenomenological* description in the sense that 'ultimate concern' is purely formal and tells us nothing about the content or the object of the concern."⁷⁹ This allowed Tillich to assert that culture is the bearer of religious truth in that it reveals the concern of humanity toward the Unconditional even amidst the Conditioned. He also admitted that some of the "traits" of his Christology are similar to Schleiermacher's as both have a "doctrine of a divine-human relation." But the term *Urbild* ('essential man') is surpassed by Tillich's 'New Being' who is "new not only over against existence but also over against essence, in so far as essence remains mere potentiality." There was also a similarity of systematic approach between the two for Tillich recognized that:

The methodologically decisive thing is that theological propositions about God or the world or man are derived from man's existential participation in the ultimate, that is, from man's religious consciousness.⁸⁰

Tillich would form his theology around the idea of 'correlation', which starts from the questions of existence and the symbolic answers of the Christian faith.

Barth and Feuerbach

An important philosopher who elicited a negative response in Barth was Ludwig Feuerbach. Feuerbach's view of religion was that it was "something man is bound to have and cannot be without."⁸¹ Furthermore, man "is religious in so far as

⁷⁹ Clayton, *Correlation*, 109.

⁸⁰ Tillich, *Christian Thought*, 407.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

he projects his own nature into transcendent dimensions.”⁸² In his *Das Wesen des Christentums* of 1841, Feuerbach’s philosophy of ‘illusion’ or ‘projection’⁸³ was developed with the notion of the human species as the “epistemological, ontological, and ethical *substitute* for the absolute role that was previously played by the notion of God as traditionally understood.”⁸⁴ Feuerbach stated “*Man has his highest being, his God, in himself; not in himself as an individual, but in his essential nature, his species.*”⁸⁵ Barth believed that Feuerbach’s philosophy could only be critically evaluated from this point as it reduced theology to an inadequate anthropology, a point that Feuerbach had conceded in principle:

Although I do bring down theology to anthropology, it is much more true that I am raising anthropology to theology. And the latter is true of Christianity; while it brought God down to man, it made man God.⁸⁶

Barth had suspicions about Feuerbach in his writings but by no means ever dismissed him as inconsequential. Barth thought that Feuerbach “the anti-theologian was more theological than that of many theologians”⁸⁷ and in 1922, during a lecture at a minister’s gathering, he asked whether it might be better for them to cease “reading ministerial, theological, and similar periodicals, to take up Feuerbach for

⁸² Ibid., 124.

⁸³ Tillich cautions against over simplistic or Freudian interpretations of ‘projection’. “To this Feuerbach has an answer. He says that man’s experience of his infinity, the infinite will to live, the infinite intensity of love, etc., makes it possible for him to have a screen upon which to project images.” *Christian Thought*, 436.

⁸⁴ Karl Ameriks, “The legacy of idealism in the philosophy of Feuerbach, Marx, and Kierkegaard” in *The Cambridge Companion To German Idealism*, ed. K. Ameriks (Cambridge University Press, 2000) 262.

⁸⁵ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence Of Christianity*, trans. G. Eliot (New York: Harper & Row, 1957) 281.

⁸⁶ Karl Barth, “Ludwig Feuerbach” (1920) in *Theology And Church*, 222.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 217.

example, and to read him without trying continually to escape from his snares?"⁸⁸

These snares lay in Feuerbach's neither denying God or theology, but "In denying the existence of an abstract divine Being, divorced from nature and man, he is merely affirming God's nature as man's true nature."⁸⁹ Feuerbach's affirmation of the human bordered on an apotheosis of humanity in the qualities of the species which appear in human history. Lutheran theology, in Barth's estimation, had fallen into this trap with its doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum in genere majestatico*, in which "the pre-dicates of the divine glory, omnipotence, omnipresence, eternity, etc., are to be attributed to the humanity of Jesus", a viewpoint that would allow the status of God and humanity to be reversed.⁹⁰ Barth's covenantal theology would assert just the opposite; there could be no idiomatic communication of the attributes of divinity into the nature of mankind, as the nature of humanity can only be expressed and understood in the humanity of Christ as the predicate.

Feuerbach's anthropology has been described as a solipsism, a doctrine "that nothing exists outside my own mind and its contents"⁹¹ but still had elements of a relational character about it. The being of man "is achieved only in community, in the union of man with man--a unity which depends on the reality of the difference between *I* and *Thou*. Man with man, the unity of *I* and *Thou*, is God."⁹² Not only would Barth object to the definition of God in such anthropomorphic terms; but the

⁸⁸ Karl Barth, "The Need And Promise Of Christian Preaching" in *The Word Of God And The Word Of Man*, trans. D. Horton. (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1928) 127.

⁸⁹ Barth, *Protestant Theology*, 521.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 524.

⁹¹ H. R. Mackintosh, *Types Of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth* (London: Nisbet, 1937) 127.

⁹² Feuerbach, *Philosophie der Zukunft*, 1843 as quoted in Barth, "Ludwig Feuerbach", 220-1.

stress on the existence of man for others alone he found to be totally inadequate.

Later Barth was to write this with regard to Feuerbach's position:

It was an exaggeration to think of human existence as 'man that comes from man.' We do not exist for our fellow-man, we exist for God. Nor is our existence for God dependent on our existence for man.⁹³

Barth agreed that the primary character of humanity is dialogical but it is predicated on the dialogue between God and man revealed in the event of Christ. The trinitarian revelation of God disclosed the character of God as dialogical, a social ontology.

Ultimately Barth found it sad that Feuerbach did not see the great freedom in human existence orientated towards God and "thus seems to have interpreted the glory of God merely as the self-glorification of man, and the light of the life of Jesus Christ merely as the shining of a light supposedly immanent in man himself."⁹⁴ Feuerbach's theology resembles that which is *idolic* for Barth, for the gaze of the believer receives only a finite human gaze in return. No gaze of the infinite can be found in the "self-glorification of man."

William Herrmann and the Theology of Marburg

When a young theological student Barth was enraptured by Herrmann's theological ideas. He later stated, "I soaked Herrmann in through all my pores."⁹⁵ Not only did Herrmann introduce Kant and Schleiermacher into the burgeoning ideas of Barth, he was also in critical dialogue with the current philosophers Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp whose works found their way into Barth's

⁹³ *CD I/2*, 42.

⁹⁴ *CD IV/3.1*, 83.

⁹⁵ Busch, *Barth*, 45.

library.⁹⁶ But it was Herrmann's christology that proved to be the most instructive for him. In the then-current debates of Ritschl and von Harnack over theories of history and Christianity, Herrmann focused on the inner life of Jesus as an act of surrender and devotion to the will of God, as *the* historical fact of faith.⁹⁷ "For our most important experience, which is the real basis of our inner life, is for us the fact that we have met the Person of Jesus".⁹⁸ He disagreed with the Neo-Kantian attempts to reduce religious knowledge to a branch of scientific knowledge with his "way to religion" that might "only be understood by the man who himself lives in it." This entailed a "moral obligation", a covenantal commitment that unifies one's personality:

A man only comes to inward unity when he sets his heart upon a cause which he serves; in other words, he must be a man who really works; therefore religion also is attained only by the burden-bearers of mankind--by those, that is to say, who work for others.⁹⁹

This led Herrmann to have suspicions concerning the cosmological proof and natural theology for, in his view, only those who had experienced revelation in their souls could see traces of God in nature.¹⁰⁰ His critique of Schleiermacher's feeling of absolute dependence argued that this feeling was not "the God of religious faith, it was rather the world and its life-forces on which our biological

⁹⁶ Simon Fisher, *Revelatory Positivism?: Barth's Earliest Theology And The Marburg School* (Oxford University Press, 1988) 341.

⁹⁷ *CRDT*, 51-52.

⁹⁸ Wilhelm Herrmann, *Systematic Theology (Dogmatik)*, trans. N. Micklem (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1927) 76.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁰⁰ *CRDT*, 55.

lives are dependent.”¹⁰¹ Faith was self-authenticating, as it “firmly maintains that God performs such miracles for the faithful; for it can justify this conception to itself.”¹⁰² The trust of faith however was a volitional act that was experienced “as the work of one stronger than ourselves who inwardly compels us.”¹⁰³ This near synergistic concept of faith was balanced by the character of its miraculous nature as gift, an “overcoming of the world by the faith created by God.” In the same manner as Schleiermacher, Herrmann believed that this *Verkehr* (relation) was established by a “yearning” for one’s own inner life; and then a perception and understanding of the inner life of Jesus “breaks through all the veils of the story.”¹⁰⁴ The seeking of God is a “longing” for such a reality and in this encounter God is revealed. This bi-polar character of Herrmann’s anthropology described as an “experience (*erleben*) of revelation leading to an “*innere Sammlung* or *Selbstbehauptung*” is what Barth came to reject as the sovereignty of man over and against God.

Barth’s Response to Herrmann

Barth has recently been described as a “critical realist”.¹⁰⁵ Although he carried his German Idealist philosophical background into his writings, he

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 57.

¹⁰² Herrmann, *Theology*, 84.

¹⁰³ Fisher, *Positivism*, 142.

¹⁰⁴ Wilhelm Herrmann, *The Communion Of The Christian With God: Described On The Basis Of Luther’s Statements*, trans. J. S. Stanyon (London: Williams & Norgate, 1906) 75.

¹⁰⁵ *CRDT*, 67. Here (fn. 70) McCormack discusses Hans Frei’s analysis of the definite break with the Idealists in the later editions of Barth’s commentary on *Romans*. McCormack places the change earlier in the *first* edition of *Romans*.



fundamentally (or critically) disagreed with the starting point of Idealistic thought, that is, the presupposition of the human subject. This would ultimately affect his appropriation of Herrmann's theology and his later rejection of Existentialism as espoused by Bultmann and Tillich. Yet, by 1925, with the writing of Barth's essay on the dogmatics of Herrmann, his teacher's influence on his theology had definitely waned. Herrmann's use of the term 'self' in his thought seemed to be for Barth a significant word on which his theology rested:

[Herrmann's] theology stands or falls with the assertions (*Artikeln*) that man must 'himself' will, yet cannot; and then must 'himself' experience or receive the revelation.¹⁰⁶

Herrmann seemed to call for a different sort of 'submission' (*Unterwerfung*) with respect to the mystery of God. For Barth, dogmatics must begin with the *Deus dixit* and not human subjective apprehension. Therefore, God could never be an "assumption of our consciousness." The noetic must follow the ontic as Barth stated emphatically:

It is God setting himself over against our consciousness and its assumptions and now become known in that height, fixed and unchangeable by any manipulation of the circle of human knowledge . . . he is God giving himself to be known through his Word.¹⁰⁷

This concentration on the human apprehension of the inner working of Jesus as the datum of revelation led to a monophysite understanding of Christ. "Herrmann's Christology, as it stands, is the hopeless attempt to raise a stagnant

¹⁰⁶ Karl Barth, "The Principles Of Dogmatics According To Wilhelm Herrmann", *Theology and Church*, 254. German text in Karl Barth, *Vorträge Und Kleine Arbeiten 1922-1925* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1990) 579.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 260.

pool to that same height by means of a hand pump, nothing can be accomplished with it.”¹⁰⁸ By rejecting Herrmann’s theology Barth was basically rejecting the last vestiges of his nineteenth-century intellectual upbringing. Herrmann had tried to “fill in the hole” of the modern predicament with the experience of the inner life of Jesus with insufficient respect to orthodox Christology; what Barth wanted was an “open space” to be filled in by the Word of God. A “diastic dilemma” still remained for “how can divinity and humanity be considered, without reducing God to a foundation in human experience or rendering God absent from the human horizon altogether?”¹⁰⁹ In other words, how can the iconic be manifested in the realm of the human horizon without a solipsistic reduction?

Tillich and Schelling

Tillich was, in his early theological career, most influenced by Friedrich Joseph von Schelling (a philosopher Barth thought could be “bypassed” along with Fichte).¹¹⁰ Early in his university life, Tillich purchased Schelling’s *Collected Works*.¹¹¹ Schelling’s philosophy became an *idée fixe* for him and Tillich not only wrote two dissertations on his work and but was also known as an expert on his writings and his influence on the existentialist movement. Tillich’s self-stated acknowledgment of the philosopher’s thought as “being determinative” of his philosophical and theological development has led many of his interpreters to

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 263-264.

¹⁰⁹ William Stacy Johnson, *The Mystery of God: Karl Barth and the Postmodern Foundations of Theology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997) 19.

¹¹⁰ Barth, *Protestant Theology*, 382.

¹¹¹ Thomas, *Tillich*, 4.

over-estimate his dependence on Schelling.¹¹² Ian Thompson speculates that to assume “both the form and content of Tillich’s thought are determined by the early influence of Schelling is simplistic.”¹¹³ Tillich summarized in 1936:

I thought that, fundamentally, I had found the union of theology and philosophy in the philosophical explanation of the Christian doctrine through the older Schelling, in his founding of a Christian philosophy of existence in contrast to Hegel’s humanistic philosophy of essence and in his interpretation of history as the History of Salvation. I must confess, that even today, I find more ‘theonomous philosophy’ in Schelling than in any of the other idealists. But to be sure, not even Schelling was able to bring about a unity of theology and philosophy.¹¹⁴

Schelling had asked, “Why is there anything at all, why is there not nothing?”¹¹⁵

The possibility of non-being is an existential ‘shock’, a “sudden, externally produced, instantaneous experience.”¹¹⁶ Tillich’s summarized:

There is no answer here except that the immediate certainty that something exists. If primordial being is prior to every concept, then even the concept of God cannot be applied to it . . . It is the *prius* of divinity, that which can be God.¹¹⁷

In Tillich’s view, this demonstrates the qualities of a true correlational philosophy which is worthy of emulation for Schelling “not only asks existentialist questions; he also tries to give religious answers to them.”¹¹⁸ This methodology is a constant

¹¹² see, Clayton, *Correlation*, 92 fn.11.

¹¹³ Thompson, *Meaning*, 31.

¹¹⁴ Paul Tillich, *The Interpretation of History*, trans. N.A. Rasetzki & E.L. Talmey (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1936) 35.

¹¹⁵ “. . . *warum ist überhaupt etwas, warum ist nicht nichts?*” as quoted in Thatcher, *Ontology*, 18.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹⁷ Tillich, *The Construction of the History of Religion*, 60.

¹¹⁸ Tillich, *Christian Thought*, 447.

feature of Tillich's "Correlative Theology. Tillich posits the concept of the *Unbedingt* (Unconditioned) as the description of the form of existence, "which is presupposed in any meaningful order of thought or being."¹¹⁹ This resembles Schelling's *Unvordenkliche*, as "it is that which all thinking and all being must presuppose and it is also ultimately inaccessible to thought." The 'Unconditioned' therefore can only find its representation in symbols. "Indeed, any attempt to speak unsymbolically of the Unconditioned is an attempt to erect a Tower of Babel to reach the infinite."¹²⁰ This 'infinite', termed *Das unvordenkliche Sein* by Schelling, described God as the *Urgrund* or *Das absolute Indifferenze*. There are three potencies of God in his schema, *der bewußtlose Wille, des besonnene Wille*, and *die Einheit beider*. Schelling posits a trinitarian outline:

The Father is the absolute possibility of overcoming *das unvordenkliche Sein*; the Son as the overcoming power; and the Spirit as the fulfillment of the power to overcome the irrational.¹²¹

In this manner Schelling takes the postulation of "non-being and the irrational into divinity itself." As Kenan Osborne points out, Tillich has taken this "basic dialectic" and incorporated it in the God-human relationship. "Essential Manhood is precisely this dialectical relationship of the finite to the infinite within essence." His iconic concept of the New Being "becomes totally transparent" to the divine. The divine is a "process working within man's very essence and within his very

¹¹⁹ James Luther Adams, *Tillich's Philosophy*, 45.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹²¹ Kenan B. Osborne, *New Being: A Study On The Relationship Between Conditioned And Unconditioned Being According To Paul Tillich* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969) 74.

history,” not apart from it as in the synthesis of Hegel.

Tillich thought that Schelling had not gone far enough with his embryonic existentialism. Schelling, in Tillich’s view, had returned to “Kant’s critical position: God as God is an object of faith, and there is no rational realization of the idea of God.”¹²² Schelling it seems had tried to approach “the God of revelation” in a type of ‘metaphysical empiricism’, a “speculative urge in his mind that conquered the Existential restriction and humility he had himself postulated.” What Tillich ultimately conceived was a God without being, a “God above (or beyond) God,” which is “the content of absolute faith”¹²³ In spite of any misgivings that he may have had about Schelling’s philosophy; Tillich always thought highly of him in his corrective of Hegel, his influence on Kierkegaard and his theology which Tillich described as:

very much a doctrine of grace, stressing the given divine reality before our merits and before our moral acts. So natural philosophy was a way of rediscovering grace over against the moralism of the Enlightenment.¹²⁴

The Phenomenology of Edmund Husserl

Given Barth’s aversion to any philosophical foundations for a dogmatic theology, it is not surprising that Husserl is barely mentioned in Barth’s writings. Yet, as far back as 1930, R. Birch Hoyle purported that Barth’s neo-Kantianism was an attempt to “stem the new doctrines of Husserl and Heidegger.” Birch

¹²² Paul Tillich, “Existential Philosophy” (1944) in *Paul Tillich: Philosophical Writings*, ed. G. Wenz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989) 360.

¹²³ Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952) 182.

¹²⁴ Tillich, *Christian Thought*, 443.

believed that Barth's *Die christliche Dogmatik* of 1927, utilized a form of the "bracketing" procedure of Husserl and "kept scrupulously to the method."¹²⁵ However, this method seemed to be inadequate in dealing with "abstract themes, Christian discourse and preaching" for "they are not within any man's co-consciousness as 'immanent' objects."¹²⁶ Barth felt that this problem should lead to a movement from phenomenological thinking to existential thought to even an ethical form.¹²⁷ His later theology would ultimately manifest its iconic and sacramental significance in the ethical realm as will be demonstrated. George Hunsinger summarizes with this statement, "As far as knowing or loving God is concerned, any phenomenological description of the event would only bring results that are theologically uninformative."¹²⁸ To proceed from an existential or Husserlian phenomenological methodology would be an idolatrous movement away from the efficacy of the witness of Scripture and the direct mediation of the Spirit in the faith of the elect. To start from any human phenomenology would be to follow false gods. Tillich gave more credence to Husserlian phenomenology than Barth. He counseled:

Theology must apply the phenomenological approach to all its basic concepts, forcing its critics first of all to see what the criticized concepts mean and also forcing itself to make careful descriptions of

¹²⁵ R. Birch Hoyle, *The Teaching Of Karl Barth: An Exposition* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1930) 59.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹²⁷ Karl Barth, *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1927) 49.

¹²⁸ George Hunsinger, *How To Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (Oxford University Press, 1991) 219.

its concepts and use them with logical constituency . . . ¹²⁹

However, Tillich took issue with the phenomenologist's taking such an event and seeing it as a vehicle to convey the "universal meaning of revelation." There were too many contradictory examples of revelation that had been encountered by "phenomenological intuition." Husserlian phenomenology, was "competent in the realm of logical meanings", but inadequate in the "realm of spiritual realities like religion."¹³⁰ What Tillich proposed was to add an "existential-critical element" to the "intuitive-descriptive" elements of phenomenology. The "reception of Jesus as the Christ by Peter" was to be the universal criterion used by Tillich, however imperfect and distorted the revelatory event actually may be.¹³¹ This means that both the iconic and the idolic (or "demonic" in Tillich's future parlance) could be found in temporal cultural expressions and depictions as well as in the sacred realm of Church and Word. The symbolic language of the Church and its icons, the Cross and the Resurrection, could be compared to ontological symbols representing finitude and estrangement. Tillich's "metalogical"¹³² phenomenology would become more explicit in his theology of the cross in his later work.

¹²⁹ *ST I*, 106. See also "The Philosophy Of Religion" (1925) in Paul Tillich, *What Is Religion?*, ed. J. L. Adams (New York: Harper & Row, 1969) 41-50 for an earlier exposition on the phenomenological method and its inadequacy.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 108. The question arises here whether the phenomenological criterion is the historical event of Jesus of Nazareth, his death and resurrection, or whether it is the *faith* of Peter that is the point of revelation. cf., Tvard, *Tillich*, Ch. 3 on this issue.

¹³² Tillich's "metalogical method" as described in "The Philosophy Of Religion" 50-51, is a "critico-dialectal method" that attempts to understand the "inner dynamic in the structure of the meaning-reality."

Conclusion

Both Barth and Tillich started their pastoral and academic careers as what has been termed ‘mediating theologians’. Following the path of Idealist philosophy and the resultant theological trends thereto, they both sought to relate their notions of Christian proclamation with the philosophical claims and counter-claims of their surrounding European culture. For both Barth and Tillich the Enlightenment critique lay at the root of their search for theological truth. Barth expanded Kant’s moral categories by postulating the irreducible need for grace (divinely initiated) as the proper catalyst for moral reason, while Tillich believed that the “essence of man plays an important role,” for it is human finitude, “analyzed critically and dialectically, that expresses the categorical imperative.”¹³³ Tillich augmented Kant’s moral ethic with his notion of ‘ultimate concern’, as an absolute of the ontological possibility of being or non-being, an expression of the essential character of human existence. Like Barth, the paradigm comes from the beyond; “In Christ, the essential Man, one discovers the material norm of the ‘what-should-be’.”¹³⁴

Hegel’s dialectic appeared in various guises in both their theologies. Tillich observed that Hegel’s dialectical system had tried to do too much in its attempt to embrace all reality. In addition, he thought that Hegel had made essence non-dialectical. “Man’s essence and every other finite essence remains in a state of

¹³³ Osborne, *New Being*, 56.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

dynamic and dialectic relation to God, who is the *Urgrund* of all finite being.”¹³⁵

Yet Tillich uses a dialectic method himself in his “root-dialectic: the union between the finite and the infinite.”¹³⁶ Barth’s later theology in his *Epistle to the Romans*, will reflect dialectical characteristics resembling Hegel’s but avoided the closure of a synthesis; “but on the contrary, attacks the syntheses forged by man, out of a proper respect for the synthesis which God in his grace throws over all our contradictions in order to bind us to himself.”¹³⁷ God is God, and man is man, and only Christ can be the synthetic bridge between the two.

Barth, although he would later remove himself from the theological lineage of Schleiermacher, always held this theology in the highest regard. What Barth did was to turn Schleiermacher’s theology around; “Instead of analyzing human existence, in order to inquire after Christ’s contribution to its religious aspect, he analyzes Christ’s existence, in order then to inquire after our religion’s place therein.”¹³⁸ Yet, it can be shown that with regard to the expression and depiction of the iconic Barth never strayed too far from Schleiermacher’s notions of the inner subjectivity of divine revelation. Tillich, on the other hand, started from the premise of his concept of ‘ultimate concern’ but still left open the possibility of the Christ-event as the ‘given’ as opposed to Schleiermacher’s ‘feeling of absolute dependence.’ Barth never accepted Tillich’s *Anknüpfungspunkt* as

¹³⁵ Ibid., 79.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 81.

¹³⁷ Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction To His Early Theology, 1910-1931* (London: SCM Press, 1962) 83.

¹³⁸ Jenson, “Barth”, 25.

having a Christological *a priori*, but only a coded anthropology that allowed too much cultural relativity in the theological scheme. If, for Barth, Schleiermacher only speaks of God ‘by speaking of man in a loud voice’¹³⁹, so also Tillich. A new mediation was to be in order for both Tillich and Barth. Initially the garb of Hegelian dialectic and Enlightenment epistemology would be prevalent in their respective theologies, but the catastrophe of the war and its attendant cultural and religious malaise would reshape their initial commitments to these concepts. Theologically speaking, a new ‘Copernican revolution’ was in the making and both Barth and Tillich would be its champions. The ‘Absolute Man’ was to be superseded by the ‘Absolute God’. “Theological Cartesianism” as Barth had dubbed it, was the anthropocentric false step of the Liberal notions of his teachers.¹⁴⁰ Their response to the crisis of 1914 only reinforced Barth’s suspicion of the inadequacy of their premises. Barth’s own developing theological positivism would lead him to replace the anthropocentric with the christocentric, the known God in human thought, to the hidden God revealed in existence but maintaining unrevealedness in a dialectic tension.

Tillich was also critical of Idealism in its most absolute forms referring to it deprecatingly as the *bürgerlicher Idealismus*.¹⁴¹ However his usage of the implied existential elements of Hegel and Schelling, especially the concepts of

¹³⁹ Torrance, *Barth*, 57.

¹⁴⁰ On Barth and his analysis of Descartes see *CD III/1*, 350-363, and Robert D. Shofner, *Anselm Revisited: A Study of the Role of the Ontological Argument in the Writings of Karl Barth and Charles Hartshorne* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1974) Ch. 1.

¹⁴¹ Osborne, *New Being*, 50.

essence, existence and essentialization, show his marked affinity with his Idealistic heritage. His mature christology would be derived from his basic Lutheran and philosophical gleanings, yet his rhetorical style would lead him to express his theology in unique terms that would confound Barth and produce a fair amount of misunderstanding in the future.

CHAPTER 3

KARL BARTH: PASTOR AND PROFESSOR

In this chapter we will trace Barth's early career, from his pastorate to his early teaching positions. It will be shown that he changed radically through the years of the first World War and during his growth as a Reformed theologian in Göttingen. The horrors of the German war initiatives and Barth's attempts to distinguish between the icon and the idol (especially in his commentary on *Romans*) will show his concerns not only with the dangers of anthropological and philosophic presuppositions as foundations for theology, but the reality of even *religious* thought falling into the same snares of idolatry. The icon of the covenant of grace, exemplified in the doctrine of predestination which will later become dominant in Barth's mature thought, will also be delineated from its origins in his theological development and his encounter with the importance of the Bible as the rule of faith and witness.

In 1908 Barth left his academic studies upon his graduation from Marburg and took up the post of editorial assistant for the journal *Christliche Welt*, edited by Martin Rade. He continued his reading of Kant and Schleiermacher, met Rudolf Bultmann and established his life long friendship with Eduard Thurneysen. Later in that same year Barth began a two year term as an assistant pastor in Geneva where he began to preach on a regular basis. Here Barth studied

Calvin's *Institutes* and continued his study of Schleiermacher and composed a lecture, "The Christian Faith and History"¹ in 1910. Here, Barth stressed that faith cannot be something "presupposed in the essence of humanity" for "the Christ intended by faith is a Christ who is utterly beyond us."² Yet the "passive-active experience of God is *somehow* historically conditioned and determined through the *personality of Jesus* which is present in human society."³ Barth would go so far as to claim that "Christ's righteousness becomes my righteousness. Christ's piety becomes my piety. He becomes I."⁴ Christ is mediated in culture and in the inner feeling of the believer, a possibility that Barth would later renounce as being an anthropological starting point for a theology of self that could lead to idolatry.

In 1911 Barth moved to Safenwil where he commenced his duties as a solo pastor to a predominately agricultural and industrial community congregation. Here Barth became aware "of the full scope of the task of a Reformed preacher, teacher and pastor."⁵ The mantle of liberal theology was still present as he admitted "while in this pastoral work I was still very much under the influence of Schleiermacher."⁶ The social and economic plight of Barth's congregants led him to become involved in the Socialist movement in the community. Barth was no stranger to the political movement as he had been involved in the "Zofingia" student association giving a

¹ Karl Barth, "Der Christliche Glaube Und Die Geschichte" in *Vorträge und Kleinere Arbeiten 1909-1914* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1993) 155-212. This lecture was later published in *Schwiezerische theologische Zeitschrift*, 29 (1912).

² Eberhard Jüngel, *Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy*, trans. G. E. Paul (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986) 29.

³ *CRDT*, 75.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 76. McCormack also states that "Barth would one day recoil in horror at words like these."

⁵ Busch, *Barth*, 61.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

lecture in 1906 on the social issues of capitalism, mammonism, poverty and the growing gap between the rich and the poor.⁷ In Safenwil, Barth took on the workers' grievances and began to educate himself in economics and trade union affairs. He stated, "I regard socialist demands as an important part of the application of the gospel, though I also believe that they cannot be realized without the Gospel."⁸ Later he became disenchanted with the Socialist movement itself, and its staunchest allies Ragaz and Kutter for supporting the war effort in Germany.

Barth's involvement with Socialist political ideas exemplified his notion of the call of the transformed (by grace through faith) Christian to an ethical expression in the midst of one's personal history. In concert with Herrmann's emphasis on the inner-life of Jesus knowable in faith, Barth sought to create "a theology ultimately christomorphic in character, with the symbol, image or *Bild* of Christ receiving the status of a cipher or conceptual stimulator, origin and goal of a personal *Gotteserlebnis*."⁹ This 'christo-morphic' paradigm was not only to be experienced in the individual sphere but also to have a prophetic expression in the socio-political arena as well. As George Hunsinger has argued, Barth wanted to "work out a viable solution to the problem of theory and praxis--including political praxis."¹⁰ The iconic point of the 'christo-morphic paradigm' would need a visible point of reference which Barth would later explicate as an 'inner-outer' ethical anthropology in his concept of the root metaphor of covenant in the *Church*

⁷ Ibid., 37.

⁸ Ibid., 70.

⁹ John C. McDowell, *Hope in Barth's Eschatology: Interrogations and transformations beyond tragedy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000) 64.

¹⁰ George Hunsinger, "Conclusion: Toward a Radical Barth" in his *Karl Barth and Radical Politics* (Westminster, Philadelphia, 1976) 191. As quoted in McDowell, *ibid.*, 67.

Dogmatics. Barth reiterated his Socialist leanings and its iconic manifestation in a lecture “Jesus Christ and the Social Movement” later published in the socialist daily *Free Aargau*.¹¹ Here he asserted that “Jesus *is* the social movement, and the social movement *is* Jesus in the present”, and he also qualified the tacit identification of God’s will with the utopian dreams of Socialism not their actual practice.¹² Barth was speaking to both Christians (who perhaps thought that Barth would “paint the Saviour red”) and to the Socialists whom he wished would “enter into a personal, inner relation with this man.”¹³ He made the distinction between what Socialism was currently doing and what the desire of the movement actually was. The Gospel and the Socialist movement in his thinking had much in common because “Jesus by word and deed opposed that material misery *which ought not to be*.”¹⁴ True humanity exists when one “decides to become a comrade.”¹⁵ In the end neither side was happy with Barth’s presentation but he remained undeterred in his commitment to the Socialist movement for the immediate future.

Barth sought to relate the concepts “personality” and “absoluteness” to the nature of God in a speech delivered to the Aargau Pastors Association in May of 1913.¹⁶ This speech also shows Barth’s early predilection for dialectical thinking.

¹¹ Karl Barth, “Jesus Christus und die soziale Bewegung” in *Vorträge 1909-1914*, *ibid.*, 380-408. English translation in Clifford Green (ed.), *Karl Barth: Theologian of Freedom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 98-113.

¹² McDowell, *Eschatology*, 72-73.

¹³ As quoted in Clifford Green (ed), *Karl Barth: Theologian of Freedom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 101.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁵ Jungel, *Barth*, 30.

¹⁶ *CRDT*, 104. Barth’s lecture was originally published as “Der Glaube an den persönlichen Gott”, in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 24 (1914).

Religious experience encompassed both the “personal nature of the encounter and the experience of the Other as the Power over all things,”¹⁷ which establishes the concepts of ‘personality’ and ‘absoluteness’. These ideas cannot be forced into a unified concept but must be left to “stand alongside each other in open contradiction, each bearing valid witness to the truth.” No analogy for God can start from the premise of human personality (as stated by Ludwig Feuerbach) but can only be found in a concrete religious encounter. Barth wrote:

A concept of God which results from projecting human self-awareness into the realm of the transcendent cannot reach the reality of God, let alone describe it exhaustively. The concept of God proper to religion cannot be something projected from out of ourselves but rather only a reflection of the fact which has been created in us. This fact is the *life from God* which is given to us through our *connection with history*. This experience of being inwardly conditioned by history is *religious experience*. In it we have God and on the basis of it we can speak of God.¹⁸

God is to be the first principle of all knowledge and reality and to question the “foundation” (*Grundlegung*) of reality was to “affirm” (*Abrede*) it at the same moment:

The ‘unfounded’ (*Ungrundlegung*) becomes the ground for the foundation of what it thought and willed, the pure deduction (*Abgezogenheit*) to pure origin. It is the truth and validity which rests in itself--the truth and validity of the a priori--that manifests itself here as the positive component of the concept of God.

This was in direct contrast to “The concept of the Absolute [which] arose as an expression of despairing humility in the depths of the human spirit at the self-induced irony of human reason.”¹⁹ The rationale of critical idealism is now open

¹⁷ Ibid., 105.

¹⁸ Ibid., 106. German text from Karl Barth, *Vorträge und Kleinere Arbeiten 1909-1914* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1993) 547-548.

¹⁹ Ibid., 267.

to the Augustinian question of faith and longing *inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te*. “*In Te* speaks of the immediate religious perception and hereby places the Sublime as a Thou before the I.” Human personality finds its meaning in its relatedness to the Other, a construal of community reflecting the inner community of the Trinity in Barth’s later thought. ‘God in us’ will later become ‘God for us’ in encounter and relation in his mature doctrine of the Covenant.

By November Barth was in trouble at his church as five of his session members resigned in a protest over his “*Sozipredigten*”, in their opinion his socialist preaching had gone too far.²⁰ Although Barth weathered the storm his overbearing emphasis on Socialist themes receded in his sermons of the following year. Bruce McCormack’s reading of the sermons of 1913 reveals a Barth giving “prominence of the theme of the judgement and wrath of God.”²¹ This placed Barth in opposition to Ritschl and Herrmann who thought that God was not in the business of judgment as that is an “anthropopathism” and a sinner’s experience of personal self-condemnation. A covenantal theme appeared in the sermon of April 27:

Where God’s love is at work, there righteousness too must have its place, either in that one exercises it or in that one experiences it himself to his harm. God’s love cannot engender anything else but righteousness, either as gift or punishment Amos showed powerfully what it means to have fellowship with God, to stand in a covenantal relationship with Him . . . The relationship of God to His own is a legal relationship. It does not rest on whim and inclination, but rather on truth.²²

Barth sought to urge his congregants to “declare war” on the “relationships” which

²⁰ Ibid., 92.

²¹ Ibid., 93.

²² Barth, Sermon of April 27, 1913, as quoted in *CRDT*, 94.

governed their social, political, and economic lives.²³ The qualitative difference of God also appeared as sermonic theme compared to human piety and self-sufficiency. “God is still wholly other and the true life is still wholly other than you now imagine for yourself!”²⁴ Religious human endeavour is only transitory and a mere “parable of the Kingdom.”²⁵ Yet, God can still work through human effort (even Socialist) and a “revolution” could yet happen, “The world must slowly grow into this transformation. And God Himself it is who completes this transformation. He wants to lead humanity through the defective and perish to the perfect and eternal.”²⁶ Even the “storms “ of revolution and “catastrophe” could be used by God as a means of grace. However, such optimism in human possibility (qualified as it was) was soon to change.

Theology with Weapons: The Outbreak of the World War One

In 1960, Barth recalled that “One day in early August 1914 stands out in my personal memory as a black day.”²⁷ On that day ninety-three German intellectuals (including Barth’s teachers Harnack and Herrmann), “issued a ringing manifesto of support for the German war policy.”²⁸ Harnack had even written the speech that Kaiser Wilhelm II used to call the nation to war. The intellectuals declared that, “We believe that for European culture on the whole salvation rests on the victory which German ‘militarism’, namely manly discipline, the faithfulness, the courage to

²³ Barth, Sermon of June 22, 1913, *ibid.*, 98.

²⁴ Barth, Sermon of May 25, 1913, *ibid.*, 100.

²⁵ Barth, Sermon of December 28, 1913, *ibid.*, 101.

²⁶ Barth, Sermon of March 2, 1913, *ibid.*, 102.

²⁷ Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (John Knox Press, 1960) 14.

²⁸ Dorrien, *Barthian Revolt*, 37.

sacrifice, of the united and free German nation will achieve.”²⁹ Barth was astounded and totally dismayed at his teachers as he wrote to his friend Martin Rade (who had not sided with the intellectuals); “Something of the deep respect which I felt within myself for the German character is forever destroyed.”³⁰ Not only did this have an effect on Barth’s nationalism but also further catalyzed his break with the German liberal theological tradition and the Enlightenment thought of Schleiermacher. Barth lamented:

Of a just cause on either side there can honestly be no talk . . . All of these things are completely alien to the innermost being of God. And if they nevertheless take place, then there is only one explanation for it: the innermost being of God is also completely alien to humankind.³¹

If Barth needed any more proof of the “infinite qualitative distinction”³² between God and humanity the outbreak of the war and the conduct of the German theological community was decisive. He saw that the hostilities were the judgment of God on the countries of Europe. “This is a *Gotteszeit* as never before. A time of judgment without equal.”³³ Yet that judgment carried the implication of an act of grace which provided him an optimism “born of a deeply personal, existential conviction that God is in control of the events which take place in this world.”³⁴ Barth never gave up on the human race although he felt its progress was portrayed in “catastrophes and violent storms”-- characterized as the inbreaking of the *judgment* of God.

²⁹ Ibid., 38.

³⁰ Barth to Rade, October 1, 1914 as quoted in Timothy Gorringer, *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony* (Oxford University Press, 1999) 15.

³¹ Barth, sermon of Sept. 6, 1914, *Karl Barth, Predigten 1914* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1974) 465.

³² *Romans II*, 10. German text from *Der Römerbrief* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1929) xiii.

³³ Karl Barth, sermon of Aug. 9, 1914, *Predigten, 1914*, 433.

³⁴ *CRDT*, 117.

Barth's disappointment with the German Socialist party led him to join the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland in 1915. He wrote Thurneysen "that faith in the Greatest does not exclude but rather includes within in it work and suffering in the realm of the imperfect." Amidst this movement Barth became interested in the preaching of Christoph Blumhardt and resolved to "open himself to God's 'Wholly Other reality'"³⁵ as well as the New Testament dimension of hope. This was a departure from the liberal school of theology (as espoused by Ritschl) for Barth "regarded God as a Reality which is complete and whole in itself apart from and prior to the knowing activity of human individuals."³⁶ This *diastasis* came to be expressed as the "World remains World. But God is God."³⁷

Nineteenth-century theology had originated in a 'turn to the subject' but Barth's course now clearly gave evidence of a 'turn to theological objectivism'.³⁸ The *diastasis* between God and humanity not only precluded any synthesis but also led Barth to become:

engaged in the (seemingly impossible) attempt to think from a standpoint lying in God Himself (*ein Denken von Gott aus*) and therefore, from a standpoint lying beyond this world, history, and human possibilities.³⁹

Barth was beginning to turn away from the constraints of idealistic thinking and its cultural expression in the near *Kriegszeit* of German theology, perceiving that the Cartesian 'turn to the subject' had divinized humanity and its 'pietistic' endeavours. A new actuality was to be presented, as the 'real' for Barth was not the world known

³⁵ Dorrien, *Barthian Revolt*, 41.

³⁶ *CRDT*, 129.

³⁷ Karl Barth, "Kriegszeit und Gottesreich", lecture of 15 Nov. 1915 as cited in *CRDT*, 129.

³⁸ *CRDT*, 130.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 129-30.

empirically. The truly 'real' is the wholly otherness of the *Self*-revealing God in comparison with whom the empirical world is mere shadow and appearance."⁴⁰

The implications of this change in direction would be profound; for Barth needed a new source of truth and reality, as well as an iconic point of reference--and the Bible itself seemed to be the answer.

This new found approach led Barth into a crisis of Socialist commitment as well as a crisis in the task of preaching. In a lecture given in 1916 entitled "The Righteousness of God" Barth asserted that the "surest fact of life" given us by "the voice of conscience" is the "righteousness of God."⁴¹ This is a *transcendent* consciousness, not a human one that can only reinforce and validate mere human striving. In misunderstanding the true origin of righteousness from God alone, humanity creates a Tower of Babel situation that gives a false sense of significance. "Our answer to the call of conscience is one great makeshift (*Surrogat*), extending over the whole of life, a single gigantic 'as if' (*als ob*)!"⁴² A catastrophe has occurred, for humanity has created a false god, an idol that cannot speak or influence the detritus of human endeavor. "The strange new world of the bible" that Barth spoke of reveals the disturbance that arises in the judgment of God and in the crisis of conscience that reveals the "wholly otherness" of God. Herein lay the seeds for Barth's dialectic between the 'No' and 'Yes' of revelation that appeared in Barth's commentary on Paul's letter to the Romans, *Der Römerbrief*. The idol of human philosophical and theological solipsism was to be evaluated by a new phenomenology

⁴⁰ Ibid., 130.

⁴¹ Karl Barth, "The Righteousness of God" in *The Word of God and The Word of Man*, 9. German text in Karl Barth, *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie: Gesammelte Vorträge* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1929) 5-17.

⁴² Ibid., 15.

whose criteria was that of the biblical Word of God.

Barth's intense concentration on *Romans* led to a breakdown in his health in early 1917. After a break from his pastoral duties he delivered a lecture in February based on his ongoing biblical research entitled "*Die neue Welt in der Bibel*". Here Barth discoursed about the "strange new world" to be discovered in the Bible for it "tells us not how we should talk with God but what he says to us; not how we find the way to him, but how he has sought and found the way to us."⁴³ In this address Barth pressed the matter of the divine-human contingency in its most stringent form and articulated an early description of his understanding of the Covenant:

It is not the right human thoughts about God which form the content of the Bible, but the right divine thoughts about men. The Bible tells us not how we should talk with God but what he says to us; not how we find the way to him, but how he has sought and found the way to us; not the right relation in which we place ourselves to him, but the covenant (*Bund*) which he has made with all who are sealed once and for all in Jesus Christ.⁴⁴

This covenantal theme would later become the cornerstone of Barth's theology based on the doctrine of election, but its iconic possibilities were beginning to manifest themselves in his thinking at this early date.

Work progressed on his commentary even as Barth continued to busy himself in the Socialist activities of Safenwil. He continued to stand for the trade unions against the factory owners, "in the background, sometimes openly, and sometimes even a bit from the pulpit."⁴⁵ As he described it later, Barth had a 'hands-on' approach to the

⁴³ Karl Barth, "The Strange New World within the Bible" in *The Word Of God And The Word Of Man*, 43.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Busch, *Barth*, 103.

Socialist issues but was “only marginally interested in socialist principle and ideology.”⁴⁶ One of the local factory owners was derisive and referred to Barth as the “worst enemy” he had ever encountered.⁴⁷ This worker involvement precipitated another crisis in the church as attendance fell; but the workers began to trust Barth and even attended worship. “The socialists were the keenest audience for my sermons--not because I preached socialism but because they know that I was the man who tried to help them.”⁴⁸ By the end of the year however, Barth began to distance himself from the Religious Socialists and resigned from the committee to reorganize the movement.

The final year of the war found Barth suffering in the great influenza epidemic as well as a general destabilization of Europe’s economy including Switzerland. Barth continued to struggle with his commentary stating “Does the good God really want this piece of writing?”⁴⁹ By August it was finished and a publisher found, the war ending as he finished reading the final proofs. Barth was as convinced as ever that returning to scripture was the only way:

If only we had turned to the Bible earlier, we should now have firm ground under our feet. Now people brood alternately over the newspaper and the New Testament and really see dreadfully little of the organic connection between the two worlds, about which one should now be able to give a clear and powerful witness.⁵⁰

The first edition of *Der Römerbrief* was published the following year. Traces of Barth’s philosophical readings of Kant’s appeal to the ‘thing-in-itself’ and Plato’s

⁴⁶ Ibid., 104.

⁴⁷ *BT*, 42.

⁴⁸ Busch, *Barth*, 103.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 105.

⁵⁰ *BT*, 45.

theory of forms were apparent in its argument, plus an ‘expressionist’ criticism of accepted reality in an attempt to uncover the ‘true reality’ that lay below the surface.⁵¹

Gary Dorrien has observed, that Barth “embraced the expressionist thesis that true reality can be glimpsed only by disrupting or breaking up the world of appearances that conventional historiography and other disciplines treat as ‘real’.”⁵² Barth’s turn from liberal theology in *Romans* “emphasized that the Word breaks into history not so much to transform the world as to shake it and throw it into crisis.”⁵³ The manifestation of this crisis Barth explained in the opposition of eternity and time, a *Durchbruch*:

With the breakthrough: Immanuel! God with us! which has taken place in current-time (*Jetztzeit*), in the messianic present, in the decisive turn of the aeons *in heaven*, a life process is also started *on earth*, on the historical-psychological side of our existence. We are no longer the same. We have been placed into the process which reaches from beyond (*Jenseits*) into this side (*Diesseits*).⁵⁴

This distancing “from the beyond” informs Barth’s anthropology throughout his commentary. From that beyond comes the “dawning of a new world” in Christ, the end of all human times and the beginning of God’s time.⁵⁵ The “eternal Now” has replaced human time as we know it with an *jenseitigen* event-- “an inner movement (*Bewegung*) in the life of God.”⁵⁶ The ‘Old Adam’ has been superseded by the ‘New Adam’, a new *Voraussetzung* established in Christ. Barth’s concept

⁵¹ CRDT, 140.

⁵² Dorrien, *Barthian Revolt*, 53.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁵⁴ Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief (Erste Fassung) 1919* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1985) 167, (Hereafter cited as *Römerbrief*).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 86

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 161.

of the 'Fall' is critical here, for he uses the notion of the "*Ursprung*" both as a reference to God and also to the primal relationship between humanity and God. Thus there can be no ontological conjoining of God and humanity no "continuum of being". The 'immediacy' (*Unmittelbarkeit*) of the relation between God and humanity has been broken by Adam's desire for independence⁵⁷ Ultimately, the seeking of autonomy leads to a form of heteronomy, from which follows sin and death.⁵⁸ The ethics of autonomy and heteronomy stand in contradistinction to the reality of grace. The existential question 'What shall I do?' is made irrelevant as Barth says, "Stop asking that question! Every word of it is ambiguous and confused."⁵⁹ The realm of grace instills the Christian not with a system of ethics, but with the notion of shared exhortation, "an expression of the whole community on the move."⁶⁰ This was described by Barth as the 'organic' character of the Kingdom, the "*Organismus gegen Monadenwesen*."⁶¹ Therefore, we are more than a collection of discreet individuals for we "stand in a living connection with each other."⁶² This is the horizontal or immanent aspect of the Covenant on which Barth was later to explicate. Apart from Christ, Christian exhortation makes little sense for its ethical injunctions can only be derived from the "new being in Christ (rather than through the application of the categorical imperative)" and only in the context of a

⁵⁷ Ibid., 177.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 272.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 263.

⁶⁰ Gorringer, *Barth*, 43.

⁶¹ *Römerbrief*, 164.

⁶² Ibid., 476.

moral and “concrete ethical situation.”⁶³ In the same manner, this “New Being in Christ” was also to become a formal component of Tillich’s theology in the future.

Although an explicit doctrine of the Covenant was not explicated in *Der Römerbrief* in any detail, one passage bears noting. In a comparison of Moses and Pharaoh being the “messenger” (*Verkündiger*) and “representative (*Vertreter*) of God’s Covenant of Grace” (even in dialectical and historical opposition), the relation between God and them was based, not on mechanistic fate (*Verhängnisses*) but by virtue of the will of God through which existence and life are established.⁶⁴ This relationship between God and humanity then, is established on God’s initiative modeled in the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ. There is no ethical determination for the gift of grace, it is given only in the activity of God. Therefore, a true freedom exists in the world, a freedom of exhortation to be witnesses to the love of God in the realm of moral behavior, and be responsible in work and praise to the gift of grace itself. This freedom of response is the basis of Barth’s covenantal ethics and also the measure of any sacramental efficacy as he was to propound in the future. However, at this time, the various reviews of his commentary led Barth to believe that he had not stated the ‘infinite qualitative distinction’ between God and humanity in bold enough terms and so he decided to publish a new edition. This second rewriting of *Der Römerbrief* was to become the edition that Karl Adam exclaimed “fell like a bomb on the playground of the theologians.”⁶⁵

Barth’s burgeoning fame was further enhanced by his appearance at the famous

⁶³ CRDT, 171.

⁶⁴ *Römerbrief*, 377.

⁶⁵ As quoted in Dorrien, *Barthian Revolution*, 45.

Tambach Conference for German religious socialists in 1919. A late substitute for Ragaz, Barth (who had not intended to attend) created a sensation when he declared that:

We must win again the mighty sense of reality in which Paul is one with Plato and the prophets. Christ is the absolutely *new from above*; the way, the truth, and the life of *God* among men; the Son of Man, in whom humanity becomes aware of its *immediacy* to God.⁶⁶

The ‘immediacy’ of God’s presence in the world obviates the possibility of dual kingdom theology. *Contra* Friedrich Nauman’s statement, “Jesus has nothing to say about the arms race”, Barth proclaimed that the religious and secular could not be safely separated.⁶⁷

The Wholly Other in God--itself resisting all secularization, all mere being put to use and hyphenated--drives us with compelling power to look for a basic, ultimate, original correlation between our life and that wholly other life.⁶⁸

The correlation with the “wholly other life” takes on a Christomorphic character for “The Christian is that within us which is not ourself but Christ in us.”⁶⁹ The manifest history of God “lives in us and about us”⁷⁰, an anthropological and undefined phenomenological assertion that is disclosed in the activity of the Kingdom of God. Barth’s lecture presented a new revolution, a dynamic power, a ‘movement’ that joins the revolution of the ‘inbreaking’ Kingdom of God.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Karl Barth, “The Christian’s Place in Society” in *The Word Of God*, 286.

⁶⁷ Gorringer, *Barth*, 49.

⁶⁸ Barth, “The Christian’s Place”, 288.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 296.

⁷¹ Gorringer, *Barth*, 51.

By 1920 Barth was busy rewriting his *Romans* commentary and continuing to speak against the German liberal theological tradition, most especially Schleiermacher. This was demonstrated in his lecture “Biblical Questions, Insights and Vistas” in which the phrase the “Wholly Other” as a reference to the mystery of God first made its appearance.⁷² Barth’s theology was also being influenced by the posthumous writings of Franz Overbeck who had promulgated a new and radical eschatology of the early church.⁷³ Overbeck’s impact on Barth and the new edition of *Romans* is not to be underestimated.⁷⁴ Also highly influential of was Søren Kierkegaard’s theology of paradox (highly important for Tillich as well), which Barth acknowledged as the only possible ‘system’ in his theology. Kierkegaard had resisted the “Hegelian notion that all contradictions can be resolved in a higher synthesis, the dialectic process moving forward in smooth and unbroken continuity from one point to the next.”⁷⁵ He proposed his own unique concept of the “qualitative dialectic” that emphasized “the naturally occurring distance between God and humanity apart from the incarnation.”⁷⁶

Barth’s understanding of the incarnation as God’s being-in-act led him to seek the point of contact between God and humanity veiled and unintuitable by

⁷² Barth, *Word of God*, 51-96. “[God] is not a thing among other things, but the *Wholly Other*, the infinite aggregate of all merely relative others.” 74.

⁷³ see Karl Barth “Unsettled Questions for Theology Today” (1920) in *Theology And Church*, 55-73.

⁷⁴ On Overbeck and Barth see especially *CRDT*, 226-235, Dorrien, *Barthian Revolt*, 61-66 and Neil B. MacDonald, *Karl Barth and the Strange New World within the Bible: Barth, Wittgenstein, and the Metadilemmas of the Enlightenment* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000). MacDonald asserts that the “metadilemma” of Hume and Kant in regards to the categories of knowledge is mirrored by Barth’s contention that theology is itself autonomous and that the Bible constituted a “*sui generis theological* historicity”, 18.

⁷⁵ Mackintosh, *Types*, 227.

⁷⁶ Price, *Anthropology*, 86.

reason but revealed in the event of the cross. "In faith, 'the death [of Christ] becomes the only (the only!) parable of the Kingdom of God'."⁷⁷ The correspondence between ourselves and Christ is a shared existence in tribulation, an analogy of His death, "Our *intuitable* kinship with Him (which becomes knowable to us in the mirror of His death on the cross as such) . . . is in itself identical with the fact of the incurable problem of human existence generally."⁷⁸ This Christomorphic anthropology is made clear in Barth's thought once and for all in the miracle of the incarnation:

GOD SENDS HIM . . . to announce the resurrection of the flesh; to proclaim the new man who recognizes himself in God, for he is made in His image (*Ebenbild*), and in whom God recognizes Himself, for He is his pattern (*Urbild*); to proclaim the new world where God requires no victory, for there He is already Victor, and where He is not a thing in the midst of other things, for there He is All in All; and to proclaim the New Creation, where Creator and creature are not two, but one.⁷⁹

Barth had seen that theme of the Bible and the essence of philosophy resided in the "KRISIS of human perception--the Prime Cause: the Bible beholds at the same cross-roads--the figure of Jesus Christ."⁸⁰ Note McCormack's distinction:

the medium of revelation is not the revelation. Jesus of Nazareth, a historical figure, standing on the plane of history, is *not* the revelation. He is the medium of revelation.⁸¹

This begs the phenomenological question, for in what way does this medium allow himself to be perceived by human cognition? What event or process can possibly

⁷⁷ *Romans II*, 202.

⁷⁸ *CRDT*, 259.

⁷⁹ *Romans II*, 277.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, preface to the Second edition, 10.

⁸¹ *CRDT*, 250.

“lift the veil” that allows the Unintuitable to become Intuitable?

The Dialectical Turn: KRISIS and Paradox

The effect of the new edition of *Romans* on the religious community was one of the great theological events of the twentieth century. In Torrance’s estimation:

it is an all-out attack upon immanentism and relativism, arrogant scepticism and idolatry, it takes the most radical of all roads, for it places all human undertakings and formulations, theological and ecclesiastical as well, under the total judgement of grace, under the *krisis* of the Spirit of Christ . . .⁸²

Barth was seeking to deal with the theological and epistemological problem of God making Himself known to human beings “without ceasing to be the *Subject* of revelation.”⁸³ The incorrectness of liberal thought had often reduced God to a projection of human desires but for Barth the *KRISIS* of God’s own revelation shows the idolatry of such intentions. “Here again is that contempt and presumption which fails to perceive the distance between God and man, which inevitably exalts and enthrones the no-God of this world.”⁸⁴ The theological difficulty lay in God remaining God after the inbreaking of revelation and not becoming a mere subject to be manipulated by fallen humanity. This was to speak of a presence of God *in* history in such a way as to make it clear that these realities are not *of* history. Revelation expressed in culture was not *of* culture and in this Barth fundamentally disagreed with Tillich as will be seen. Furthermore,

⁸² T. F. Torrance, *Barth*, 51.

⁸³ *CRDT*, 207.

⁸⁴ *Romans II*, 57.

a close reading of Barth's second edition of *Der Römerbrief* with regard to anthropological and covenantal concepts leads to two lines of thought, his regard of these two concepts in relation to the notions icon and idol, and his description of theological ethics.

Barth summarized the intent of *Romans* for it "moves around the theme that in Christ Jesus the *Deus absconditus* is as such the *Deus revelatus*." A legitimate epistemology is based only in the event of divine initiative as Barth asserted:

This means that the theme of the Epistle to the Romans--Theology, the Word of God--can be uttered by human lips only when it is apprehended that the predicate, *Deus revelatus*, has as its subject *Deus absconditus*.⁸⁵

Human utterances and endeavours can never come first; revelation occurs at the precise "Moment, when God not man, speaks and acts, [which] is the Moment of Miracle."⁸⁶ Yet humanity cannot apperceive such an event for even when saying "God" one is still saying "Miracle." Barth argues:

We are incompetent (*Nicht-Schauen*) to see what is invisible (*Unanschaulichen*) and to comprehend (*Nicht-Begreifen*) what is incomprehensible (*Unbegreiflichen*). We have no sensible organ wherewith to perceive the miracle. Human experience (*Erfahren*) and human perception (*Verstehen*) end where God begins.⁸⁷

Therefore, the only adequate and iconic response to this phenomenological occurrence is the one of John the Baptist, a mode of wonderment and witness.

This was depicted in Barth's favorite work of art, Grünewald's Isenheim Altar,

⁸⁵ Ibid., 422.

⁸⁶ The German verb *geschehen* is translated here as the English noun 'Moment', an occurrence or happening. Later, Barth will use the cognate *Moment*.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 120.

where John is pointing to the crucified Jesus.⁸⁸ To point elsewhere would be an idolatry. Barth quotes Kierkegaard:

‘Now, Spirit is the denial of direct immediacy. If Christ be very God, He must be unknown, for to be known directly is the characteristic mark of an idol.’⁸⁹

This terse phrase would continue to have its impact on Barth’s refutation of any iconic depiction of Christ and his ultimate repudiation of sacramental efficacy. Idolatry is to be found in the the human “falsehoods” (*Lügen*), which Barth describes as a “No-God” (*Nicht-Gott*).⁹⁰ This is what humanity fashions for itself when it is in rebellion (*Widerstand*) and declares itself to be God making the “appearance of the idol (*Abgott*) . . . inevitable.”⁹¹

Even if the image of Jesus Christ cannot be represented by any conceptual or visible icon, he still is the iconic moment in some manner. Barth is reluctant to give more than this to avoid the obvious false step of idolatry. It is the atonement of Jesus, by his sacrifice and faithfulness to the God who sent him, which is the iconic moment. The scandal of Christ’s death on the cross, that which is the paradox of Messiahship, is that event in which, “By His blood, . . . Jesus is proved to be the Christ, the first and last word to men of the faithfulness of God.”⁹² Barth quotes Fr. Hiller, “In the picture of the Redeemer the dominant

⁸⁸ Cf., *ibid.*, 158, where Barth sees the finger of John pointing to the “the deepest horror of death.” In “Biblical Questions, Insights, and Vistas” Barth highlights the words of John, *‘Illum oportet crescere, me autem minui’*, which is the “characteristic insight of the Bible”, *Word of God*, 75-76.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 105.

colour is blood.” However, the blood is not an icon in and of itself, it only signifies the KRISIS of judgement that is the “shade” of the cross.⁹³ Yet, a phenomenology of the cross is still to be found in Barth’s exposition, an understanding of the human “conformity to Christ in the likeness of His death.” The gaze of the believer reveals, not the eternal, but the finite reality of human selfhood in bondage to sin. Barth underscored, “With my eyes fixed upon Christ, in this judgement and surrender and dissolution (*Aufhebung*) and contradiction (*Gegensätzlichkeit*) I recognize myself.”⁹⁴ Later, however, Barth seems to contradict himself by stating that

It is the road--which is the shadow cast by the Cross upon all ‘healthy’ human life: which is the place where the tenacity of men is invisibly, yet most effectually, disturbed and shattered and dissolved; the place where the possibility (*Möglichkeit*) of God, of the Spirit, of Eternity, can enter within our horizon.⁹⁵

There follows the claim that, “in so far as in His death the invisible God becomes *for us* visible”, yet even with this Barth would not allow a possible iconic depiction, not even in the art of Grünewald. The human construct of such an icon would not disclose the gaze of the infinite, it would remain, therefore, an idol. Only the divine initiative of grace can provide this “possibility”, for it can not be apprehended by any human cognition or vision. The initiative of God is the summation of any phenomenology for Barth as McCormack observes:

Where the veil is lifted--or better, made to be *transparent*, for Jesus’ death in God-abandonment never ceases to be a veil--

⁹³ Ibid., 106.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 198.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 239. Translation amended.

where this occurs, there God is known.⁹⁶

In a similar mode, Marion allows for a similar understanding of:

how Christ Jesus offers not only a visible image of the Father who remains invisible but even (visible) face of the invisible itself (the Father), a visible image of the invisible *as invisible*.⁹⁷

What is given by Christ is the “trace of God” derived from the “kenosis of the image.”⁹⁸ For Barth also, it is only in the suffering of Christ that the glory of

God is manifested as a saturated phenomenon:

it is for His sake that we are bound to gaze upon it, to see in it the step, the movement, the turning point from death to life, and to apprehend it as the place where Christ is to be seen. To overlook suffering is to overlook Christ.⁹⁹

For Marion this kenotic phenomenon is manifested in the liturgy at the moment of the Eucharist.¹⁰⁰ For Barth in *Romans* it is in the participation of the suffering of Jesus, that the believer, as disciple and witness, discloses the reality of the Son of God in sacramental form. Christ’s death “is the occasion (*Anlaß*) by which men are able to apprehend (*verstehen*) themselves in God, that is to say, they apprehend His increase (*Wachstum*) in their decrease (*Abnehmen*).”¹⁰¹ This apprehension can only be given by grace alone and, for Barth, “grace is obedience.”¹⁰²

⁹⁶ *CRDT*, 255.

⁹⁷ Jean-Luc Marion, “The Blind at Shiloh” in his *The Crossing Of The Visible*, trans. James K. A. Smith (Stanford University Press, 2004) 58, (Hereafter cited as *CV*).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁹⁹ *Romans II*, 305.

¹⁰⁰ *CV*, 64.

¹⁰¹ *Romans II*, 196.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 229.

Ingrid Spieckermann has detected that Barth was postulating an “analogy of the cross” (*Kreuzesanalogie*) as the the *Urgestalt* in the *Wendung* of Barth’s theology that later led to his *analogia fidei*.¹⁰³ McCormack considers her observation a major discovery in the understanding of Barth’s theology and also notes that, for Barth, “the analogy of the cross has in view a highly negative content.”¹⁰⁴ The cross itself is a sign of God’s judgment on sin and evil, not an icon to be venerated in any revelatory manner. The actuality of grace calls for a less static response in this regard, a reaction of gratitude and moral obedience; an ethics of grace.

The Ethics of Grace

Barth referred to the subject of ethics as “The Great Disturbance” (*Die grosse Störung*).¹⁰⁵ But grace is spoken in stronger terms yet, as a forceful “downright conclusion”(schlichten Feststellung).¹⁰⁶ Grace establishes the possibility of human response to its assertion, a reminder of “that primal Origin by which my existence is affirmed, and that I perceive that I--and yet not I---AM.”¹⁰⁷ This too is a “disturbance” for it calls one to war---not only against others but more emphatically--against oneself. This marginalizes all human achievement and human strivings to the realm of death (as Barth later wrote in 1922):

¹⁰³ Ingrid Spieckermann, *Gotteserkenntnis: Ein Beitrag zur Grundfrage der neuen Theologie Karl Barths* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1985) 143.

¹⁰⁴ *CRDT*, 261.

¹⁰⁵ *Romans II*, 424.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 208.

The problem of ethics contains the secret that man as we know him in this life is an impossibility. *This* man, in God's sight, can only perish.¹⁰⁸

Therefore, no "positive" or "interim" ethic can be established for it remains under the influence of the sinful (erotic) character of the world. "How, indeed, can it be otherwise? for human endeavor must inevitably be disturbed by the thought of God."¹⁰⁹ Only grace can quell the disturbance for it "means also the possibility, not of a 'good'(!) conscience, but of a consoled conscience."¹¹⁰ Grace is God's act of mercy that thus "provides the positive answer to the ambiguity of the human"¹¹¹, but still continues to precipitate a sense of contradiction in the sphere of human ethics. Barth discerned that:

Grace is the unobservable truth of men: it is their impossibility, which constitutes the veritable possibility of their acting or not acting (*Nicht-Tuns*); it is their veritable existence, which can be defined only as non-existence.¹¹²

Robert Willis describes this process (or actuality) of Grace as "an absolute translation of the human."¹¹³ A new ontological status is now achieved; one that is governed by the "indicative of divine truth" and the "imperative of divine reality" as exemplified according to the will of God.¹¹⁴ Ethical exhortation now leads humanity to *repentance*, a "rethinking" about the divine initiative of God

¹⁰⁸ Karl Barth, "The Problem Of Ethics Today" in *The Word of God*, 140.

¹⁰⁹ *Romans II*, 424.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 428.

¹¹¹ Robert Willis, *The Ethics of Karl Barth* (Leiden: Brill, 1971) 29.

¹¹² *Romans II*, 215-6.

¹¹³ Willis, *Ethics*, 30.

¹¹⁴ *Romans II*, 222.

and *worship*, which allows the penitent to make themselves present as sacrifices to the will of God. Only in this manner and in this order can true Christian ethics become efficacious.

Once the priority of grace is established, Christian ethics proceeds on a basis of the imperative of “existential belonging to God.”¹¹⁵ Barth describes ethics in the primary level of “sacrifice” (*Opfer*) characterized by worship and in a secondary level as a mode of behavior that “stands under the *Telos* of life.”¹¹⁶ Sacrifice is “not a human action” (*Gemeinschaft*), but also an “encountering of the OTHER in the full existentiality of his utter OTHERNESS.”¹¹⁷ Human encounter is to mirror the divine encounter in Jesus Christ, the ultimate “Individual, The One, The New Man.” This divine-human pattern Barth later explicated in his concept of the *analogia relationis*, or even an *analogia electionis*:

AGAPE is the answer of the man who under grace is directed towards the unsearchable God. AGAPE is the concrete analogue of election (*Erwählung*). And further, as the love of men towards men, AGAPE demonstrates the existential existence of my neighbour who is unobservable.¹¹⁸

The ethical behaviour of the Christian in summary, is a life of love, first in the acceptance of the paradoxical love of God (as wholly other yet present in Christ) and the manifestation of election in the love of others (as wholly other yet present to us in Christ). This is the basis of an implied Covenant in *Romans* which Barth would later explicate in more detail in the *Church Dogmatics*, a Covenant

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 220.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 430-1.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 443.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 452.

with two distinct dimensions, that of ‘disturbance’, and the other of ‘conclusion’.

The Covenant of Grace

The Reformed doctrine of the Covenant is not found in *Romans* in any specificity. Early in the book Barth alludes to it as a condescension from God:

In all this mist (*Nebel*) the prime factor (*Kern*) is provided by the illusion (*Wahn*) that it is possible for men to hold communication with God or, at least, to enter into a covenant relationship (*Bündnisfähigkeit*) with Him without miracle--vertical from above . . . ¹¹⁹

The miracle from above is the *Gestalt* of Grace; “It is the invisible relationship (*Relation*) in which all things stand; and the knowledge of it remains always a dialectical knowledge.”¹²⁰ Grace is a manifestation of the KRISIS that “cuts through every particular human status” and acts as an agent of “dissolution” (*Aufhebung*) to the pretense of human affairs.¹²¹ Grace is revelation and divine possibility for humanity for it is “the relating of the visible man to his invisible personality which is grounded in God.”¹²² The structure of Grace (as Covenant) has the vertical origin in the initiative of God but also an immanent disclosure in an ontological restructuring of the *Gestalt* of human existence as well. This ontological restructuring will find a similarity with Tillich’s concept of the ‘New Being’ in the future.

Grace carries with it the Covenantal idea of gift, command and response.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 50.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 135.

¹²¹ Ibid., 139. [misprinted as v.16,17 in the English text sixth edition, read *iv. 16,17*].

¹²² Ibid., 200.

Barth iterated, “Grace is the power of obedience; it is theory and practice, conception and birth; it is the indicative which carries with it a categorical imperative.”¹²³ In discovering oneself through the efficacious power of Grace, comes a freedom to be concerned with Other, the arena for the correct practice of Christian ethics, not to obtain grace, but to practice true *agape* in response to that which has already been given. This *agape* is “the concrete analogue of election.”¹²⁴ Election and Predestination play a significant role in Barth’s understanding of the implied Covenant of *Der Römerbrief* as well.

The “analogue of election” leads to a numinous awe of the Wholly Otherness of God. The act of submission to the Presence of God is completed when “He who has been chosen (*erwählt*) by God cannot say He has chosen God.”¹²⁵ This is the paradox, the impossibility of the human made possible by the action of God, yet unspeakable and unable to be possessed. For Barth, Predestination to “blessedness” (*Seligkeit*) has been distorted by Augustine and the Reformers in a mythological form “as though it were scheme of cause (*Ursache*) and effect (*Wirkung*), thereby robbing it of its significance (*Tragweite*).”¹²⁶ This is a tendentious reading of the tradition perhaps, exacerbated by the arrogance of Barth’s contemporary religious context in the decadent Weimar Republic and his own ironical rhetoric.¹²⁷

¹²³ Ibid., 207.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 452.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 59.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 324.

¹²⁷ On Barth’s rhetorical style see Stephen H. Webb, *Re-Figuring Theology: The Rhetoric Of Karl Barth* (State University of New York Press, 1991).

Barth continues:

Predestination means the recognition that love towards God is an occurrence, a being and having and doing of men, which takes place in no moment of time, which is beyond time, which has its origin at every moment in God Himself, and which must therefore be sought and found only in Him.¹²⁸

The concept of predestination remains paradoxical and is not to raise questions of who and who are not the elect but to concentrate “attention upon the eternal foreordination of temporal men, by reminding them of the decision of *him that calleth*, and by insisting that God is veritably God.”¹²⁹ Barth also admonishes the Church “not to dissolve the secret of Predestination by imposing upon it some human ‘way of salvation’.”¹³⁰ The Church is in the sway of the destiny of Esau and therefore can only point to the way of Jacob. So also individual Christians live in the tension between sin and election but the irruptive power of Grace leads to the practice of true *agape* towards God and neighbor. It would not be until Barth’s engagement with the Reformed doctrine of the Covenant in his teaching at Göttingen that he would begin to uncover the biblical warrants for this aspect of the structure of Grace.

Conclusion

The success of the first edition of *Der Römerbrief* led to Barth’s appointment as professor of Reformed Theology, a position partially funded by American Presbyterians. Göttingen was a Lutheran school and Barth found himself in the

¹²⁸ *Romans II*, 324.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 346.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 385.

minority among the rest of the faculty. He was not well-versed in Reformed dogmatics or even the Confessions, but Barth characteristically immersed himself in the task of this Calvinistic endeavour “burning the midnight oil in my struggle over it.”¹³¹ The struggle would lead him to a more Covenantal approach to his own theology based on the Reformers and the early Church theologians. Barth’s future studies of Calvin and Anselm were to change his theological direction radically.

In spite of these changes much of Barth’s theology remained consistent throughout his career. The character of the *Gotteslebnis* informed his theological epistemology all the way to the last volume of his *Dogmatics* and beyond. The German intellectual collapse into the *Kriegstheologie* impacted Barth so greatly that he always maintained suspicions of any theological ideology connected to a specific political expression. This misgiving, as will be seen, would lead him into direct confrontation with the Nazi regime and an expulsion of any existential thought in his writings that might suggest an anthropology in the guise of Feuerbach and Schleiermacher. Yet, it would be an anthropology that would become the iconic manifestation of grace in the late *Dogmatics*.

Barth’s return to the written Word, as the supreme *locus* of his theological objectivism, would also open him up to the tradition of the Reformers in his research in Göttingen. The doctrine of the Covenant of grace is only implied in his commentary on *Romans*. In his class preparations in Göttingen however, Barth’s interaction with Calvin, Heppe and other Federal theologies would lead to a later profound assertion of the doctrine of Election, an overarching theme to be

¹³¹ Busch, *Barth*, 129.

explored in the following analysis of his theology. In the next chapter we will see how Barth interacted with Tillich and the ultimate disintegration of the so-called “Dialectical Movement.”

CHAPTER 4

PAUL TILLICH: CHAPLAIN AND PHILOSOPHER

Tillich's Early Theological Influences

Tillich's mature theological concepts developed after a long process of intellectual reflection, war experience and socialist commitment. In this chapter we will be concerned with his early writings up to 1923 in order to extract the threads of his theological and philosophical thought. Beginning with Tillich's Lutheran tendencies, his assertion of the Protestant Principle and the divine initiative of grace provided him with a criteria with which to employ in his notions of the realm of the sacred and secular. How Tillich develops his philosophy of culture from his exposure to expressionistic art and his establishment of the concept of *kairos* will also be explored. Finally, Tillich's historic meeting with Barth and the resulting issues between their theologies will conclude the chapter. From this we can garner important insights on the differences of their approaches to both the iconic and the idolic. Tillich's religious upbringing as a Lutheran and the influence of his teacher Martin Kähler led to his re-stating Luther's doctrine of justification.¹ However, Tillich's own

¹ See Paul Tillich, "Author's Introduction" in James Luther Adams, ed., *The Protestant Era (Abridged Edition)*, (University of Chicago Press, 1957) ix. Here Tillich describes the task of a "theology of mediation" as a "mediation between the eternal criterion of truth as it is manifest in the picture of Jesus as the Christ", (cited hereafter as *PE*).

assessments of Luther came from his own tendentious viewpoints in his attempts to clarify and justify his own theology. It was a joke amongst his students that Tillich's lectures on Luther and Calvin revealed more about his own theology than that of the Reformers!² Tillich rarely quoted Luther but always acknowledged that his own religious substance "is and remains Lutheran."³ In his own description of the Reformer's influence on German thought Tillich wrote, "Lutheranism has worked indirectly through philosophy, as well as directly to check socialism."⁴ In this regard, Tillich adjudged Barth's 'dialectical theology' as both Calvinistic and Lutheran in his "strongly transcendent idea of the Kingdom of God."⁵

Luther's prophetic criticism in Tillich's opinion, was a "struggle against the claim of reason to be able to grasp and realize truth on its own account" for truth 'transcends both being and spirit.'⁶ This brings a judgement to all things finite and in the doctrine of justification by faith "drives rational criticism 'to its depth and its limit.'⁷ Tillich found that the existential concept of the 'boundary-situation' disclosed the autonomous search for finite security for both the Church as well as the individual. Luther had stood:

² John Heywood Thomas, *Tillich* (London: Continuum, 2000) 1.

³ As quoted by James Luther Adams, "Paul Tillich on Luther" in *Interpreters Of Luther: Essays In Honor Of Wilhelm Pauck*, ed. J. Pelikan (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968) 306.

⁴ Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966) 75.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶ Paul Tillich, "Protestantism as a Critical and Creative Principle" in *Political Expectation*, ed. J. L. Adams (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1981) 15. Originally published in *Protestantismus als Kritik und Gestaltung, Zweites Buch des Kairos-Kreises*, ed. P. Tillich (Darmstadt: 1929).

⁷ Adams, *Interpreters*, 310.

in the depth of this boundary-situation in which the divine ‘Yes’ over the whole of human existence can be received; for this ‘Yes’ is not founded on any human achievement, it is an unconditional and free sovereign human judgement from above human possibilities.⁸

However, grace must ultimately prevail even in the nature of faith as Tillich elaborated in an important essay from his *Religiöse Verwirklichung*⁹ of 1929,

“Faith is the faith of man. It does not come *from* man, but is effective *in* man.”¹⁰

The *Gestalt* of grace is founded on the reality of the Word who is Jesus the Christ both in word and event. Scripture speaks not only about this reality but as “an expression of this reality” as it has been “grasped by it.”

The reality of grace is the *prius* of all speaking and hearing about it; being moved by the Spirit is the *prius* of faith, not the reverse. But to be moved by the Spirit or to be grasped by the unconditional means to be drawn into the reality and the life of a *Gestalt* of grace.¹¹

Both the doctrine of grace and the divine initiative propounded by Tillich in this essay reflect his dependence both on Luther and the Reformed tradition. However, Tillich would carry this *Gestalt* of grace even farther in his perception of the reality of grace being found in the immanent (secular culture and its artistic, moral and philosophical expression) as well as the transcendent (as found in religious symbols). His notions of grace being found in both sacred and secular spheres would lead him into asserting the possibility of iconic depictions of grace manifesting themselves in various modes of human apprehension.

The prophetic criticism of Luther motivated Tillich to propound one of the

⁸ Paul Tillich, “The Protestant Message And The Man Of Today” in *PE*, 201.

⁹ Paul Tillich, *Religiöse Verwirklichung* (Berlin: Furche, 1929)

¹⁰ Paul Tillich, “The Formative Power Of Protestantism” in *PE*, 210.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 211.

important keys to his theology, the 'Protestant Principle.' He wrote later in 1952:

In an early polemic between Karl Barth and myself, he accused me of 'still fighting against the Great Inquisitor.' He is right in asserting that this is a decisive element of my theological thought. What I have called the 'Protestant Principle' is, as I believe, the main weapon against every system of heteronomy.¹²

This principle was based on "Luther's fight for justification by grace and through faith alone."¹³ As a self-critical principle it avoids its own self-negation by deriving its "formative power" from the "power of the New Being that is manifest in Jesus the Christ."¹⁴ This Christo-centric emphasis is the "bedrock" of all Protestantism, in its sacramental foundation, principle and reality.¹⁵ The bible is to remain as Scripture the "original document of the event which is called 'Jesus the Christ' as the sole "criterion of all Scripture and the manifestation of the Protestant Principle."¹⁶ The "boundary situation" of Luther's despair and sense of dread is answered by that found in Scripture, i.e. the power of the New Being and its restorative characteristics in the temporal existence of human reality.¹⁷ Yet Tillich would strike a markedly different Christological formulation of the cross and the doctrine of the Atonement than Luther which would leave him

¹² Paul Tillich, "Autobiographical Reflections" in *The Theology Of Paul Tillich*, ed. C. W. Kegley & R. W. Bretall (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956) 8.

¹³ Paul Tillich, "The Protestant Principle And The Proletarian Situation" in *PE*, 170. The original essay was published as *Protestantisches Prinzip und proletarische Situation* (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1931).

¹⁴ Tillich, "Author's Introduction", xviii.

¹⁵ see Ian E. Thompson, *Being And Meaning: Paul Tillich's Theory of Meaning, Truth and Logic* (University of Edinburgh Press, 1981) 12, for an identification of the Protestant Principle with the "Kantian critical principle" and later with 'Ockham's razor', 76.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xxiv.

¹⁷ see Theodor Siegfried, "The Significance of Paul Tillich's Theology for the German Situation" in Kegley & Bretall, *The Theology Of Paul Tillich*, 80-82.

open to a Barthian misinterpretation in the future. However, as George Lindbeck has pointed out, “Tillich sometimes seems to affirm something very near to the *solus Christus*. He says, for example, that the message of Christ is the ‘ultimate expression of the divine’.”¹⁸ However, the ‘something like’ remains problematic for interpreters of Tillich’s theology. Is the ‘grasping power’ of the Protestant Principle similar to the Reformed doctrine of the covenant of grace espoused in the theology of Karl Barth?

The Influence of Schelling on Tillich’s Theology

As has been shown in Chapter 2, Tillich’s Lutheran background was always combined with the ever present philosophy of Schelling. Tillich’s christology, trinitarian thought and his symbolism of the cross can be seen to be under the influence of Schelling’s notions. Schelling’s anthropology is explicated through his doctrine of the “potencies.” The first potency is the “real or sacramental basis of religion”, the second is the “formal and efficient cause of being” and the third is the realm of the spirit “the final cause . . . the unity of the first and second potencies.”¹⁹ A basic trinitarian outline of these potencies was adumbrated with God as the “unconscious will”, Christ as the “rational will”, and the Spirit as the unity of the other two. In Schelling’s description:

The idea of the trinity passes through three moments: it must proceed from *tautousia*, where only the Father is the dominating *ousia*--where the Father comprehends all; it must proceed from *tautousia* through

¹⁸ George Lindbeck, “An Assessment Reassessed: Paul Tillich on the Reformation” in *The Journal of Religion* Vol. 63/4 (Oct. 1983), 391.

¹⁹ As summarized by Victor Nuovo in his “Translator’s Introduction” in Paul Tillich, *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling’s Positive Philosophy: Its Presuppositions and Principles* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974) 16-17.

heteroousia, which lasts as long as there is tension until the final reconciliation, to *homoousia*, which, therefore, is only the final moment, which is totally incomprehensible apart from the two that precede it.²⁰

A crisis of estrangement is found in the “tension” between the first and second potencies as a separable opposition that leads to what Tillich described as “structures of destruction.”²¹ This tension arises from the polarity of the first potency, “absolute want of being” in relation to the second potency, the “absolute fullness of being.”²² There abides a “self-ishness” in tension with a “self-less” character between pure potency and pure act. The purview of the third potency, the Spirit, is a combination of these potencies and has a teleological referent, the “what ought to be or what shall be.”²³ God is also the “principle of love” and contains an “original power of contraction.” This contraction is a “conquest of divine egoism by divine love” and is the “process by which God becomes personal.”²⁴ An incarnational dimension therefore becomes important for this “contradiction in potency leads God to assert his absoluteness and become an individual.”²⁵ The contradiction (or estrangement) is conquered by Christ as the “true infinite” in the finite and by his deed of self-sacrifice reconciles the existential tension. Tillich saw that Schelling has posited an event of grace:

²⁰ As quoted in the “Translator’s Notes”, 177.

²¹ *ST II*, 60-62.

²² Tillich, *Construction*, 52.

²³ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁴ Paul Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling’s Philosophical Development*, trans. V. Nuovo (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974) 94.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

The self-comprehending contradiction is overcome negatively by the self-destruction of selfhood in its separation from essence (death and wrath), positively by the self-annulment of selfhood in its communion with essence that had become individual and has annulled itself as individual (grace).²⁶

For Schelling, the passion of Christ is not a purely temporal act of grace. “The Messiah suffers from the beginning, he has been set in a condition of negative suffering ever since he was restored to human consciousness . . . pure potency.”²⁷

Schelling went on to say that the *Logos* “created an intuition of the estranged being of every natural spirit that is not free from itself and cannot sacrifice itself.”²⁸ The power of the potency of ‘self-hood’ is “exhausted” when it “has killed him who has become lord of being, and in whom everything finite is sacrificed to the infinite.”²⁹ The vicarious sacrifice of Christ destroys the “power of darkness” and the “ideal man is restored.”³⁰ This culminates in the agency of the Spirit of unity which asserts the Lordship of God over “beings who are brought back from estrangement.”³¹ This allows the “a priori inconceivable in God” to become conceivable. In the incarnation of the *Logos* the freedom to be ‘self-less’ in human existence becomes possible again. The goal of Schelling’s Negative Philosophy is found in the search for the supreme essence in the longing of the self to find (and even possess) God. However, this lies outside

²⁶ Ibid., 112.

²⁷ Tillich, *Construction*, 156.

²⁸ Ibid., 157.

²⁹ Ibid., 110.

³⁰ Ibid., 111.

³¹ Ibid., 60-61.

self, therefore the divine initiative must prevail:

The self cannot itself lay claim to the power to win this God. God must *come to meet* the self with his aid . . . All we can do (and no philosophical pride can or should keep us from doing this) is gratefully accept that which comes to us undeservedly and (as a gift of) grace, and which we cannot attain otherwise.³²

Schelling's potencies influenced Tillich's trinitarian thought as well as his understanding of the *Gestalt* of grace. A Christological notion of healing and reconciliation also existed in Schelling's philosophy in Tillich's paraphrase, "God affirms the will to selfhood by himself becoming an individual. 'Only the personal can heal the personal, and God must become man in order that man may return to God.'"³³ This healing enacted by God as an act of the conquest of estrangement resides in the paradox of God's being:

Contradiction in potency leads God to assert his absoluteness and become an individual. Thereby, however, he becomes subject to wrath and the immanent self-negation of all self-hood . . . The Cross of Christ is the the solution of this supreme contradiction, that is, the self-sacrifice and self-annulment of the will to selfhood, raised to the absolute, divine will to power.³⁴

Schelling's own quote, "The true infinite entered the finite, not to deify it, but to sacrifice it to God in his own person, and thereby to reconcile it" was echoed later by Tillich and may be interpreted as foundational for his Christology:

God's presence and power should not be sought in the supranatural interference in the ordinary course of events but in the power of the New Being to overcome the self-

³² as quoted in Jerome A. Stone, "Tillich and Schelling's Later Philosophy" in John J. Carey (ed), *Kairos and Logos: Studies in the Roots and Implications of Tillich's Theology* (Mercer University Press, 1984) 7.

³³ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁴ Tillich, *Mysticism*, 111.

-destructive consequences of existential estrangement
in and through the created structures of reality.³⁵

The “supreme contradiction” of Christ, in the power of the New Being, manifests itself in the finitude of humanity through his participation in the estranged existence of human life. It is the symbol of the cross that, for Tillich, will decisively reveal this corroboration with the structures of “the ultimate negativities of existence” and give “universal significance” as an icon of the ‘New Being’.³⁶

Tillich and World War One

Tillich, unlike Barth, was a full participant in the military horrors of the war. After the commencement of hostilities he enlisted as a chaplain and was sent to the Western Front. Tillich observed that he shared the typical nationalistic attitude of the other enlistees:

When the German soldiers went into the First World War most of them shared the popular belief in a nice God who would make everything work out for the best. Actually everything worked out for the worst, for the nation and for almost everyone in it.³⁷

By December Tillich had been awarded the Iron Cross for his bravery in leading outdoor worship services under Allied fire. As the war went on Tillich was not only administering succor to the wounded but also digging graves for the ever increasing dead. Understandably his spirits began to flag. Tillich recalled his feelings later, “The first few weeks had not passed before one’s original

³⁵ Tillich, *ST II*, 161.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

³⁷ Paul Tillich, “Principalities and Powers” in *The New Being* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955) 52.

enthusiasm disappeared; after a few months I became convinced that the war would last indefinitely and ruin all Europe.”³⁸ The fighting on the Western Front stalemated early in the war leading to protracted trench warfare and appalling casualties. In 1916 the utter folly of this situation manifested itself in the horrific slaughter at Verdun in which Tillich’s division was engaged. Tillich wrote his father, “Hell rages around us. It’s unimaginable.”³⁹ After his division was withdrawn from the battle Tillich had his first nervous breakdown. When one of his best friends was killed in combat Tillich, much sleep-deprived, collapsed once again. His depressed mood is punctuated in a letter to his friend Maria Klein

I have constantly the most immediate and very strong feeling that I am no longer alive. Therefore, I don’t take life very seriously. To find someone, to become joyful, to recognize God, all these things are things of life. But life itself is not dependable ground. It isn’t only that *I* might die any day, but rather that everyone dies, *really* dies, you too, -and the suffering of mankind---I am an utter eschatologist . . .⁴⁰

Tillich later described all this as his “personal *kairos*”⁴¹ in which he found solace in the writings of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Reading this work in a French forest was an “ecstatic experience” as “he found in it an affirmation of existence which contrasted with the death he found around him.”⁴² Nietzsche’s concept of the “will to power” fascinated Tillich his entire life for it “designates

³⁸ Tillich, “Autobiographical Reflections”, 12.

³⁹ Pauck, *Life*, 49.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴¹ D. Mackenzie Brown, *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue* (London: SCM, 1965) 153.

⁴² Thomas, *Tillich*, 6.

the self-affirmation of life as life, including self-preservation and growth.”⁴³ Tillich, though influenced in existential thought by Nietzsche, later came to repudiate much of his thought and regretted his misappropriation by the Nazi regime.⁴⁴ During 1917 America entered the war and the outlook for peace seemed worse than ever. Tillich started to read modern philosophy rigorously, especially Husserl and Otto. But by 1918 his frayed nerves gave way once more and he wrote his father, “Body and soul are broken and can never be entirely repaired, but that is a small sacrifice in comparison with millions who have given their lives.”⁴⁵ Tillich asked to be relieved from his military commitment but was refused and later received the Iron Cross First Class. On November 9, 1918, the war ended and Tillich, like so many other German soldiers, returned to a country broken economically and on the verge of a civil war. The ravages of the conflict would lead Tillich into a mode of theological reflection on the boundary between despair and hope, an eschatological optimism coming in the breakthrough of a new *Kairos* as he was soon to elucidate.

Tillich returned to Berlin and began his professional life as a lowly *Privatdozent*. His first public speech for the Berlin Kant Society was entitled “On the Idea of a Theology of Culture.” In this lecture Tillich illustrated how the functions of faith, cult, community, and the church were related to the functions of culture, for “Religion is the substance of culture and culture is the form of

⁴³ Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952) 26-27.

⁴⁴ For Tillich’s detailed exposition of Nietzsche’s philosophy see *Christian Thought*, 493- 503.

⁴⁵ Pauck, *Life*, 54.

religion”⁴⁶ The ‘Unconditional’ is to be the iconic focus of his philosophy of religion:

before which every particular thing and the totality of all particulars--before which every value and the system of values--before which personality and community are shattered in their own self-sufficient being and value.⁴⁷

Schelling’s contribution to his thought was acknowledged as well, in the notion of the horror that “dwells in the depths of every living creature”, and the possibility of a redemption which is “the transition of one individual existence into the other, the wiping out of individual distinction, the mystical love achieving union with all living things.”⁴⁸ Tillich recognized that Expressionist Art conveyed this situation most precisely in the “profoundest No and Yes” and the passion of these artists displays a religious meaning.⁴⁹ For Tillich then, the sacred and the profane must complement each other, at whatever epistemological cost. The possibility existed that icons could be found discovered in both spheres, an erroneous notion in the future estimation of Karl Barth.

The success of this address brought Tillich invitations to speak at various conferences, schools, the Kant Society and small discussion groups. Tillich was introduced into the world of modern art, especially Expressionism by the art

⁴⁶ Ibid., 64-65. The original lecture, “Über die Idee einer Theologie der Kultur” was originally published in *Religionsphilosophie der Kultur: Zwei Entwürfe* (Berlin: Kant-Gesellschaft, 1920), Philosophische Vorträge, No. 24. English translation is found in Paul Tillich, *What Is Religion?* ed. James Luther Adams (New York: Harper & Row, 1969) 155-181.

⁴⁷ Tillich, “On the Idea . . .”, 162.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 169.

⁴⁹ Later, in 1955 Tillich would claim that “Religious art is Expressionistic” in his, “Theology and Architecture”, *Architectural Forum* (New York) CIII, No. 6 (1955) pp. 131-134. As quoted in Michael F. Palmer, *Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Art* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1984) 15.

historian Eckart von Sydow. Cezanne attracted his attention because he saw him as one who “battled with the form that depicted self-sufficient finitude and restored to things their real metaphysical meaning.”⁵⁰ In Picasso’s ‘Guernica’ he found a “great Protestant painting, perhaps the greatest of modern times” and that, “the radicalism of the Protestant question rather than the Protestant answer was found in this masterpiece.”⁵¹ The Protestant Principle itself was to be the criteria for any evaluation of the iconic.

In 1920 Tillich joined what was called the ‘*kairos* circle’. This small group of, in the words of fellow member Eduard Heimann, “naive, optimistic, esoteric, eccentric academicians” met together to solve the problems of the world, which was now open to new creative possibilities.”⁵² The war had provided the impetus for a sense of renewal, the ‘*kairos*’, “the moment of timely action when the eternal (what ought to be) breaks into time (the prevailing situation), resulting in the emergence of something new out of old and dying conditions.”⁵³ In time Tillich became the leader of the circle and contributed to their journal entitled *Blätter für den Religiösen Sozialismus*. Though the group was sympathetic to the prevailing socialism, Tillich did not immediately join the Socialist party. Yet, the intellectual stimulation of this cadre of thinkers prompted him to continue his writing essays on the philosophy of religion and the concept

⁵⁰ James Luther Adams, *Tillich’s Philosophy*, 110.

⁵¹ Pauck, *Life*, 78.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 70. See also Eduard Heimann, “Tillich’s Doctrine of Religious Socialism” in Kegley & Bretall, *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, 312-325 for a full description of this group.

⁵³ Pauck, *Life*, 73.

of 'kairos'. Living in the Weimar Republic in the early years of the twenties brought Tillich into a period of his life described as "creative chaos" and "the *Bohème*." This "boundary" lifestyle reflected his "non-bourgeois outlook."⁵⁴ Tillich's own apartment was dubbed by von Sydow as the *KatastrophenDiele* or Disaster Bar. Tillich's personal life was in total upheaval as well with the breakup of his marriage, an abortion (which he came to abhor) and a robbery. His resultant lifestyle would emphasize the erotic and the demonic, two themes that would later figure prominently in his theology. Yet Tillich would continue to write in cafes and produced two important essays in 1922 that solidified his philosophical theology in a powerful way.

"*Die Überwindung des Religionsbegriffs in der Religionsphilosophie*" was to demonstrate Tillich's understanding of paradox.⁵⁵ The paradox of the iconic Unconditioned could not be resolved in his estimation, for it "poses a problem that calls for intuition (*Schauen*)."⁵⁶ Dealing with this dilemma indicated, for Tillich, "my spiritual affinity in the following ideas with men like Barth and Gogarten whose concern is the religious Word." The Unconditioned is to be the primary phenomenon for it is "the supporting ground of every theological judgement, and can be an absolute presupposition but never an object of theory."⁵⁷ The self is "subordinated to the Unconditional", and can only

⁵⁴ Tillich, *Boundary*, 22.

⁵⁵ English translation found in James Luther Adam's compendium of Tillich's early essays entitled *What Is Religion?*, 122-154.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.

become possible “through the Unconditional.” Yet the divine initiative as that which is *given* must be sustained:

Objectively considered, all consciousness is related to God: but subjectively, consciousness can be God-less. Thus there is no way from the self to God, but there is, in terms of directedness rather than substance, a way from God to the self.⁵⁸

This “breakthrough” (*durchbruch*) is “grace” and can free human self-consciousness from the “compulsive flight from God.” This is the phenomenon of “concrete grace”, over and against mysticism and predestination, which locates “salvation in the Unconditional” in its “historical self-manifestation.”⁵⁹ Ultimately, in a manner similar to Barth, Tillich concludes that “God and not religion is the beginning and end, the center of all things. . . God is known only through God!”⁶⁰ Tillich explicated his notion of the Unconditional even further in his article of 1922 entitled “*Kairos*”. In a footnote in the beginning of the essay he wrote:

The unconditional is a quality, not a being. It characterizes that which is our ultimate and, consequently, unconditional concern, whether we call it ‘God’ or ‘Being as such’ or the ‘Good as such’ or the ‘True as such’. Or whether we give it any other name. It would be a complete mistake to understand the unconditional as a being the existence of which can be discussed. He who speaks of the ‘existence of the unconditional’ has thoroughly misunderstood the meaning of the term.⁶¹

There are no “outstanding moments in history” that disclose the unconditional “except the *one* moment which is called ‘Jesus the Christ’ and which has a

⁵⁸ Ibid., 140.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 147.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 154.

⁶¹ Paul Tillich, “Kairos” in *PE*, 32. Originally published in *Die Tat*, Vol. XIV (1922) Heft 5. German text in Paul Tillich, “Der Widerstreit von Raum und Zeit: Schriften zur Geschichtsphilosophie”, *Gesammelte Werke Band VI* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerke, 1963) 9-28.

supra-historical character.”⁶² A philosophy of history that is cognizant of the *kairos*, the “right time” or the inbreaking of God’s rule “rich in content and significance,”⁶³ must be concerned with the “relation of the conditioned to the unconditional, in individual as well as social life. . . the finite life is either turned toward the infinite or turned away from it toward itself.”⁶⁴ To be open to the unconditional then, is to be open to the reality of its character as manifested by Jesus the Christ. This is a “theonomous situation” because it is “open to and directed toward the divine.”⁶⁵ *Kairos* is unique and universal for it is located in the event of Jesus as the Christ, “it is deed and freedom, as it is also fate and grace.”⁶⁶ Tillich believed that Religious Socialism represented a vision of the *kairos* and the possibility of a theonomy, a theme that he would later develop in greater detail. He wrote later that being a Socialist “may be a decision for the Kingdom of God even though the socialist society is infinitely distant from the Kingdom of God.”⁶⁷ This distinction would lead later to his concept of the “Demonic”, construed as the idolic, which is manifestation of a “power in personal and social life that is creative and destructive at the same time.”

Would Barth affirm Tillich’s phenomenological notions? Their first encounter was to prove decisive for the separation of their theological paths.

⁶² Ibid., 38.

⁶³ Ibid., 33.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 44.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 48.

⁶⁷ Tillich, *Boundary*, 79.

The Meeting

In this first face-to-face confrontation, Barth and Tillich shared their particular viewpoints concerning the new concepts of dialectical theology. Tillich had been most impressed with Barth's "powerful" *Epistle to the Romans*, linking Barth's 'theology of crisis' with his own conception of 'kairos', i.e., the ongoing crisis of history. Barth felt that Tillich had appeared to "vindicate himself" concerning his theology and displayed an "anti-authoritarian antagonism" (*antiorthodoxes Ressentiment*) with his "historical mythology". Yet Barth also saw that they both could do justice to the current sense of theological 'kairos' and co-exist in peace "only on the basis that each of us is willing to think and to expect the best of the other".⁶⁸ Barth seemed gratified that Tillich wanted to review his commentary on *Romans* and showed an interest in Tillich's proposed book on the philosophy of religion which would add to "the gradually growing bubble (which in twenty to thirty years will be pricked like all the earlier ones by those unknowns attending kindergarten!)." These were prophetic words to be sure, but the bubble was soon to be punctured by Tillich, much to the surprise of Barth.

Tillich also mentioned this meeting in a private letter to his brother-in-law Alfred Fritz.⁶⁹ Like Barth, he found that they had little to agree on:

As a 'supranatural eschatologist' Barth was to have had no interest in history and to have found Tillich's notion of 'theonomy' dangerous. If that were the case, Tillich countered, then Barth's own notion of

⁶⁸ *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925*, trans. J. D. Smart (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox, 1964) 95-96.

⁶⁹ This letter is undated and is marked "Bei Goslar im Speisewagen. Sonntag Nachmittag", cf. John Powell Clayton, *Concept of Correlation*, 162.

‘act of faith’ must likewise be dangerous, a point which Tillich implies Barth conceded.⁷⁰

Tillich went on to state that a pact was made between them:

he will endeavour to rationalize his supranatural formulas and I will endeavour to balance (*kompensieren*) my rational formulas with supranatural ones; he will proclaim the essential meaning of the Unconditioned as a biblical theologian, and I shall do so as a cultural theologian.

This pact was not to last for long, however. There were too many serious and conceptually different theological approaches in their writings and personal beliefs to allow for an irenic academic and theological relationship. The point of real contention was the manifestation of the iconic in the realm of the secular. Barth’s ‘supranaturalism’ would exhibit itself in his doctrine of the Covenant in the future. Tillich’s iconic ‘*Gestalt of grace*’ would find its phenomenological apparition in the symbol of the cross. Yet, neither Tillich nor Barth were at these points in the decade of the early twenties. And their moment of *détante* was not to last either.

The open controversy started in earnest with Tillich’s article entitled “Critical and Positive Paradox” published in the *Theologische Blätter II* in 1923. Tillich sided with Barth’s dialectic as expressed in his *Romans* commentary, in that:

A direct, unparadoxical relationship to the unconditioned (*Unbedingten*) which does not pass through the constant radical ‘No’ is a relationship not to the unconditioned, but to a conditioned (*Bedingten*) which makes the claim to be unconditioned, that is, to an idol.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Ibid., 162-163.

⁷¹ Paul Tillich, “Critical and Positive Paradox: A Discussion with Karl Barth and Friedrich Gogarten”, in *The Beginnings of Dialectical Theology*, ed. J. M. Robinson, trans. Louis De Grazia & Keith R. Crim (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox, 1968) 133. German text in Paul Tillich, “Der Protestantismus Als Kritik Und Gestaltung: Schriften zur Theologie I”, *Gesammelte Werke Band VII* (Stuttgart:

This would lead to an infinite series of dialectics in an “endless row of self-transcendings” that would never be transcendent in actuality. The critical point would be “whether the theology of crisis still acknowledges an absoluteness that it itself forbids, or whether it is willing to recognize the positive form (*Fassung*) of paradox which is presupposed in the critical.”⁷² Tillich writes further:

The theologian must stand under the dialectic itself. In speaking the ‘No’ to the conditioned, a submission to this selfsame ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ must be conceded. It does not mean that the conviction (*Überzeugung*) of the superiority of the dialectic position *under* the ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ must therefore be given up, but it is the awareness of the non-transcending position which is contained even in the proclamation of the crisis; it is the comprehension (*Erfassung*) of the ‘Yes’ which is the presupposition (*Voraussetzung*) of the ‘No’; it is the step back from the critical to the positive paradox.

Therefore, to stand in the unity of the paradoxical ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ is to perceive that “only through grace does judgement become judgement. Only where love is revealed is wrath revealed as wrath. Without its unity with grace, judgement is merely a natural process.”⁷³ It also stands that without a paradoxical understanding of this unity a “demonic realism” might arise that would see “the destruction of the conditioned in nature.” The “irrationality” of the world, taken as the negative pole of the dialectic, reveals more than just the brokenness of the world, it also reveals “the abyss in the creator God just as much as it does the infinite majesty of God as the object of worship.” However, orthodox Christian doctrine holds that the works of the Trinity *ad extra sunt indivisa* and the Son

Evangelisches Verlagswerke, 1962) 216-225.

⁷² Tillich, *Dialectical Theology*, 134.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 135.

is an agent of creation. Therefore, the order of creation and redemption belong together and coexist for each other. "Neither is an objective (*gegenständliches*), perceptible (*anschauliches*) judgement, but a paradoxical, imperceptible one."⁷⁴

Tillich spoke positively with Barth that the "greatest service of the theology of crisis" is its assault on the claim of religion in its absoluteness, and "every word on this subject, particularly in Karl Barth's *Epistle to the Romans*, is the destruction of idols."⁷⁵ But no dialectical self-transcendence can transcend its own religious position "which forms the basis for this negation." Tillich continues by stating that the symbolic phenomena in both religion and culture are to be considered in a "metaphysics of history, a symbolic, paradoxical salvation history." Residing in culture are "phenomena which make visible the source . . . the revelation of grace and judgement in terms of faith." For Tillich these manifest themselves in art, music, poetry, literature etc., revealing the depths of the dialectic itself. Tillich went on to explicate this paradox in christological terms for the point of history in and of revelation is the event of the Christ who also is the man, Jesus of Nazareth. Gogarten and Barth are seen as overlooking the "positive root of their theology of crisis, but yet are forced to seek a position in history on which the proclamation of crisis can be based." Tillich concluded that "in its search for a foundation for the criticism the theology of critical paradox ends as a theology of the positive absurd." This recognition of "an empirical fact" is now allowed into the realm of faith in which "heteronomy, law, and absolutistic religion break in unhindered." Tillich concluded his essay

⁷⁴ Ibid., 136.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 138.

with a complimentary note regarding the theology of crisis. But he added his own particular stance to it in the paradoxical speech of the “eternal source , the ground, the ‘abyss’ given through the ‘Yes’ and ‘No’, the eternal redemption evident only in faith and presented in history ‘in Christ with complete symbolic power’, and as eternal consummation in which the struggle between the godly and the demonic are “transcended in the eternal unity of God.”⁷⁶ The theology of crisis now becomes the theology of positive paradox.

Barth’s reaction was both emotional and polemic. He wrote to his friend Thurneysen, “Tillich writes against us in the *Theol. Blättern* . . . Perhaps I will answer him . . . It has to do with Christology.”⁷⁷ In the same issue that Tillich’s article was published, Barth’s response (and Tillich’s counter-response) appeared. In spite of not being sure that he understood Tillich completely, Barth challenged him with a trenchant essay that delineated the major methodological and distinct theological differences between them. His tone was combative and insinuated that Tillich thought that Barth had heard as little as those “disciples of John the Baptist of whether there was a Holy Spirit.”⁷⁸ Barth’s underlying problem with Tillich’s critique resided in the manner of a proper methodology starting either from a philosophy of culture or Christian theology:

We are really to a large extent ourselves non-theologians, and the objection which is to be raised continuously from the outside

⁷⁶ Ibid., 141.

⁷⁷ Barth, *Revolutionary Theology*, 153.

⁷⁸ Karl Barth, “The Paradoxical Nature of the ‘Positive Paradox’: Answers and Questions to Paul Tillich”, in *The Beginnings of Dialectical Theology*, *ibid.*, 142. German text in Karl Barth, *Gesamtausgabe: Vorträge und kleinere Arbeiten, 1922-1925*, ed. H. Finze (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1990) 358-375.

against theology is also our objection in as far as we continuously also stand outside. Tillich can reject my protest against the presupposition with which he wrote his article, but only on the condition that he admit that his presupposition is the characteristically non-theological one, against which it would not even occur to me to protest because it is obviously possible.⁷⁹

He then proceeded to question the presuppositional concept of the “positive paradox”. What is this “point on which everything depends?” Barth felt that Tillich had glossed over its definition leaving the “real transcending (*Aufhebung*) on the basis of the unconditional” as the only thing he could understand. Who does the transcending? Barth felt that the concept of transcendence was a poor term for the “entity beyond the ‘Yes’ and the ‘No’.” The term needed to be more closely defined; was transcendence an intellectual act of philosophical theologians or a “divine act”? He also felt that the concept of the *Real* might be better defined as the “existential” (in the usage of Kierkegaard). So, “Why this hide-and-seek with the frosty monster (*Ungeheuer*) ‘the unconditioned’?” Barth wondered if that was a term for God, and if so, how the term might be “weatherproof”(*wetterfest*) in the context of the dialectic.”⁸⁰

These criticisms were based on Barth’s fundamental distrust of Tillich’s theological method. What were the philosophical assumptions he was working with? Could a doctrine of the Trinity proceed from Tillich’s reflections? Was the notion of the unconditioned in positive paradox not just an old concept in a “new dress”?⁸¹ Barth asked whether Tillich was employing this terminology as

⁷⁹ Barth, *Dialectical Theology*, 144.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 148.

an uncritical scythe to be used “at will at the decisive point at any direction as something given . . . and confident, to throw up against the clouds the house of true gnosis?” He also admitted, that in spite of the method that Tillich used, “strange and incomprehensible to me even at the first step”, there was an agreement in principle on the subject matter itself. This subject matter was the postulation of the dialectic itself and certainly not a shared vision of the nature of God. Barth believed that Tillich’s generalizations were like “a general steamroller of faith and revelation . . . affecting everything and nothing as it rolls over houses, men, and beasts as if it were self-evident everywhere.” Therefore the God of Tillich was similar to the God of Schleiermacher and Hegel, not the God of Luther and Kierkegaard.⁸² The christological point was contentious as well, “for ‘us’ Christ *is* the salvation history---*Christ* is the ‘positive paradox’.” Barth was suspicious that Tillich had relegated Christ to salvation history, as a mere ‘presentation’ (*Darstellung*) of complete “symbolic power” (*Symbolkraft*). He also thought that divine freedom and love had been overlooked, and that Tillich “runs the great danger of letting the justified polemic against the ‘man-god’, once waged by Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky, be converted into its opposite, the polemic against the *God-man*.” The “positive paradox” was not, therefore sufficiently “divine” in Barth’s estimation.⁸³

Barth emphasized the character of Chalcedonian Christology as the primary foundation for any serious theology. Tillich had, in Barth’s opinion, deviated from this irrefutable orthodoxy in his reducing the revelatory event of Jesus to a mere

⁸² Ibid., 149.

⁸³ Ibid., 150-151.

symbolic referent. To do this was to confuse subject with object, a sabotaging of the 'positive paradox':

What is 'absurd' is all unreflecting, unclassical, disrespectful deviation from the formula of Chalcedon, for to hold quietly to this confession would still indicate, *mutatis mutandis*, good insight even today.⁸⁴

The 'heteronomy' of Tillich's symbolical Christology seemed to threaten the 'critical historical science' which, even in its incomplete status versus theology, must continue with great interest for theologians. But the 'autonomy' of a *theological science* is to be critiqued in its ongoing attempt to find "offense" (*Ärgernis*) in the Bible. This situation was intolerable for Barth, for he felt that it had "emaciated" Protestant theology and he called for the historians to be theological exegetes and work in obedience to the truth.⁸⁵

Barth concluded his essay by stating that "Tillich as a theologian . . . is a riddle to me."⁸⁶ Though Barth restated his amiable feelings toward him as an individual, Tillich's corrective was "an attack on the decisive things we want to say." There must not be a "Tower of Babel" theology free of presuppositions (*voraussetzungslose*) even under the guise of 'theonomy'. The doctrines of the "one holy catholic church" are to be the only presuppositions of a genuine Protestant theology. However, "The altars before which Tillich worships are really not entirely unknown by me." Barth hoped that the "lively debate" would help Tillich understand the "*paradoxicality*" of the 'positive paradox'. He then

⁸⁴ Ibid., 152. For a detailed account of Barth's Chalcedonian Christology see George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, Ch. 7.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 153.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 154.

finished his essay with a phrase of Augustine's, "In the church it is not significant that I say this, you say this, but rather that the Lord says thus."⁸⁷

Tillich's response took notice of the belligerent nature of Barth's essay. "I refrain from . . . going into various expressions of Barth's in which his temperament and zeal for battle carry him beyond the limits of an appropriate analysis."⁸⁸ Tillich continued to disagree with Barth over the terminology of God and the unconditioned. "Not that this is a substitute expression; it is rather a key to open for oneself and for others the closed door to the holy of holies of the name 'God'."⁸⁹ Yet he agreed with Barth that there could be no "direct access" (*direckte Zugriff*) to God and the notion that one could speak of God is forbidden. Tillich believed that the time, the *kairos* he was later to explicate, called for a new manner of proclamation as opposed to:

a way of speaking of culture and a leap into absolute contingency which is faithless to our situation, and which above all condemns itself by breaking community with those who in all areas of culture struggle for the revelation of the positive paradox . . .⁹⁰

Tillich concluded his rebuttal with a warning to Barth that his use of the dialectic would proceed, albeit unintentionally, to a "very undialectic supernaturalism" with a 'No' to the world and a subsequent 'Yes' that would be "all the more positive and undialectic."⁹¹ Barth appealed to the tenets of Reformed theology

⁸⁷ The Latin text reads, "*In ecclesia non valet: hoc ego dico, hoc tu dicis, hoc ille dicit, sed: haec dicit Dominus*".

⁸⁸ Paul Tillich, "Answer to Karl Barth" in *The Beginnings of Dialectical Theology*, 155. German text in Paul Tillich, *Gesammelte Werke Band VII*, 240-243.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 158.

which might lead to “The profanization and emptying of cultural life as a whole . . . and the reduction of religious life to a subcultural level.” Tillich, as a Lutheran, believed that his tradition was “producing ever new attempts to overcome profane autonomy through a filled, theonomous autonomy.” His differences with Schleiermacher and Hegel lay in their “attempt to obliterate paradox in favor of dialectic identity.” However, Tillich allied himself with them when it came to the question of “making the reference to paradox perceptible in the forms of the logical and ethical, of transcending profane autonomy with theonomy.”

In the end, Barth thought that Tillich had not refuted him directly. “If ever again I let myself become involved in such a discussion, I will lay down the condition that the other man shall return *me* an answer and not go slipping off so quickly into the bushes.”⁹² Tillich had not been confrontational or even specific in his answer to Barth, but he did have an effect on Barth’s later thought. Tillich had “forced Barth point-blank to think further about the problem of the contingency of revelation; i.e., what it means to affirm that one piece of history has been qualified by revelation as ‘*the site of the salvation history*’.”⁹³

Conclusion

The differences and similarities of Barth and Tillich’s theological concepts at this juncture demonstrate that, although both sought to criticize culture and its insidious claims to be a ‘religious culture’, their positions on the initialization of this critique were markedly different. In an important essay on Tillich’s influence

⁹² *Revolutionary Theology*, 160.

⁹³ *CRDT*, 323.

on German theology, Theodor Siegfried pointed out that Barth had described his attitude toward the world in the image of the brackets of judgment and grace enclosing all existence as a “plus and minus sign with equal validity, so that no decision is possible.”⁹⁴ History is closed to that which is transhistorical as grace and judgment “enter it concretely and without permeating it actually.” Even in his acceptance of the dialectical ‘No’, Tillich also asserted that both reality and history were open to the transcendent forms of judgment and grace.

The influence of Schelling in Tillich’s thought allowed him to “speak of a dynamic immanence of the transcendent in world and history.” An openness to the existential in life would dominate Tillich’s anthropology, while Barth would maintain a nearly non-immanent form of paradigmatic Christology that would separate him from the mainstream of neo-orthodox thought. Tillich would find transcendent meaning in cultural as well as religious expression allowing for a phenomenology of the cross, whereas Barth would put “the whole of reality into the brackets of a Yes and No” and accept “in a positivistic way the world in its estrangement from God . . .”⁹⁵ With regard to methodology Tillich affirmed that reason and experience could exist in the theological paradigm, while Barth would begin with the “Word of God”, which stands over and against all human possibility.

The possibility versus the impossibility of human depiction of grace and the experience of God lies at the heart of the Tillich-Barth debate. Where Tillich affirms the appearance of God as the Unconditioned in culture, Barth denies its

⁹⁴ Theodor Siegfried, “The Significance Of Paul Tillich’s Theology For The German Situation”, *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, 73.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

actuality. This Unconditioned seemed to be an idol for Barth, a mere product of human rationality thrust into the sacred realm. Barth's return to the Bible as primary source of revelation, marginalized all other modalities of proclamation. His later emphasis on the Covenant of grace in the *Church Dogmatics* is the result of an intense encounter with Scripture starting with the *Epistle to the Romans*. Tillich, on the other hand, proceeded with the holy Writ as inferential background to his theology, leaving him open to rephrase and postulate interpretive and existential meanings to the symbols of the Christian faith, both biblical and sacramental. At this moment in time however, any definition of the iconic versus the idolic remained somewhat abstract. This was all to change with the rise of that which both theologians perceived as demonic: the inexorable rise of Hitler and the Third Reich. Soon the demonic was to have a face, an idol of power that would only reflect the need of the German national psyche to restore its fortunes after the humiliation of the Versailles Treaty.

CHAPTER 5

COVENANT AND CONTEST: BARTH'S THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT 1922-1931

Karl Barth “left the beautiful Aargau” and joined “the Swiss on foreign service”¹ as a new resident of post-war Germany. His teaching duties would expose him to the intricacies of Reformed theology, its concentrations on scriptural themes, and the covenantal exposition of the followers of Calvin. This chapter intends to examine the influences of the various Reformers and how they impacted Barth, as well as his own development from a dialectical theologian to a theologian of the *analogia gratiae*. That which Barth studied in his time in Göttingen was to carry on through to the very end of his *Church Dogmatics*; the root metaphor and iconic symbol of the Covenant of grace and the ethical response to the initiative of God’s gift. The change in Barth’s theology through his study of Anselm’s *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* will also be noted as that which substantially informs Barth’s epistemology, and focuses on the inner disposition of the believer as that which must be addressed by God to establish a reality that is cogent.

¹ Busch, *Barth*, 126.

Göttingen: The Formal Doctrine of the Covenant in Exposition

The cultural and academic environment that Barth discovered in Göttingen was both personally formidable as well as academically challenging. The war indemnities that Weimar Germany was forced to pay in accordance with the terms of the Versailles Treaty had crippled the economy. Inflation was rampant and food riots were common.² Germany's failure to keep up with the war payments provoked the French Army to occupy the Ruhr, her richest area of resource and industry further crippling any ability to repay the debts. These events led to an incident that established Barth as a foreigner and a dissident among a mostly Lutheran faculty. He had been invited to Göttingen to teach Reformed doctrine on the basis of his reputation as lecturer and his writing of *Der Römerbrief*. Barth felt most apprehensive about the academic challenge he faced in that "I did not even possess the Reformed confessional writings, and I had certainly never read them."³ A Christmas greeting from eighteen French theological students to their fellow students in Germany was vociferously denounced by some of the faculty at Göttingen. Barth, who personally disapproved of the French occupation of the Ruhr, took a moderate stance; but felt that a civil response was appropriate arousing the indignation of Emmanuel Hirsch who accused him of being a Swiss agitator and a "disturber of the peace!"⁴ This incident illustrated Barth's dilemma in Göttingen; he was a foreigner teaching

² *CRDT*, 292. For a detailed insight of post-war Germany and the Weimar Republic, see Gorringer, *Barth*, 73-77.

³ *CRDT*, 293.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 300.

Reformed theology in a Lutheran setting, a tradition that he was alienated from because of his unfamiliarity with its confessional doctrines. Barth would pay a stiff price for his political and national views in the future, but he would also embark on a theological journey that would give rise to his understanding of the Calvinistic tradition and the Reformed doctrine of the Covenant.

Barth's academic responsibility at the university was to teach an "Introduction to the Reformed confession, Reformed doctrine and Reformed church life."⁵ He conducted seminars on expositions of the Heidelberg Catechism and the Epistle to the Ephesians. Barth persisted in laborious preparations for his classes and his popularity as a lecturer increased. The founder of the university was the renowned Albrecht Ritschl who was venerated by the Lutheran faculty but, after reading his biography, Barth regarded him in a negative light as the "prototype of the national-liberal German bourgeois in the age of Bismarck."⁶

In the summer of 1922, Barth's second year at Göttingen, he gave a seminar on the theology of John Calvin. As he prepared for this course he wrote his friend Thurneysen that:

Calvin is a cataract, a primeval forest, a demonic power, something down from Himalaya, absolutely Chinese, strange, mythological; I lack completely the means, the suction cups, even to assimilate this phenomenon, not to speak of presenting it adequately . . . I could gladly and profitably set myself down and spend all the rest of my life just with Calvin.⁷

Barth was struck by Calvin's description of the Reformed Scripture principle

⁵ Busch, *Barth*, 128-29.

⁶ *CRDT*, 299.

⁷ Barth, *Revolutionary Theology* 101.

as somewhat ambiguous for it seemed to have “elevated the words of the biblical witness to the status of a law, to understand humankind’s relationship to the Bible legalistically.”⁸ Though Barth, in principle, supported a strong character of biblical authority, he seemed wary of Calvin’s legalism:

In Calvin, as we see from his sermons, even the proclamation of grace wears a moral garb. *This* is what we have to hear and understand and take to heart and believe. For Calvin divine service was a parade ground on which imperatives held sway in every relation.⁹

For Barth, the solution of the problem of grace and law was to be found in Calvin’s christology. In his summary of Calvin’s Institutes of 1536, Barth wrote:

Christ is that unspoken original presupposition in terms of which we see God *a priori* as the ground and goal, the one who judges us and shows us mercy, and in terms of which we see ourselves *a priori*, when measured against God, as sinners, and are thus pointed to grace.¹⁰

Christ who is united with God in his incarnation has “concluded the covenant with us,” bringing us back to God from our estranged existence.

Always in fact Christ is the covenant and the one who concludes the covenant between God and us, the enacting of the inconceivable and impossible thing that when enacted is also the most simple and most natural.¹¹

An explicit investigation into Calvin’s covenantal doctrines was not to be forthcoming in Barth’s lectures as his emphasis lay in describing the differences

⁸ *CRDT*, 305.

⁹ Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995) 122.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 167.

of the various themes of Reformation thought. However, the lectures of the summer semester in 1923 on the Reformed Confessions were to become the initial focus for Barth on the doctrine of the Covenant and the history of the dogma itself. But during that summer there was not a “quiet hour” for Barth as he complained to Thurneysen:

Always it was Zwingli, Zwingli, James, Zwingli, and in between only those hours of Buddhist submersion in which one knocks about at something or--reads, while in the purple depths of the subconscious the necessary regroupings take place.¹²

The “reading” that led to this “necessary regrouping” came in the form of a “thick book by Gottlob Schrenck of Bielefeld on Cocceius” that provided a background on Reformation thought which for Barth “would clarify historically in some measure the problem of the relation of my Göttingen existence to the rest of my existence.”¹³ Schrenk had focused on the federal theology of Cocceius as well as giving a summary of its historical roots. Barth’s own sense of covenantal theology would develop from this initial exposure to the Reformation line from Calvin, and the intricate debates over the Gospel and Law decrees and their primal origins amongst later theologians.

The Background of the Reformed Doctrine of the Covenant

The Reformed doctrine of the covenant is found in the biblical terminology of both the Old and New Testaments. Scholars delineated the covenants between God and Adam, Abraham, Moses, the prophecy of the New Covenant in Jeremiah

¹² Barth, *Revolutionary Theology*, 118.

¹³ Ibid., 120. Schrenk’s book was entitled *Gottesreich und Bund im älteren Protestantismus, vornehmlich Johannes Cocceius* (Gütersloh, 1923).

and its fulfillment in the mediatorial covenant of Christ. The dichotomy between faith and works was a major issue, not only in the larger Reformation disputations on the whole, but also at the specific covenantal point regarding the prevenience of grace. James Torrance comments:

Divine covenants have their source in the divine initiative, in the loving heart of God. God conceives of the covenant, God announces it. God confirms and establishes it and carries it through to fulfillment, and the motive is love. The form of the covenant is the indicative of grace--the promise, 'I will be your God and you shall be my people.'¹⁴

In spite of the strong claim of the divine initiative of God, the response of humanity led to two distinctions; that of *unilateral* and *bilateral*. The bilateral covenant is conditioned by the human response and remains open and unfulfilled until there *is* a response. The unilateral covenant in contrast, is established (in Christ) by its own assertion and what is required in response is gratitude and joy.

Barth began his Reformed covenantal lectures in following Leo Jud's *Catechism* of 1535, reiterating the 'covenant' with Abraham that consisted of two major articles: that God wills to be his God and the God of his descendants, and that the seed of Abraham show faithful obedience to God's statutes. "This is the eternal covenant of grace that is renewed and sealed in Christ."¹⁵ In August Lang's words "As I believe, so am I Israel" allows faith to be the initiation and participation in God's covenant. To be obedient to the New Covenant, enacted in Christ, is to be free "to enter into the service of Christ to our neighbor."¹⁶ Good

¹⁴ James B. Torrance, "Covenant Or Contract?" in *Scottish Journal of Theology* (1970), 55.

¹⁵ Karl Barth, *The Theology of the Reformed Confessions: 1923*, trans. D.L. Guder & J.J. Guder (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) 90.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

works alone do not merit God's grace but "God is certainly 'praised' (*gelobt*) and 'honored' (*gepriesen*) through them."¹⁷ In this way we both 'testify' to (*bezeugen*) and 'practice' our faith, and reassure (*vergewissern*) ourselves that election is no 'illusion'.

In a later exposition on the Westminster Confession Barth not only speaks of the "codification of triumphal Calvinism" but also of the tragedy of the movement "being conquered by the world." He asserted that:

One must turn to the Westminster Confession not only to learn the original intention of the Reformed movement but also the form in which this movement as Calvinism has conquered the politically (if not the intellectually) dominant part of the Protestant world, and of the Christian world in general.¹⁸

The *aporia* lay in an incorrect emphasis on election. In Barth's view the doctrine of double predestination espoused in the Westminster Divines allowed for the abuse of the doctrine "for the purpose of gaining personal assurance of salvation." This was to place the focus on human salvation which led to "the question of human *truth*" becoming "decisive in an immodest and irrelevant way."¹⁹

The concept of the Covenant occurs in Chapter 7 of the confession. The impossible distance between humanity and God is bridged by the special "condescension" by the Creator. The Covenant of works first established with Adam has been abrogated by the Fall. Barth parenthetically discusses the danger

¹⁷ Ibid., German text from Karl Barth, *Gesamtausgabe: Die Theologie der reformierten Bekenntnisschriften 1923* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1998) 143.

¹⁸ Barth, *Reformed Confessions*, 135.

¹⁹ Ibid., 137.

of establishing a “temporal history of salvation” that is developed ‘based’ (*auf Grund*) on the Fall which would make it impossible to “assert that the law in and of itself is a stage (*Stufe*) of *revelation*.”²⁰ The *foedus gratiae* remedies this situation with its retroactive power. “There are not, therefore, two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations.”²¹ Barth found this to be “walking on the razor’s edge”.²² He summarized the historical outcome of this as an ongoing problem, “The following generations opted for the unhappy second possibility. We are plagued by this up to today.” In Barth’s estimation the Westminster Confession revealed that Christian doctrine had lost its certainty of the *divine* subject, “so that in spite of all monergistic assertions (*Beteuerungen*) it must degenerate (*herunterzusinken*) into the description of possible human relationships to this subject.”²³ This allowed the eventuality of an human starting point for theology, a point that Barth continued with all his intellectual power to resist.

The results of Barth’s engagement with the Reformed tradition appeared in the form of a lecture given in the fall of 1923. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches invited him to speak in Emden. Barth had been prompted in part to make a reply to his former Genevan mentor, Adolf Keller, who had stated that a recent theological discussion on the Reformed tradition had proven “fruitless”

²⁰ Ibid., 137-8.

²¹ Westminster Confession, Ch. 7, article 6 in John Leith (ed.), *Creeds Of The Churches* (Louisville: John Knox, 1982) 203.

²² Barth, *Reformed Confessions*, 138.

²³ Ibid., 139.

that the “old sacred inheritance” should be dealt with “untheologically” in the current situation.²⁴ His response to Keller emphasized that the “cultivation of a consciousness which is more strongly Reformed in character” must proceed with the “earnestness and rigour the way which Luther and Calvin went, the way which leads from *thought* to action, and no other.”²⁵ The strength of the Reformed creeds resided for Barth, in their commitment to the “one object” of all religious thought which is “God *himself* and God *alone*, as he speaks his own *word* in Scripture and in Spirit.”²⁶ This led to a restatement of the “scriptural principle” which places the Bible as the Word of God, a formal principle that includes the material principle as well. All confessions are to be subjugated to the authority of scripture as an act of obedience to the *Deus dixit* in the *testimonium spiritus sancti internum*. Only in this manner can Church proclamation be valid as Barth stated:

Doctrina is the word of the Christian man at crisis with the word of God: it is penetrated by that merciless purifying and cleansing which is witnessed to in Scriptures. It remains the word of man. It does not itself become the *verbum divinum*, but in this relation it is none the less a legitimate and pure *praedicatio verbi divini*.²⁷

This provides a “relative authority” to Church dogma which would include the doctrine of the Covenant, election and all the themes of ecclesial theology. In this vein then, Barth could say, “So the fathers understood the answer of the old and new covenants to the question as to the end of the *vita humana*.”²⁸

²⁴ Barth, “The Doctrinal Task Of The Reformed Churches” in his *The Word Of God*, 219.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 225.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 235.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 241.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 267.

So inspired by Calvin and the Reformed Confessions, in an epistemological disputation with Lutheranism and Schleiermacher and enthused by the ‘Scripture Principle’, he went to work on his own thought in his lectures on systematic theology.

The Göttingen Dogmatics

As result of his interactions with Catholic thought Barth began to be attentive to the doctrine of the Incarnation. Tillich’s inducement concerning the symbolic Christ of culture also led to a recombination of “the *distinction* of revelation and Christ’s humanity.”²⁹ The ‘Unconditioned’ is a particular person in Jesus of Nazareth as well as the Christ of faith. The Chalcedonian christology is to be reaffirmed and with it the concept of the covenant. This Barth discovered when a copy of Heinrich Heppe’s *Reformed Dogmatics* “fell into my hands.” As he recalled in 1935:

I read, I studied, I reflected; and found that I was rewarded with the discovery, that here at last I was in the atmosphere in which the road by way of the Reformers to H. Scripture was a more sensible and natural one to tread, than the atmosphere, now only too familiar to me, of the theological literature determined by Schleiermacher and Ritschl.³⁰

This new concentration on Reformed orthodoxy proved to be a distancing from the ‘dialectical’ theologians of Barth’s era (especially Bultmann, Gogarten and Tillich). It would exemplify itself in his new found rigor of systematic thought and serve as an introduction to the covenantal theologian of the past, Johannes Cocceius. Barth’s theology was now turning to the realm of the

²⁹ *CRDT*, 322.

³⁰ Karl Barth, “Foreword” in Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics Set Out And Illustrated From The Sources*, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1950), v.

ecclesial as he observed:

Success can come only if we have previously learned to read the Reformers as the *Church's* teachers and, with them, Scripture as the document for the Church's existence and nature, and therefrom to ask what Church science might be.³¹

The doctrine of the covenant that Heppe had proposed and Barth assessed reveals the aforementioned complexity in Reformed theology. Heppe stood on the theological shoulders of Calvin, Ursinus, Olevianus and Cocceius in regard to to covenantal theology. His motive for writing his dogmatics in 1861 resided in his attempt to convey a theological system that was correspondent “to the spirit of Reformed Church doctrine.”³² Yet there was also a polemical side to Heppe's endeavors with his struggle for Reformed Unionism against one of his Marburg colleagues, August Vilmar.³³ Heppe held that the theological basis for the German Reformed churches was not Calvinism but its confessional statements. Philip Melanchthon was the authority that had combined Reformed and Lutheran elements with his *Augsburg Confession Variata*. However, after Luther's death a new faction appeared, the genuine ‘Lutherans’ who defied Melanchthon's authority with literal interpretations of Luther's early writings. The ‘Diet of the Princes’ in 1561 established the succession of the ‘Genuine Lutherans’ who, in Heppe's view, were the theological heirs of the ‘Old Protestant’ Church.³⁴

³¹ Ibid., vii.

³² Ibid., xi.

³³ Lowell H. Zuck, “Heinrich Heppe: A Melanchthonian Liberal in the Nineteenth-Century German Reformed Church,” in *Church History* 51 (1982) 419-33.

³⁴ Ibid., 427.

Heppe accepted Calvin's doctrine of predestination as the "material principle" of his theological system.³⁵ Yet, he also perceived a negative attitude towards the Church, which needed to be tempered by an infralapsarian approach over the supralapsarian. This may have contributed towards Heppe's assertion of Covenantal theology in his dogmatics and a concentration on Cocceius.

The publication of Johannes Cocceius' (1603-1669) *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei* of 1648 demonstrated his grounding in biblical studies, a hermeneutic based on the Word of God, as Jesus Christ revealed in Scripture, "not in words alone, but from faith to faith under the illumination of the Holy Spirit."³⁶ However, merely reading the Bible was inadequate, "Many people put Scripture in place of the Pope. They are orthodox *à la mode*."³⁷ Responsible exegesis, in Cocceius' view, should allow for every biblical text to "be interpreted according to its context . . . and thus he put himself in opposition to the scholastics and the Cartesians."³⁸ The confessional creeds are subservient to Scripture and are to be interpreted in light of the Bible itself. Theology as a discipline according to Cocceius is "knowledge and speech . . . speech about God, from God, in the presence of God, to His own glory."³⁹ Barth went on to cite this passage in his first

³⁵ Bruce McCormack, "A Scholastic of a Higher Order: The Development of Karl Barth's theology, 1921-1931." (Unpublished Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1989), 628.

³⁶ Charles S. McCoy, "Johannes Cocceius: Federal Theologian," in the *Scottish Journal of Theology* (1963), 355.

³⁷ Quoted in 'Cocceius' article in *Biographisch Woordenboek van Protestantse Godgeleerden in Nederland*. see McCoy, *ibid*.

³⁸ A. Ebrard, as quoted by McCoy, *ibid.*, 356.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 357.

volume of the *Church Dogmatics* of 1932.⁴⁰

For Cocceius, in contrast to the scholastic principle of predestination, the biblical doctrine of the Covenant unifies Scripture and the history of God in relation to humanity and is conferred in the “successive phases of the covenant of God.”⁴¹ He states that “Christian doctrine is wholly drawn together into one stream with this particular point as a centre.”⁴² The covenant itself exists in two different aspects, the first being a pact between the Father and the Son, and the other in the history between God and humanity. The first covenant in history is established through Adam as a covenant of works or of nature. Because of the Fall into the bondage of sin, the same covenant is re-ordered as a covenant of grace that consists of a dual aspect as well--the Old Testament (which is the prefiguration of Christ) and the New Testament (which is fulfilled in the event of Christ.)

Buoyed by Heppe and Cocceius, Barth delivered his lectures (which were never intended for publication) on Reformed dogmatics in the summer term of 1924. Since the substance of these dogmatics has been well covered the focus here will be on the exposition of the Reformed covenantal doctrine specifically.⁴³ Barth was particularly challenged by the ramifications of covenantal doctrine, even going so far as to cancel a lecture on *De foedere* at the last moment. He had

⁴⁰ *CD I/1*, 3

⁴¹ McCoy, “Cocceius”, *ibid.*, 361.

⁴² Johannes Cocceius, “*ut analogiam et 'symphonian' doctrinae Christianae quae in hunc locum tanquam centrum tota corrivatur*.” Preface to his *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei* (1648) 4.

⁴³ See especially Daniel L. Migliore, “Karl Barth’s First Lectures in Dogmatics: ‘Instruction in the Christian Religion,’ in *GD*, xv-lxii, and *CRDT*, 327-374.

felt that what he had written was “nonsense and dangerously false teaching.”⁴⁴

What Barth found most dangerous was the notion of a covenant with Adam based on an ethical legality in the manner of Old Testament law. Cocceius’s distinction was in Barth’s estimation “a fatal historical moment.”⁴⁵ This seemed to be a covert Pelagianism and as such “was not to be recommended (*empfehlenswerte*) for the *homo paradisiacus* as a possibility.”⁴⁶ Two covenants, one of nature (based on works) prelapsinarian and the other (based on grace) postlapsinarian were serious distortions of the Calvinist tradition in his judgement.

Barth’s explication of the doctrine of the covenant(s), *Gott Und Mensch Im Bunde* in his Göttingen dogmatics, was placed before the doctrine of sin to emphasize the prevenient character of grace given before the Fall. Barth’s thesis (*Diktatsatz*), (that his students were required to copy verbatim), adumbrated the theological intention of this section that in the human situation, even as bearing God’s image, there was no material possibility (*verwirklichende Möglichkeit*) of community with God in temporal existence. The promise of eternal communion resides in the Covenant already given by God.⁴⁷ This is in keeping with Barth’s notion of the dual possibility of grace itself as an indirect knowledge grounded in the mystery of revelation, and as the dialectical revealing of God in Jesus Christ as actual possibility. “The diacritical element in the whole concept is clearly the

⁴⁴ Barth, *Revolutionary Theology*, 203.

⁴⁵ As quoted by Migliore, “Barth’s First Lectures”, *ibid.*, xxxviii.

⁴⁶ Karl Barth, *Unterricht In Der Christlichen Religion, Zweiter Band: Die Lehre von Gott/Die Lehre vom Menschen*, ed. H. Stoevesandt (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1990) 397. Translations mine unless otherwise noted.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 381.

relation between revelation and concealment (*Verborgenheit*) even when we consider the matter on the positive side.”⁴⁸ The ‘positive side’ exists in the prior determination of God who covenants with humanity in the ordinance of the *Gnadenwahl*, not in dual covenants but in *one* Covenant of Grace with two aspects, that of nature and of grace.

Barth would not go so far as to postulate a covenant of works (*foedus operum*) before the Fall. The primal essence of humanity as represented in the *status integritatis* provided the implicit gift of grace bestowed to all creation and creatures in existence. The reality of God’s speech to humanity in the *Deus dixit* affirms the possibility of revelation (even as mystery) to created humanity. Barth noted, “Indeed, the reality of revelation belongs to the complete concept of humankind.”⁴⁹ As the object of God’s revelation, humanity discovers its creatureliness and the boundary between the human and the divine. Bruce McCormack speaks in this way of our *Kreaturgrenze*:

Creaturely existence is donated; it is a gift. Created out of nothing like all creatures, [a] human being knows itself as poised on the abyss of annihilation.⁵⁰

Barth’s discussion of the *imago Dei* (*Gottes Ebenbild*) follows Cocceius in the “*rectitudo* which he explains as moral reciprocity with God in all a man’s parts, in soul of course as the *hegemonikon* and in the body and limbs as the *skeuos*.”⁵¹ The *imago Dei* is placed relationally in the decision for God as the

⁴⁸ *GD*, 447.

⁴⁹ Barth, *Unterricht*, 388.

⁵⁰ McCormack, *Scholastic*, 646-7.

⁵¹ Heppe, *Dogmatics*, 232.

imago Dei substantialis which is the image of Christ. This is the primal image lost in the Fall which can only be restored in the act of God in the establishment of the Covenant. How do we know this if humanity is in a fallen state? If, as Barth says, “We know ourselves only in the *status corruptionis*, not in the *status integritatis*; only in a disordered (*gestörten*) relationship to God and not in the primal relation.”⁵² Empirical knowledge or self-introspection will not lead to any disclosure of this *status corruptionis*, “Knowledge of sin, knowledge that we are thieves (*Schächer*), is only in the kingdom of grace.”⁵³ Humanity is already graced in the primordial relationship with God as created beings, available for revelation and our ultimate destiny to be conformed to the image of Christ.

The doctrine of divine election as propounded by Barth underscores for McCormack “the fact that everything which is said of humanity is said, not of the human *an sich* but of the human as addressed by God.”⁵⁴ In this way the Covenant of Grace performs the same function as predestination. In the possibility of being *addressed* by God (in the event of grace) lies the reality of human essence and definition. However, the Reformed characteristic of predestination is not an “integral component” of Lutheran dogmatics in Barth’s estimation.⁵⁵ This claim may be the basis for his criticism of Tillich in 1964, that the application of the biblical sense of ‘covenant’ is “unknown” to him.⁵⁶ Perhaps the existential

⁵² Barth, *Unterricht*, 363.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 364.

⁵⁴ McCormack, *Scholastic*, 652.

⁵⁵ Barth, *Unterricht*, 381.

⁵⁶ Karl Barth, “An Introductory Report” in Alexander J. McKelway, *The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964) 13.

moment of revelation in Tillich's thought bore a resemblance to Barth's concern towards the federal theologians (Cocceius, J. H. Heidegger, Burman) identifying revelation in the successive divine acts of history.⁵⁷ The covenantal concept should be maintained as long as it does not "mean a historicizing of revelation" or a denigration of the doctrine of predestination.⁵⁸ Barth cites J. H. Heidegger's definition of covenant to underscore the connection between predestination and the *foedere naturale*:

God's covenant is the pact or convention of God with humankind by which, in view of the eminent right He has and of His singular goodness, God makes with humankind on fixed conditions a pact of eternal life in heaven and seals it with sure signs and pledges.⁵⁹

The Covenant is established (*aufriichtet*) by God, and God determines how this love might be reciprocated, "it is God who acts (*handelt*) and is triumphant."⁶⁰ Barth emphasizes the reciprocity of covenantal demands by asserting that grace precedes gospel and what is required is a binding of the human subject to the objective love from God for mankind. H. Heidegger is cited again for "it becomes God to return the love of the creature who loves Him and . . . He must give and impart Himself entirely to be enjoyed."⁶¹ What is established is the concept of a "bound humanity" (*dem gebundenen Mensch*) in a Covenant of "binding"

⁵⁷ McCormack, *Scholastic*, 653-4.

⁵⁸ Barth, *Unterricht*, 383.

⁵⁹ "*Foedus Dei est pactum s. conventio Dei cum homine, qua Deus ex eminente, quod habet, iure et singulari bonitate homini certa conditione vitam aeternam coelestem paciscitur et eandem certis signis ac velut pignoribus obsignat.* As quoted in McCormack, *Scholastic*, 654.

⁶⁰ Barth, *Unterricht*, 392-3.

⁶¹ "*Deo dignum esse creaturam se amantem vicissim amare et [. . .] se ipsum fruendum dare et communicare totum*" as quoted by McCormack, *Scholastic*, 655.

(*Bund kommt von binden*).⁶² Behind the concept of the Covenant stands the figure of Christ. For the Federal theologians the *signum visibile* of the ‘tree of life’ illustrates the sacramental character of the covenant.⁶³ Barth noted:

according to the intention (*Absicht*) of the Reformed Dogmatics at this above the fall (*oberhalb des Sündenfalls*) which is denoted as a *foedus naturae*, the Covenant of God with mankind is not about natural revelation, a religious *apriori* or such similar abstractions, but throughout is treated as a positive revelation, in the middle of the Old Testament stands the sacramental Christ prepared in eschatological significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*).⁶⁴

Bruce McCormack’s observations seem pertinent that Barth’s emphasis on the sacramental Christ (the tree of life) has established one Covenant of Grace *before* the Fall. “The old Covenant theologians left the door open a crack to this possibility by speaking of sacraments of the covenant of works and Barth has pushed it wide open.”⁶⁵ In this the semi-Pelagianism inherent in the *foedus operum* is to be avoided. Christ is the first object of predestination as Barth later asserted in the *Church Dogmatics*. If the sacramental symbol of the ‘tree of life’ is a proof for Barth of the pre-existent and prevenient character of grace (in the pre-existent Christ), could the Tillich’s symbol of Christ as the “New Being” be taken as an analogous concept?

Regarding Tillich in the *Göttingen Dogmatics*, Barth thought his theology as “anti-orthodox at all costs.”⁶⁶ He once again disapproves of the term “the

⁶² Barth, *Unterricht*, 384.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 390.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 391.

⁶⁵ McCormack, *Scholastic*, 657-8.

⁶⁶ Barth, *GD*, 30.

Unconditioned” as “hyperbole” in an attempt to “satisfy the linguistic refinement of the declining West”.⁶⁷ In his discussion of the *Deus Dixit*, Barth cautioned that it “is the revelation of God, not the epitome of eruptions of the unconditioned.”⁶⁸ He continued, “The self evidence of revelation is not that of the universal but that of the particular of *God*, but still the *particular* of God (Tillich!).” For Barth then, revelation can never be fully associated with creation as “too much is at stake for us to be able to say this even in faith.”⁶⁹ He re-echoed his earlier reply to Tillich, “Revelation is not a leveling roller that sets everything, even everything conditional as even an eminent theological thinker like P. Tillich seems to think.”⁷⁰

The content of revelation starts, not in any correlational or numinous experience but in the positing that God “is the source of all truths, the doer of the acts, the giver of gifts.”⁷¹ To posit otherwise, for Barth, would leave open the opportunity to detach the “divine predicates from the divine subject” and give to them “a being and glory of their own” making them idols of theological fabrication. There can be no revelation that is not concealed as Barth averred, for “It means the radical dedivinization of the world and nature and history, the complete divine incognito.”⁷² Only the agency of God can provide the human

⁶⁷ Ibid., 46.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 60.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 364.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 365.

⁷¹ Ibid., 89.

⁷² Ibid., 144.

capacity to receive the concealed revelation in the:

good pleasure of his own free grace . . . being himself the organ and way and movement in this human activity, so that is no longer without an object but has God himself as its object.⁷³

The *Göttingen Dogmatics* laid the foundation for Barth's later christological doctrine of Reconciliation and the Covenant of Grace posited as the "internal presupposition and ground of creation."⁷⁴ So also was the necessity of divine initiative for any phenomenological understanding of revelation reiterated. The scholastic research that Barth undertook appeared in the later *Church Dogmatics* in the voluminous notes as background to his concepts. Barth was not finished with the Federal theologians (especially Cocceius) though he believed that they had seriously distorted the Calvinist tradition.⁷⁵ In the end Barth was surprised by his study of the Reformed tradition in Göttingen writing to Thurneysen:

after much racking of my brains and astonishment I have to finally acknowledge that Orthodoxy is right on almost all points and to hear myself saying things in lectures which neither as a student nor as a Safenwil pastor would I ever have dreamed could really be so.⁷⁶

However, the future held a change for Barth's circumstances; in July 1925 he was informed that he had been appointed Professor of Dogmatics and New Testament Exegesis in Münster in Westphalia.

⁷³ Ibid., 175.

⁷⁴ T F. Torrance, *Barth*, 210.

⁷⁵ Karl Barth, *Unterricht In Der Christlichen Religion, Dritter Band* (Zurich: TVZ, 2003) 14.

⁷⁶ Barth, *Revolutionary Theology*, 221.

Münster: Ethics and *Die christliche Dogmatic im Entwurf*

In his teaching in Münster Barth became more involved in debates with Catholic colleagues, especially the Jesuit Augustinian Erich Przywara, whose writings he first encountered in 1923. Münster was a predominantly Catholic city, a “nest of priests and rebaptizers” in Barth’s opinion.⁷⁷ He got on better with his new colleagues on the faculty than with those Göttingen, though he found the students a “rather rough crowd.”⁷⁸ Barth prepared his lectures focusing on the scholastic thought of Aquinas and Anselm whom he found to be “somehow certainly right.”⁷⁹ Stimulated by his study of these great medieval scholastics, Barth went so far as to join a theological group that included both lay and faculty Roman Catholics. In spite of profound misgivings concerning the nature of grace, he found modern Catholicism in fact “closer to the Reformers than is the Church of the Reformation insofar as it has actually and finally become the new Protestantism.” Barth went on to assert that, because of the neo-Reformed interpretations of Schleiermacher-Ritschl-Troeltsch, if forced “to make a choice between two evils, I should, in fact, prefer the Catholic.”⁸⁰ The Trinitarian and Christological doctrines were affirmed in the modern Roman tradition therefore the *substance* of the Church remained intact. This openness towards Catholic thought became quite influential in Barth’s later theology.

⁷⁷ Busch, *Barth*, 164.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁸⁰ Karl Barth, “Roman Catholicism: A Question To The Protestant Church” in *Theology and Church*, 314.

writing a formal dogmatics, eventually published as *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf* in 1927.⁸¹

These Münster dogmatics did not deal with the doctrine of the Covenant in any explicit manner. Barth did not get any farther than a theological *prolegomena* that was concerned with the doctrine of God, the Trinity, Scripture and dogmatic norms of the Church. Barth started first from the Word of God as an objective reality not hidden in the believer's subjectivity. This starting point rejected both the Catholic natural theology and the "religious self-consciousness characteristic of Protestant liberalism following Schleiermacher."⁸² The Word reveals the nature of Trinitarian theology, the true grounding of theology as opposed to any metaphysical or philosophical system. Yet there was still an existential element in the human response to God's addressing Word in Christ: This meant that:

the hearing man is as much included (*eingeschlossen*) within the concept of the Word of God as the speaking God. He is 'co-positd' with the Word in much the same manner as Schleiermacher's God is co-positd in the feeling of absolute dependence (*schlechthinigen Abhängigseitsgefühl*).⁸³

Barth, however, was not going down the same path as Schleiermacher for, as Thomas Torrance has observed, the knowledge of God is "not of man's cognition so much as recognition of God, not of knowledge so much as acknowledgment

⁸¹ Karl Barth, *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf: Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes, Prolegomena zur christlichen Dogmatik* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1927).

⁸² David L. Mueller, *Karl Barth* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1972) 33.

⁸³ Barth, *christliche Dogmatik*, 111. As quoted in Mueller, *ibid.*, 35.

of God, in making himself known to him.”⁸⁴ This existential moment resided in the actuality of the address of God to all humankind. The Word of God is not grounded in the actuality of the response of humanity, but, like the Tree of Life (as a symbol of the sacramental presence of Christ) is grounded in itself alone. This is the *Urgeschichte* of God “the genuine, actual, primal history that is the predicate of God’s action in Jesus Christ” which cannot be “abstracted from the fact of Christ.”⁸⁵

The description of the agency of the Spirit re-emphasizes the character of the Divine volition for Barth. We can only know our own “helplessness and incapacity” in relation to God by “the positive knowledge we have through the Spirit.”⁸⁶ Humanity can comprehend God only because God has first “grasped” humanity.⁸⁷ There is an ethical dimension implied here as well, for the believer, hearing the address of God and in obedient response to grace received in this encounter, and in the work of the Church, must go forth in relationship to other humans. Barth was later to amplify this with his lectures on ethics in 1928 and 1929 as will be described. Furthermore, this faithful response to the gift of God in the event of grace will ultimately stand as *the* iconic phenomenon in Barth’s mature theology.

In *Die christliche Dogmatik*, Barth made two overt references to Tillich. First, he is criticized for his excessive zeal (*eifrig*) and, secondly, for his overt

⁸⁴ Torrance, *Barth*, 109.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 118.

involvement with the *Berneuchener* group. This “order” or “league” was a fellowship of German Christians, about three hundred strong, who later shared deep concerns over the rise of Nazism and a suspicion that the “doctrinal rigidity of the confessing church”, under a Barthian influence, was lacking in religious resolve to “unite all German Protestants against Hitler”.⁸⁸ Barth connected Tillich and this movement with the “conscious lamentation (*Jammer*) over idolatry, numbness, sedateness and alienation” found in the Church.⁸⁹ Barth, however, also had a lamentation concerning his own dogmatics as he felt that the work was too dependent on Kierkegaard and his earlier *Epistle to the Romans*. This project was a tentative effort at best in Barth’s estimation for “this dogmatics will probably have to go its solitary way, like my interpretations of *Romans* eight years ago in the field of modern biblical exegesis.”⁹⁰ There was not to be another volume released and the rest of his lectures on dogmatics at Münster remain unpublished. In addition, Barth had also become suspicious of the existential movement and the influence of Martin Heidegger’s philosophy on Rudolph Bultmann. Later, in his first volume of the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth was to excise all existentialist implications from his theology, “I have excluded . . . anything that might appear to find for theology a foundation, support, or justification in philosophical existentialism.”⁹¹ Barth was now entirely

⁸⁸ Pauck, *Life*, 191-192.

⁸⁹ Barth, *Die Lehre*, 34, 385, translation mine.

⁹⁰ Busch, *Barth*, 174.

⁹¹ *CD I/1*, xiii. German text in Karl Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik: Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes* (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1932). Hereafter abbreviated as *KD*.

removed from the 'Dialectical Theology' movement, as he stated to Bultmann in 1930:

From my standpoint all of you, though your concern differs from mine in different ways, represent a large scale return to the flesh pots of Egypt -[as] all of you--in a new way different from that of the nineteenth century--are trying to understand faith as a human possibility . . . and therefore you are once again surrendering theology to philosophy.⁹²

Barth also was to lecture on ethics in Münster for two semesters, "a voyage beset with rocks" in his words.⁹³ He had come under serious criticism by various commentators (including his own brothers) on his apparent lack of interest in the subject. These lectures were never published in Barth's lifetime and therefore were inaccessible to his critics. What Barth feared in any system of theological ethics was a preoccupation with casuistry as the premise or the ultimate result. Grace preceded Law as he emphasized in his lectures in Göttingen but does "not reverse the sense" in Nigel Biggar's estimation.⁹⁴ Another factor in Barth's reluctance to have his Münster ethics published resided in his dissatisfaction with the 'orders of creation' that remained in these lectures.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, these lectures stand as precursors to his later formulations of ethics in the *Church Dogmatics* though here the concept of covenant is only mentioned briefly.

Barth's understanding of the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace takes on a dual aspect in his Münster lectures. Life is God's gracious gift to his creatures

⁹² As quoted in Gorringer, *Barth*, 116.

⁹³ Busch, *Barth*, 181.

⁹⁴ Nigel Biggar, "Barth's Trinitarian Ethic" in John Webster (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion To Karl Barth* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) 225-26.

⁹⁵ John Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans, 1998) 41.

and thereby humanity stands in the covenant of grace. As inheritors of the divine promise of God because of the human reality of being addressed *by* God, “the promise sets our conduct under necessity.” The horizontal aspect of the Covenant of grace is predicated on the vertical aspect of divine initiative, not as a necessity to enable God’s gracious response to us, but as our response to God:

We would not know the necessity of life and law if we did not know the necessity of promise, if, in addition to bidding us live and humbling us, the divine claim did not also summon us to consider a truly better future, if it did not mean also goal, fulfillment, and perfection.⁹⁶

Later, Barth would assert the covenantal understanding of Law in contradistinction to Calvin and Luther. The law should not be, as such, “unequivocally grouped with the *devil*, *sin*, and *reason*, as it sometimes is in Luther” nor should it be seen in the context of God’s *wrath*. God in this encounter seeks to be ‘Immanuel’, for “This is love, and as God’s love . . . it must regarded as the thing which dominates everything else.”⁹⁷ The incorporation of humanity into the household of God, to hear the *Shema* as the declaration that establishes the covenant but “even as this ‘hear’ sounds forth, it tells us already that God has accepted us.” Therefore, election stands over command as Barth contended:

How can one really refute the statement of Calvin that the law is from the very outset ‘graced with the covenant of free adoption’? Is not the final point of the law, of the command of God that judges us, God’s *promise*, the promise of his *covenant* with us? Can one hear it as command or place oneself under its judgement without recognizing this final point which is also the first one? Are we really mature, do we really know our accountability, so long as we do not

⁹⁶ Karl Barth, *Ethics*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981) 56.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

know our election?⁹⁸

The Law is given as fulfilled promise for Barth and faith can only accept that God's grace has been given before human response; the covenant has been "satisfied in advance of the command under which I am placed and by which I am judged."⁹⁹ This is the love of eternal election, not in a synthetic achievement of humanity but a "recognition of a synthesis already *achieved* . . ." in the prior decision of God.¹⁰⁰ Later, in the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth would attribute human agency in faith and ethics as a "correspondence" of human response to the prevenient divine action using the sacramental practice of baptism as the supreme example of this concept. Ethics are to be derived from a christological premise and not from temporal moral law. Barth stressed this in his ethical lectures at the end of his career; "what would we know of the covenant of grace, and of man as God's partner in history, if we knew nothing of Jesus Christ?"¹⁰¹ The Covenant, presaged in the Garden of Eden, has been seen in its ultimate appearance in the event of Jesus and has therefore become our history as well. Barth sums up the ontological moral condition in this manner:

The decision concerning his true human being was taken from all eternity and also in time on Golgotha, long before he is ready (or not ready) to recognize it and to honor it with his own decision.¹⁰²

With the establishment of a doctrine of election based covenantal ethics in the

⁹⁸ Ibid., 91.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 92.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 93.

¹⁰¹ Karl Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV, 4 Lecture Fragments*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981) 20.

¹⁰² Ibid., 21.

Münster lectures, he went on to refine his understanding of the relationship between theology and philosophy.

Barth's concern about the influence of philosophy on Church theology came from two sources. One was his ongoing interaction with the Catholicism in Münster especially with Erich Przywara and Barth's own lectures on Aquinas and Anselm, and the other, the unabashed usage of Heidegger's existential philosophy by Rudolph Bultmann. The contention of the so-called 'Dialectical theologians' followed the path of relating the symbols (or myths) of Christianity to a perceived mode of existence in the world. As we have seen, Barth was fundamentally opposed to such a starting point as this was the error of Schleiermacher.

In a lecture given in Amsterdam in 1926 Barth dealt with how the Church might proceed in relating to Culture. Barth observed that there seemed to be a "sociological group that which is concerned with religion" of which Tillich was a part.¹⁰³ For Tillich, the Church should be defined as "that sociological reality in which the holy is supposed to be presented" and is caught up in a dialectical relationship with the profane in culture.¹⁰⁴ This description was inadequate for Barth as it omitted "mention of God and his Word" as well as faith and obedience.¹⁰⁵ This was a "world-view" theology (or philosophy) that sought a higher synthesis to solve the problem of God and culture, and of this Tillich

¹⁰³ Barth, "Church And Culture" in *Theology and Church*, 334.

¹⁰⁴ Paul Tillich, "Church and Culture" in *The Interpretation of History*, trans. E. L. Talmey (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936) 220.

¹⁰⁵ Barth, "Church and Culture", 334.

was culpable.¹⁰⁶ Barth asserted that the Church was not accountable to culture in any limiting manner for “the Church is determined always to speak the first, the proper, the essential word *to* culture.”¹⁰⁷ The “work of culture”, for Barth, must take its “place among the earthly signs by which the Church must make God’s goodness, his friendship for men, visible to itself and to the world.”¹⁰⁸ It seemed that Barth opened a door that he was later to walk through in his notion of the iconic appearing in secular parables. The Church must remain alert for these signs, which “perhaps in many cultural achievements, announces that the kingdom approaches.” Barth, at this time, chose not to identify what these signs might be, perhaps for fear that a natural theology might be seen in his theology. It remained in the future for Barth to deal with any *particular* identities of what these signs or “tokens” of revelation might be.

The essay of 1929 “*Schicksal und Idee*” was Barth’s exploration into the problem of philosophy and theology over the concepts and boundaries of realism and idealism. In what way then, could philosophy as an “academic discipline” (*Wissenschaft*) assist or contend with theology whose self-stated starting point was God alone? Barth noted:

Theology thus has God as its object, but only to the extent that, as Thomas Aquinas once profoundly remarked, theology has God as its subject, even if that subject is most highly hidden.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 340, fn.1.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 338, emphasis mine.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 344.

¹⁰⁹ Karl Barth, “Fate and Idea in Theology” (trans. G. Hunsinger) in H. Martin Rumscheidt (ed.), *The Way Of Theology In Karl Barth: Essays and Comments* (Allison Park, Penn: Pickwick Publications, 1986) 27. German text in Karl Barth, *Theologische Fragen und Antworten* (Evangelischer Verlag AG,

For Barth, philosophers do well when they limit themselves to human thinking and existence while the theologian must ponder the meaning of *grace*. Yet, “Grace is imponderable (*nicht rechnen*), one cannot take it for oneself, it can only be received.” Theology can only exist “under the presupposition of God’s gracious miracle.”¹¹⁰ After defining the limitations and points of departure for both disciplines, Barth proceeded to explicate the need for both a ‘realistic’ and an ‘idealistic’ approach to theology. The ‘actual’ resided in the affirmation that:

‘God is’--what does that mean if not that God takes part in being? Then of course the next proposition leads us to the idea that God is himself being, the origin and perfection of everything that is. In their classical form, as set forth by Thomas Aquinas, these propositions combine with a third which can logically be regarded as the consequence, namely, everything that is as such participates in God. Everything that exists as mere creature in greatest dissimilarity (*Unähnlichkeit*) to the Creator, yet by having being it exists in the greatest similarity to the Creator. That is what is meant by *analogia entis*.¹¹¹

The ‘analogy of being’ was to become a very real point of contention in his later theology especially in his interaction with Emil Brunner. Three years later, Barth would go so far as to call this concept an “the invention of the Antichrist” in the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics*.¹¹² Barth was not against the function of analogy *per se*, for one can not speak of God without it, rather, it was the blatant misuse of the concept in modern theology that plagued him. What Barth was to propose was an *analogia fidei* predicated on the fact that “faith has come to [the believer] through the Word.” Barth explained:

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 29.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 33.

¹¹² *CD I/1*, xiii.

Precisely when we describe both the conformity of man to God that takes place in faith and also the point of contact for the Word of God posited in this conformity, not as an inborn or acquired property of man but only as the work of the actual grace of God, our only final word at this point can be that God acts on man in His Word.¹¹³

In this experience of grace, no human “conceptual formulations as such” can give access to the reality of God. “God is therefore given to us neither in the givenness of history and nature nor in that of our own consciousness.” *Schicksal* cannot reveal God for “God distinguishes himself from fate by the fact that he is not so much *there* as rather that he *comes*.”¹¹⁴ To proceed otherwise would, in Urs von Balthasar’s words, “unmask the absolute presumption, the radical sinfulness of human thought.”¹¹⁵

Barth perceived that the tendency in idealist and realistic philosophy was to equate reason with God (*ratio sive Deus*), or nature with God (*natura sive Deus*) which leads to an intolerable situation.¹¹⁶ This predicament cannot be resolved by a philosophical synthesis (of a Hegelian character) nor should theology appropriate such a technique. Theology must appropriate the beginning point of a “form of thinking *from* rather than a thinking *toward*.” Existential philosophy was implicated in this critique as a “theosophy” for in Barth’s judgement philosophy had erred in this regard:

The reason is that theology has to regard human beings as creatures

¹¹³ Ibid., 244.

¹¹⁴ Barth, “Fate and Idea”, 40. Emphasis mine.

¹¹⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans. E. T. Oakes (San Francisco: Communio Books, 1992) 98.

¹¹⁶ Barth, “Fate and Idea”, 50.

of illusion when the course of self-reflection (be it ever so existentiell; be it even the self-reflection of the 'I' addressed by the 'Thou'), they think they can discover an ultimate word in their own sphere, when they think they can really discover God in action through human self-reflection.¹¹⁷

Whatever synthetic *tertium* might be produced in the course of theosophic reflection is inadequate and would be an self-made idol, a deification of the temporal order, or in the words of Luther, a *speculatio majestatis*.¹¹⁸

The solution to the *impasse* for Barth was to present a theology based on the concept of covenantal election that would "be patient as well as incisive." This would be a theology based on the humility of reception which would be "always a matter of God's free grace."¹¹⁹ This is a "genuine theological dialectic" if it is "open to this conception." Humanity has not found a way to God, God has found a way to humanity. Election and predestination are the concepts that most accurately defined this divine impetus. The character of confession again looms in importance for Barth:

Not because I can demonstrate how fate is really idea, or idea really fate, or how my synthesis of them is really God; but rather because it has pleased God, as the one superior to the contradiction of my existence and my thought, to step in for me as Revealer and Reconciler so that I should confess him: and therefore because it has pleased (*gefallen*) God to confess himself to me.¹²⁰

However, before Barth could commence on his *Church Dogmatics*, one more facet of his theological epistemology remained to be stated, and the stimulus for

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 54. Emphasis mine.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 55.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 58.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 59.

declaration would come from another Scholastic source, Anselm of Canterbury.

Fides Quaerens Intellectum

In 1930 Barth moved to the University at Bonn to take up the chair of systematic theology vacated by Albrecht Ritschl's son, Otto. A rupture now existed between the 'Dialectical' theologians and Barth's intention to eradicate any existentialist concepts in his theology. This fracture led to the writing of a book dealing with Anselm's proof for the existence of God. He was proud of his efforts recalling in 1939 that, "I think that I wrote this with more loving care than any other of my books and that . . . it has been the least read of all my books."¹²¹

In 1958 Barth noted that most commentators have:

completely failed to see that in this book on Anselm I am working with a vital key, if not the key, to an understanding of that whole process of thought that has impressed me more and more in Church Dogmatics as the only one proper to theology.¹²²

Hans Urs von Balthasar cited this work as the final turning point in Barth's theology from dialectic to analogy. This "emancipation" from the "shackles of philosophy" was a "conversion" of a "gradual process, indeed a struggle, that lasted nearly ten years, ending at about 1930."¹²³ McCormack has contended that von Balthasar was mistaken about the timing of Barth's "conversion" placing it much earlier in the Münster dogmatics. The nature of von Balthasar's error lay in not taking into account Barth's own word "deepening" as opposed to

¹²¹ As quoted in Busch, *Barth*, 206.

¹²² Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, trans. I. W. Robertson (London: SCM Press, 1958) Preface to the Second Edition, 11, (Cited hereafter as *FQI*).

¹²³ von Balthasar, *Barth*, 93.

“conversion” in McCormack’s estimation.¹²⁴ In any case, whether the change in Barth’s thinking occurred decisively in his book on Anselm, or perhaps earlier in *Die christliche Dogmatik* does not materially affect his doctrine of the Covenant. For this particular concept the Göttingen lectures on the Reformed Confessions and the subsequent lectures on dogmatics are the starting point. I contend that Barth became more open to the covenant of grace in this formative period which eventually led him into the polemics with his Catholic colleagues and his study of Aquinas and Anselm. The process may have been gradual but the “deepening” started with Barth’s radical concentration on the Reformers in Göttingen.

Fides Quaerens Intellectum stands as the culmination of Barth’s focus on grace as the necessary starting point for theological and anthropological reflection. In Anselm’s scheme the *Gratia Dei praeveniente* is the ultimate consideration for “myself to hold the faith of our redemption, by the prevenient grace of God.”¹²⁵ The “faith seeking understanding” is a gift from God and the *Credo ut intelligam*, the summons to knowledge:

Faith . . . does not come about without something new encountering us and happening to us from outside, *nequaquam sine sui generis semine et laboriosa cultura. Fides esse nequit sine conceptione*. The seed to be received is the ‘Word of God’ that is preached and heard; and that it comes to us and that we have the *rectitudo volendi* to receive it, is grace.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ CRDT, 1 fn.1. “Now a ‘deepening’ of a knowledge already acquired is hardly the same thing as a decisive turning-point.”

¹²⁵ Anselm, “*Cur Deus Homo?*” in *Saint Anselm: Basic Writings*, trans. S. N. Deane (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1962) 179.

¹²⁶ FQI, 19.

grace.¹²⁶

The way to understand God is through faith and a humility before the task of theology. Barth emphasized:

What is at stake here is not just the right way to seek God, but in addition to God's presence, on which the whole grace of Christian knowledge primarily depends, the encounter (*Begegnung*) with him which can never be brought about by all our searching for God however thorough it may be, although it is only to the man who seeks God with a pure heart that this encounter comes.¹²⁷

Scripture interpretation itself, i.e. the seeking of the "inner text" comes from more than a mere hearing of reading of the "outward text" but "only by virtue of special grace."¹²⁸ Revelation is "hidden" and can only be "revealed" by an prevenient act of God; this divine decision becomes a fundamental axiom to Barth's epistemology. He specified that:

even here decision enters into it, not as to whether it is *ratio veritatis* but whether it can be recognized as such. In the *Credo* and in the Bible it is hidden and must reveal itself in order to make itself known to us. It does this, however, only if and in so far as the Truth, God himself, does it.¹²⁹

McCormack summarizes Barth's reading of Anselm in terms of a *Realdialektik*.¹³⁰

God cannot never be known as an object, a *ding an sich*, for "it is only God himself who has a conception of God." Human cognition exists in the realm of the phenomenal and needs an infusion of God's grace to intuit any divine truth

¹²⁶ *FQI*, 19.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 38. German text from Karl Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981) 38.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹³⁰ *CRDT*, 432.

correct the presumptive illusions of human thought is to be found in the concept of the Covenant of Grace, the gift *par excellence*.

Conclusion

Barth's explorations in the Doctrine of Grace would lead to his mature statement of Election in the *Church Dogmatics*. In Göttingen, his academic task prompted his serious study of the Reformed tradition and its Calvinistic derivation. Barth's uncomfortable relationship with his Lutheran colleagues and Luther's emphasis on "justification by faith" opened the door to a Pelagianism that Calvin and other Federal theologians seriously contended with. Barth established the connection with a covenantal Christology that would ultimately place Christ as the first ground of election. In Münster, he embroiled himself in a debate with modern philosophy that forced him to clarify and ultimately repudiate any existentialism in his theology. The Word was to take supremacy over all human deliberation on the nature of God, indeed it could not be dealt with in any salvic manner without the acknowledgment of its character as gift. Inasmuch as God's speech as revelation *is* gift, only the gracious gift of God could unlock its secrets. No synthesis with culture and intellectualism would do, for they all stand under God's judgement and have been found wanting.

The iconic *locus* of the covenant of grace Barth was to explicate later in his *Church Dogmatics II: The Doctrine of God*. What was irrefutably idolic however, was any synthetic approach from secular philosophy, even under the guise of a *analogia entis*. The Idealistic tradition was the culprit in these matters for Barth: "To put it concretely, here is where we face the temptation of seeking and finding

God in fate or God in idea.”¹³² Modern philosophy be it idealistic, existential, phenomenological and any theology in alliance with these movements could only create an idol, a *Begriffsgott*. Barth’s suspicion of Tillich on this score led to their *diastasis*; what still was needed in Barth’s theology was a proper focal point for the covenant of grace and its manifestation in human existence. The situation in Germany would lead him to refute any possibility of these occurring in an iconic mode in modern culture. The Barmen Declaration would be the future testimonial on this.

¹³² Barth, “Fate and Idea”, 32.

CHAPTER 6

PAUL TILLICH: HISTORY AND DECISION

In 1924 Tillich went to the University of Marburg replacing the ill Rudolph Otto with whom he became a close friend. Here also he came into contact with the existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger. As Tillich wrote later, "It took years before I became fully aware of the impact of this encounter on my own thinking."¹ He also spent much of his teaching time asserting his own views against his students' preoccupation with Barth and the dialectical movement itself. Tillich, more than Barth at this particular time, would also become preoccupied with his Socialist commitments which would ultimately lead to his expulsion from Germany in 1932.

The aforementioned "pact" between Barth and Tillich would exemplify itself in Tillich's expression as a 'theologian of culture.' To illustrate this, the focus of this chapter will be on Tillich's thoughts on politics (most especially Socialism), his understanding of contemporary culture and religion through the concepts of 'kairos' and the 'demonic' as well as his covenantal concepts of theonomy and grace. The demonic idol of Hitler would force both Barth and

¹ Paul Tillich, "Autobiographical Reflections" in C. W. Kegley & R. W. Bretall (eds.) *The Theology Of Paul Tillich*, 14.

Tillich to leave Germany and destroyed any sense of a *particular* form of culture manifesting the intrusion of grace. Tillich's early ideas on Religious Socialism appeared in an article published for the 'Kairos' circle in 1923 titled "*Grundlinien des religiösen Sozialismus: Ein systematischer Entwurf.*" Four major topics were considered: inner attitude, the goal, the opponent and the way of religious socialism. Tillich made two distinctions regarding the "inner attitude" (*innere Haltung*), one of the "sacramental" defined as "a consciousness of the presence of the divine" and the other, the "rational attitude that is historically critical."² These "tendencies" were to be synthesized in the "prophetic form" of religious socialism.³ To avoid the distortion of "reflection, rationalism, and political strategy", the prophetic attitude "must recognize that the presence of the Unconditional is the *prius* of all conditioned action"⁴ This prophetic view of history is the "*kairos*" from "whose concrete tensions the new creation proceeds in which sacred import is realized in necessary form." For Tillich at this time, this form was to be found in his concept of socialism.

The goal (*Ziel*) of religious socialism was to reveal the "creative syntheses in which the eternal idea" is revealed. This synthesis is to be called 'theonomy' that is the "unity of sacred form and sacred import in a concrete historical

² Paul Tillich, "Basic Principles of Religious Socialism" in James Luther Adams (ed.), *Political Expectation* (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1971) 58. German text in Paul Tillich, *Christentum Und Soziale Gestaltung: Frühe Schriften zum Religiösen Sozialismus, Gesammelte Werke Band II* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1962) 91-119.

³ Ibid., 60.

⁴ Ibid., 60-61.

situation.”⁵ The concept of theonomy carries a covenantal aspect in Tillich’s thought and is an important facet of his theology especially in comparison with Barth. I contend that theonomy described by Tillich as a “condition in which the spiritual and social forms are filled with the import (*Gehalt*) of the Unconditional as the foundation, meaning, and reality of all forms,”⁶ is analogous to Barth’s doctrine of the Covenant. In 1953 Barth wrote:

It can only be by way of analysis and emphasis that we maintain that grace is not only the basis and essence, the ontological substance of the original relationship between God and man which we have described as the covenant between them willed and instituted and controlled by God.⁷

This speaks to the divine initiative in the covenantal relationship, and the historically conditioned human dimension is described by Barth as missionary activity:

For in so far as the creature is the object of divine activity and the recipient of the grace of God, it becomes *ipso facto*, not the means of this grace, for grace works directly or not at all, but its witness and herald and proclaimer. Thus even in the utter humility of its spiritual existence it acquires an active function within the history of the covenant. It has a mission to fulfill, or a commission to execute, a mission or commission to its fellow-creatures.⁸

It is to this commission of proclamation that Tillich’s concept of theonomy attests to its historical formulation and its embodiment as the goal of religious

⁵ Ibid., 62.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *CD IV/1*, 44.

⁸ *CD III/3*, 64.

socialism. What Tillich was trying to achieve with his idea of theonomy was *both* present and future oriented. Thus he declared in 1952 that, "I could say that in a perfect theonomy the philosophical analysis of the structure of being-in-itself would be united with a theological expression of the meaning of being for us." This was an "eschatological vision" that however partially fulfilled exists as a "mutual immanence of theology and philosophy" which sees "the event of Christ as the entrance to the universal *logos*."⁹ Kenan Osborne has described Tillich's concept of theonomy in this fashion:

Theonomy is both the fact of this presence of God at the ultimate in all things as well as man's realization of this fact, and the reality of this presence is presupposed prior to man's realization. Such a theonomous reality can be the only genuine *Naturbegriff*, for according to Tillich's principles nature cannot but be this way. This presence of God at the very being of things is grace. Gratuitous creativity forms, sustains, and directs the power, the facticity, the meaning and the objective structure of every essence.¹⁰

In later years Tillich was to lose some of his theonomous optimism for an equitable and socialist future. In a letter to his friend Eduard Heimann in 1958, he posited the idea of a "hidden theonomy" without which the "autonomous side of culture would sink into complete meaninglessness and the heteronomous side into sheer willfulness."¹¹ This is a very real analogue of Barth's notion of *Krisis* in the *Epistle to the Romans* after World War One. Unlike Barth however, Tillich

⁹ Paul Tillich, "Answer" in *The Theology Of Paul Tillich*, 336.

¹⁰ Osborne, *New Being*, 106.

¹¹ As quoted by Raymond F. Bulman, "Theonomy and Technology: A Study in Tillich's Theology of Culture" in John J. Carey (ed.) *Kairos and Logos* (Mercer University Press, 1978) 231.

hopes for a new *Kairos* to transform German culture to a true theonomy during the Weimar period. As Barth retreated from active socialist participation, Tillich was an involved proponent for his brand of a theonomous *religious* socialism that was to dominate his writings from 1923-1933.

Even in the more hopeful milieu of 1923 Tillich was aware that a theonomous critique of contemporary existence would uncover that which opposed it; this force of opposition he termed the “demonic.” For the “demonic is the contradiction (*Erhebung*) of unconditioned form, an eruption (*schöpferischen*) of the irrational ground of any realization of form that is individual and creative.”¹² Tillich would explicate this concept further in the near future, but in this essay regarding socialism the ‘demonic’ was characterized as “the ethos of the limitless rational economy.”¹³ Communities also can be permeated with the ‘demonic’ as Tillich contended:

It becomes the task of religious socialism to combat sacramental demonries in all social relations, for example, sacramental pride and honor that destroy personality, and to sustain the form of autonomous personality and of free community.¹⁴

Only this iconic concept of theonomy as “the new breakthrough of import” can rectify and combat the ‘demonic’ in Tillich’s estimation and this is not the result of human endeavour. “Rather, it is fate and grace.”¹⁵ The demonic is the absolute

¹² Tillich, “Basic Principles”, 66.

¹³ Ibid., 78.

¹⁴ Ibid., 84.

¹⁵ Ibid., 86.

point of idolatry for Tillich. This idolic situation in whatever form it manifests itself must always be critiqued by the “Protestant Principle” as he was to state later.

The University of Dresden

In 1925 Tillich accepted a full professorship in religious studies at the University of Dresden. He had drawn critical attention with the publication of his first book entitled *Die religiöse Lage der Gegenwart* which was in Tillich’s own judgement his first genuine success of “original impact.”¹⁶ Written in a popular style, the various expressions and distortions of contemporary European culture were adumbrated as well as Tillich’s notion of an attitude of “belief-ful realism.” In contrast to a belief-ful idealism which tends to “spiritualize its objects, to regard them no longer as symbols of the ultimate or as deriving their meaning from the Unconditioned,” belief-ful realism “forbids all trespassing over the boundaries of experienceable reality.” Since the Unconditioned is not known by temporal reality “it follows that all religious ideas are symbolic.”¹⁷

Tillich affirmed Barth’s Neo-Reformed theology for it “lets the judgement of the unconditionally transcendent God fall upon every attempt of culture or religion to claim value before him.”¹⁸ However, Tillich feared that this movement would ultimately reinforce the “spirit of capitalism” once the “prophetic

¹⁶ Pauck, *Life*, 98.

¹⁷ H. Richard Niebuhr, “Translator’s Preface” in Paul Tillich, *The Religious Situation* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956) 13-14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 217.

disturbance of our days has ceased . . .”¹⁹ Barth’s retreat from active socialist politics had not gone unnoticed by Tillich who felt that the *Kairos* and the attitude of “belief-ful realism” had “shaken to the foundations” all the “social and economic order of capitalism” and stood as a “negation of every kind of romanticism and utopianism.”²⁰ Tillich concluded his work with this call for involved socialist commitment:

One thing however must be remembered in connection with all these observations: they can have meaning only for those who are themselves engaged in the movement and for them they are not only meaningful but also full of responsibility. Such men are not permitted to stand aloof as non-participating observers, but it is demanded of them that they think and speak about the religious situation of the present with the unconditioned, active responsibility.²¹

Tillich’s next essay *Religionsphilosophie* was critiqued by the reviewer Emanuel Hirsch as “one of the most mature accomplishments of recent German systematic philosophy.”²² Tillich outlined his thesis from the contention that there is “a tension between every synthesis and the Unconditioned which constitutes its meaning or import.”²³ Religion is therefore paradoxical as the Unconditional can appear in every cultural or religious form. “Belief-ful realism” transcends both

¹⁹ Ibid., 218.

²⁰ Ibid., 116.

²¹ Ibid., 219.

²² As summarized in James Luther Adams, *Paul Tillich's Philosophy Of Culture, Science, And Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) 250. Hirsch’s review was published in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, LI (1926), 96.

²³ Adams, *Tillich*, 250.

subject and object and stands above the temporal order. Once again the demonic is acknowledged acting as a dialectic with the creative impulse of the divine. Correspondingly, the icon of the theonomy of grace stands in opposition to the pervasive influence of the demonic in all its forms. In his comparison of the secular and the sacred spheres (*Das Heilige und das Profane*), Tillich claimed:

Theonomy itself uncovers and identifies (*durchschaut*) the paradoxical character of the Holy and of ecstasy, the inner transcending character, the quality of breaking through immediate forms and of interpreting them symbolically. As against both supernaturalism and idealism it thus achieves the insight that the state of holiness is *grace*, and not a supernatural sphere, but also not a merely natural ideal demand (*Forderung*). Grace is always a paradox; it breaks through the immediate form but has no form of its own.²⁴

Both the demonic and the paradox of grace exist in the sphere of the Holy:

The difference, however, is this, that grace breaks through the form as both an acknowledgment (*Anerkennung*) of the form and an affirmation of (*Bejahung*) the unconditional form, whereas the demonic does not submit (*beugt*) to the unconditional form.²⁵

This synthesis Tillich described as the essence of a “religion of grace, or “a religion of paradox.”²⁶ Its sacramental character produces “a symbol that brings to full expression the religious paradox: the symbol of the divine mediator.”²⁷

The symbolic nature of Tillich’s thought would generate his notion of Christ as

²⁴ Paul Tillich, “The Philosophy of Religion” in James Luther Adams (ed.) *What Is Religion?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969) 83-84. German text in Paul Tillich, *Writings in the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. J Clayton (Berlin: De Gruyter-Evangelische Verlagswerk, 1987) 117-170.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 86. Translation amended.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

the “New Being”, a symbol that Barth would have great difficulty in accepting and raised a barrier between the two that would never be broken down theologically. At this point Tillich’s christology was still a work in process though Barth had suspicions about its direction as early as 1923 as we have seen. Grace, for Tillich, was “the correlate of revelation in the practical sphere.”²⁸ The summation of his philosophy of religion resided in the essence of “belief-ful” activity that would demonstrate:

The union with the Unconditional, the apprehension (*Erfassung*) of its gracious presence, which is the ecstatic fulfillment in sacramentalism and personal obedience in theocracy, becomes in the religion of paradox *spiritual love*, the synthesis of ecstasy and obedience.²⁹

In short, the horizontal demands of a covenantal obedience are prompted by the gift of grace that comes from beyond.

Tillich continued his explication of the demonic in his essay of 1926. Setting this concept in the history of philosophy as a whole, he sets out Dostoevsky’s character of the “Grand Inquisitor” as the “symbol most impressive for our time” as it is opposed to Christ:

the religion which makes itself absolute and therefore must destroy the saint in whose name it is established--the demonic will to power of the sacred institution.³⁰

This literary allusion (also used by Barth in *Der Römerbrief*) illustrates “the

²⁸ Ibid., 114.

²⁹ Ibid., 115.

³⁰ Paul Tillich, “The Demonic: A Contribution To The Interpretation Of History”, trans. E. L. Talmey, in *The Interpretation of History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1936) 80.

embracing form, which unites in itself a formative and a form-destroying element, and therewith affirms something contra-positive.” The “metaphysical essence” of the demonic is to be understood “through an analysis of the basic relationship to existence” i.e. “the depth in things.”³¹ This Tillich describes as the “abyss” which is not “exhausted in the form of things” but rather that “Every one of our relations in existence, however, suggests that it is directed to something, which, despite its finiteness, shares the inexhaustibility of existence.” The concept of the “abyss” is taken from the theosophy of Jacob Boehme (an influence on Schelling) who Tillich felt was worth recovery for modern theology:

If Protestant theology wants to penetrate the ontological implications of the Christian symbols, it would do well to use the ideas of Boehme more than those of Aristotle. In contrast to the *actus purus* of Aristotle, Boehme tried to describe in metaphysical-psychological symbols the *living* God in whom the roots of every life must be sought.³²

For Boehme the “*Urgrund*” or “abyss” in God allows the existence of the demonic; “The Unground is that depth in God unknown by humans and not fully known even by God: It is God as ‘No-nature.’”³³ This internal dialectic, or ‘demonic’ element characterizes the nature of the *living* God in Boehme’s thought. Tillich appropriated both Schelling and Boehme in his description of the concept of the ‘abyss’ as both

³¹ Ibid., 82-83.

³² Paul Tillich, “Foreword” in John J. Stoudt, *Jacob Boehme: His Life and Thought* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968.) 7-8.

³³ H. Frederick Reisz, Jr., “The Demonic as a Principle in Tillich’s Doctrine of God: Tillich and Beyond” in John J. Carey (ed.) *Theonomy and Autonomy: Studies in Paul Tillich’s Engagement with Modern Culture* (Mercer University Press, 1984) 139.

a “sacred void” and “the infinity of meaning.”³⁴ How then is the concept of the Demonic related to grace? Tillich averred that the demonic is fulfilled and selects as the “most prominent object” of its destruction the personality “for it is the bearer of form in its totality and unconditioned character.”³⁵ This demonic assault puts the personality into a state of “possession” in the “cleavage of consciousness.” The “state of grace” is the correlative conquest of the demonic “which the free, rational, synthetic consciousness does not achieve.”³⁶ Tillich went on to explain further:

The paradox of the possessed state is as strong as the paradox of the state of grace: the one is as little to be explained as the other by casual thinking by categories of rational observation of nature. The difference is only that in the state of grace the same forces are united with the highest form which contradict the highest form in the possessed state. Therefore grace has a fulfilling and form-creating effect on the bearer of the form, while demony has the consequence of destroying the personality through the robbing it of being and emptying it of meaning.³⁷

The conquest of the demonic occurs as “the divinity takes the demonic destruction upon itself.”³⁸ Tillich saw that the Christological and Trinitarian disputes of the early Church were attempts to “ward off” the influence of the demonic. The incarnational nature of a divine mediator that “subjects himself to the transcendent

³⁴ Ibid., 145.

³⁵ Tillich, “The Demonic” 86.

³⁶ Ibid., 87. Tillich would later explicate the concept of personality in his “Die Überwindung des Persönlichkeitsideals” of 1927. English translation in Paul Tillich, “The Idea And The Ideal Of Personality” in *PE*, 115-135. Here grace is expanded to cover more than the Protestant “forgiveness of sins” notion, but also to include all facets of the personal life as found in depth-psychology.

³⁷ Ibid., 88.

³⁸ Ibid., 105.

negation of every existence” allows for the possibility of a “concrete reality united with man” that also preserves the character of the unconditioned. These concepts lie at the very core of Tillich’s christology yet to be dogmatically formulated. But the implication of divine initiative was made clear for “Demonic breaks down only before divinity, the possessed state before the state of grace, the destructive before redeeming fate.”³⁹ Although the demonic exerted a strong influence in the course of human history, its fate was sealed by the incarnational appearance of the Logos which had entered into time and revealed its “inner infinity.”⁴⁰ Insofar as the *Kairos* reveals the Logos it also reveals the reality of grace.

In 1926 Tillich also published an article entitled “*Denker der Zeit: Karl Barth*” a survey of the Barthian movement, its origins and its influence on modern German theology.⁴¹ Tillich reiterated that the significance of the dialectical movement had been established with the publication of Barth’s first edition of *Der Römerbrief*, a “landmark” (*Markstein*) in Evangelical theology.⁴² Kierkegaard’s “strong” influence on Barth was noted, and both the Church and the Socialist polity were placed under judgement of the eternal over the temporal. Tillich wrote:

The established ‘No’, which of God over the world has been spoken,

³⁹ Ibid., 122.

⁴⁰ Paul Tillich, “Kairos And Logos” in *The Interpretation of History*, 164.

⁴¹ Paul Tillich, “Denker der Zeit: Karl Barth.”, *Vossische Zeitung* (Berlin) No. 32 (“Das Unterhaltungsblatt” No. 16) January 20, 1926. Modern German text in Paul Tillich, *Begegnungen: Paul Tillich über sich selbst und andere: Gesammelte Werke, Band XII* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerke, 1971) 187-193. Translations mine.

⁴² Ibid., 187.

the powerful proclamation of judgement, the crisis, has occurred in its utmost paradoxical form, the breaking in (*einggebracht*) in the trend (*Richtung*) named 'Dialectical Theology'. It alone is fulfilling itself as the heir (*Erbe*) of Reformation thought . . .⁴³

The "majesty" of Calvin's theological thought seemed to be the strength of Barth's position in Tillich's estimation.⁴⁴ Between God and human existence is found a great cavity, *der Hohlraum*, that reminds us of our creatureliness and the infinite transcendence of the God we cannot know. Religion itself betrays this separation as it is an "affair (*Stück*) of human history, a human possibility."⁴⁵ Only faith, not intuition, derivation, experience or knowledge, can grasp the "astonishment" (*Überraschende*) of the paradox of revelation.

It is faith, therefore a discontinuity (*Sprung*), a wager (*Wagnis*), yes, better still an attitude (*Verhalten*), that is not our attitude, for it does not originate (*entspricht*) in human possibility, because it rests outside our reality (*Wirklichkeit*).⁴⁶

This description carries the implication of Marion's "saturated phenomenon", that which overcomes the rational but incomplete human cognition with the reality of the *gift*, which comes from without. In summary, the Barthian movement for Tillich belongs "to the great events of Protestant theology", an attitude he was to maintain all his life.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibid., 188.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 188-189.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 190.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 191.

⁴⁷ See especially D. Mackenzie Brown, *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue* (London: SCM Press, 1965) 189-193.

Tillich further described his understanding of the relationship between faith and grace in an article of 1928, “*Über gläubigen Realismus*.” Here Tillich posits a “self-transcending realism” which carries a “universal attitude toward reality” that has two elements; an “emphasis on the real and the transcending power of faith.”⁴⁸ Reality is then seen as something new and even “transparent” i.e., “theonomous.”⁴⁹ The ultimate power that grounds every human existence grasps us in the experience of faith, acting as both the “crisis” of judgement and the healing power of grace. “Neither crisis nor grace is in our reach, neither grace nor crisis is beyond possible experience”⁵⁰ However, only crisis unified with grace allows the judgement to be perceived in the “religious sense.” Historical realism then becomes possible in the sphere of the self-transcendent and seeks to make contemporary that which is past in revelation, the event of Christ. Tillich had accepted the methodology of historical criticism and stated that “there is no way of meeting the ‘historical Jesus’ (i.e., the product of historical criticism) because the Jesus of whom we have reports was from the very beginning the ‘Christ of Faith’.” Barth had taken exception to this premise already and Tillich continued to further exacerbate the rupture between them in suggesting that:

Self-transcending realism requires the criticism of all forms of supra-naturalism in the sense of a theology that imagines a supra-natural

⁴⁸ Tillich, “Realism And Faith” in *PE*, 67.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

world beside or above a natural one, a world in which the unconditional finds a local habitation, thus making God a transcendent object, the creation an act at the beginning of time, the consummation a future state of things.⁵¹

Tillich's commitment to the discourse of the academy and the secular world would not allow a 'supra-natural' move as in the manner of Barth. This *aporia* would manifest itself later in the polemic between Barth and Brunner as well as isolating Tillich from the realm of the Barthian neo-orthodoxy. But, as yet, Tillich had not fully explicated his christology and its relation to the *gestalt* of grace.

The University of Frankfurt

In March of 1929, Tillich resigned from the University of Dresden (which had failed to receive accreditation) and accepted the post of Professor of Philosophy and Sociology. The college was considered progressive, employed an extensive Jewish faculty and was known as the "red university."⁵² Tillich received a large salary that was guaranteed and not predicated on the number of students in his classes. He was allowed to teach precisely what he wished and received a sizable housing allowance suitable for living in either the city or suburbs surrounded by the Taunus hills. For Tillich it was a dream come true. He was to teach courses in social education concerning ethics, historical action and political direction as well as seminars on Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Locke and Thomas Aquinas.⁵³ He also taught an informal

⁵¹ Ibid., 82.

⁵² Pauck, *Life*, 110.

⁵³ Ibid., 113.

course in systematic theology in his last semester there.

Tillich's tenure in Frankfurt brought both success and difficulty. His reputation as a teacher was legendary and his personal interest in the intellectual development of his students profound.⁵⁴ Among his students was the philosopher-sociologist Theodor Adorno who wrote his dissertation on the aesthetics of Kierkegaard under Tillich's supervision. Along with Max Horkheimer, Adorno was to found the Institute of Social Research of what was later known as the Frankfurt School.⁵⁵ Tillich's exposure to other renown faculty members especially Kurt Goldstein and Adhémar Gelb introduced him to the burgeoning Gestalt therapy school and provided insights into organic and inorganic biology. Adolf Löwe, Karl Mannheim and Friedrich Pollock stimulated Tillich's understanding of economics as well. Even though Tillich was the only theologian in the school, a singular position as a Christian teaching philosophy in a secular University, his interactions with his academic colleagues and openness to new forms of thought would serve him well in the future.

Tillich's introductory address at Frankfurt, *Philosophie und Schicksal*, dealt with the philosophical treatment of "fate" as "transcendent necessity in which

⁵⁴ See Pauck, *Tillich*, 110-138 and Terence O'Keeffe, "Tillich and the Frankfurt School in *Theonomy and Autonomy*, 67-87 for a description of Tillich's Frankfurt years.

⁵⁵ For a detailed history of the this School, see Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories and Political Significance*, trans. M. Robertson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994.)

[human] freedom is entangled (*verflochten*).”⁵⁶ Similar to Barth’s *Schicksal und Idee in der Theologie* of the same year,⁵⁷ Tillich outlined the history of philosophy and its attempt to postulate an idea of truth that stands outside of a human “demonically controlled (*beherrschte*) existence.” Greek philosophy was able to suppress the “Power of fate” but not “eliminate” (*beseitigte*) it. Since certainty could not be found in philosophical endeavour, the threat of a demonic fate forced reflective thought to reach out for a “saving (*rettendem*) fate--for ‘grace’.”⁵⁸ This redemptive grace places a “positive valuation” on existence that “brings salvation in time and history [and] subdues a demonic fate which denies the new in history.”⁵⁹ Philosophy, in and of itself, cannot reach a point “at which either *logos* or *kairos* alone is to be found.”⁶⁰ Philosophy as a human construct is constricted by fate as Tillich asserted:

Fate obtrudes (*betrifft*) even into the sacred inclosure (*Vorhof*) of philosophy, into the truth itself, and it stops only before the holy of holies. It stops only before the certainty that fate is divine and not demonic, that it is meaning-fulfilling (*sinnerfüllend*) and not meaning-destroying (*sinnzerstörend*).⁶¹

Is Tillich guilty of Barth’s fear of the *mixophilosophicotheologia* (Abraham

⁵⁶ Paul Tillich, “Philosophy And Fate” in *PE*, 3. German text in Paul Tillich, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. G. Wenz (Berlin: De Gruyter: Evangelisches Verlag, 1989) 307-319.

⁵⁷ cf. discussion above in Chapter Four.

⁵⁸ Tillich, “Philosophy and Fate”, 7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

Calov) i.e., “the mixture of philosophy and theology which, at present, seems to make such a tremendous impression upon many as the newest thing under the sun?”⁶² One contemporary assessment stresses that the linguistic differences between the two stems from their distinctive religious traditions:

Barth cannot locate himself within either philosophical camp [realist or idealist] on principle, but insofar as a theology makes use of philosophy and leans towards either a realist or idealist orientation, he finds himself with Augustine and with Zwingli and Calvin whose ‘idealism’ stood in relative opposition to the ‘realism’ of Luther and Melanchthon.⁶³

This is undoubtedly correct but it might also be added that the apologetic and kerygmatic intent of Tillich and Barth decisively altered their respective assertions concerning the nature of grace as inherited from their respective Lutheran and Calvinistic backgrounds. Grace is the *sine qua non* for Barth’s theology of the Church as Tillich’s *Gestalt* is the prophetic dimension of grace at work in the world. This conception was to be the basis for Tillich’s articles “The Formative Power of Protestantism” published in *Religiöse Verwirklichung* and “Protestantism as a Critical and Creative Principle” both published in 1929 as well. In these two essays Tillich spells out his understanding of the “*Gestalt* of Grace” in detail and provides important insights into what Tillich was attempting to establish concerning the *prophetic* import of grace itself.

⁶² Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, trans. G. Foley (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans, 1963) xiii.

⁶³ A. Katherine Grieb, “Pharaoh’s magicians at the holy of holies? Appraising an early debate between Tillich and Barth on the relationship between philosophy and theology,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* (2003) 377. Grieb notes that the essays show their theological disparity as “early as 1929”. As has been shown the rupture began in 1923.

In the first essay, Tillich was seeking to provide a new 'form' for modern Protestantism to take after the manner of a *Gestaltung* referring to "the total structure of living reality."⁶⁴ Tillich saw the need for a synthetic *Gestalt* that unites the protest with a creative Yes.⁶⁵ The "Theology of Crisis" movement had taken a "dangerous turn" in his estimation. "It seems as if Barth and his followers, in a good orthodox style, are interested only in the form of *doctrine* in Protestantism." This preoccupation with doctrine had not been affected by the 'No' of the Protestant principle as "it had not passed through the fire of its own protest."⁶⁶ The new form of the self-realization of Protestantism was to be found in a new authority that "participates in the infinite, in the unconditional, in a trans-human authority" the "reality of grace." Tillich elaborated:

Grace-embodied, reality of grace, *Gestalt* of grace--all these sound strange and dangerous for Protestants. 'Grace' is supposed to be something intangible and unsubstantial, while 'embodiment' and '*Gestalt*' seem to point to something that can be grasped and touched.⁶⁷

Tillich, of course, realized that this characterization of grace had become a legalism in Catholic sacramentalism. Yet, the polemics of the Reformation were finished and "we are able to decide in terms of principles and not of controversy" in his opinion. Tillich named the center of Protestant doctrine the "divine structure of reality" i.e.,

⁶⁴ Tillich, "The Formative Power Of Protestantism" in *PE*, 206.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 209.

faith. The divine initiative was stressed again by Tillich as he wrote:

Faith is the Faith of man. It does not come *from* man, but is effective *in* man. And in so far as faith is in a community or personality, they are embodiments of grace. Faith is created by the hearing of the 'Word.' The Word is said from *beyond* us, *to* us. But, if it is received, it is no longer *only* transcendent. It is also immanent, creating a divine structure of reality.⁶⁸

The 'embodiment' of grace is manifested in the immanental character of its existence in the world, "permanently actual *in* history--though they [the structures of grace] do not derive *from* history--if in *any* moment of history the Word is to be pronounced." The prophetic nature of grace itself creates faith, not just a "human act of subjection to a report about grace." For Tillich, this distinction was critical as the authority of faith then is grounded in the power of the unconditional and not rooted in the objective knowledge of mere intellectual assent. "Grace is preached and faith is created."⁶⁹ However, more than mere words about grace and faith were to be proclaimed, as the 'divine Word' in Jesus as the Christ must be the basis of all attestation.

Tillich was afraid that the so-called "theology of the word" would confuse doctrine with the proclamation of the totality of the Christ-event. He explained:

If we say that his total being and not merely his words (or words about him) is the Word of God, we are saying that the reality of grace and not the speaking about grace as the source of Christianity.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ibid., 210.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Tillich's italics.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 211.

True Christian proclamation was to not only speak *about* the reality of grace as “an expression *of* this reality, not detached from their object but grasped by it.” The authority of the biblical word is grounded in the “New Testament picture of Jesus as the Christ “ which is open to a “nonsensuous intuition.” Tillich’s opaque expressionist rhetoric is employed here in the statement that “we might say that a *Gestalt* of grace is a possible object of ‘imaginative intuition.’ Furthermore, the “transcendent meaning of a finite reality is not an abstract concept but a matter of imaginative perception.”⁷¹

For Tillich, the purview of this “imaginative perception” is an engagement of both critique and being critiqued by secular culture. The “eternal element” of the Protestant *Gestalt* is to be expressed “in relation to a present situation.”⁷² The imaginative assertion of grace must be expressed as “daring and risk” without a surrender of the transcendent origin and character of grace. Tillich explained:

A daring act is demanded, an act that penetrates to the deepest level of reality, to its transcendent ground. Such an act is what in the religious tradition is called ‘faith’ and what we have called a ‘belief-ful’ or ‘self-transcending realism.’⁷³

The covenantal aspects of the *Gestalt* of grace are to be exemplified in the response to the other *person* in ethical respect and fidelity. Barth would emphasize the *individual* response in covenantal obedience to the call of God as Tillich would

⁷¹ Ibid., 212.

⁷² Ibid., 214.

⁷³ Ibid., 215.

stress the *social* dimension of ethical behavior in the realm of politics as would be demonstrated in the future.

Barth objected to Tillich's methodology in his first volume of the *Dogmatics*. Citing Tillich's statement from "Nature and Sacrament" of a distinction in the "human cleavage between sacramentalism, daemonism and secular exorcism"⁷⁴, Barth perceived the danger of Tillich's over-estimation of the influence of positive grace in secular society and culture. Barth wrote that, although "God was not bound to the historical Church", there remained a qualitative distinction between their respective approaches. The fact remained for Barth that :

the antithesis between Church and society can be a symptom of the divine distinction, and a pointer to its truth, not in the abstract equality but in the concrete inequality of the two sides.⁷⁵

The judgement of God "casts a shadow before in the event of this provisional distinction in which man is at work." At this juncture in Barth's early theology, God could not be confined or even found in human cultural expression in any revelatory or redemptive fashion. He felt that Tillich was critiquing the Church from the 'outside' and this ultimately made Tillich's theology "irrelevant." Barth contended:

A philosophy of culture may very well reflect upon other things, including an 'unconditioned' or a 'far side of being' discerned elsewhere than in the command [to the Church]. But it must not imagine that in so doing it has even touched the task of theology.

⁷⁴ Paul Tillich, "Nature and Sacrament" in *PE*, 110-111.

⁷⁵ *CD I/1*, 48.

Barth wryly noted however, that “God may speak to us through Russian Communism, a flute concerto, a blossoming shrub, or a dead dog.”⁷⁶ But only the Church in its preaching and the practice of the sacraments has the special commission to “decisively talk about God to men and for them.”⁷⁷ The Church’s preaching was not to be “controlled” or “guided” by anything but “the exposition of Scripture.”⁷⁸ Barth associated Tillich’s “sacramental situation” as an equivalency to proclamation “that successfully reaches the depth of our own undivided, pre-objective being” which would be, in effect, humanity “only conversing with itself.”⁷⁹ In sum, Barth thought that Tillich’s criticisms were a rather “naive polemic.”⁸⁰ He wrote further:

One must give him credit that in what he says he has in view proclamation of the Word of God. But, if so, are not all his proposals mere naiveties compared to which it is perhaps much more realistic to stick now as always to the direct proclamation of the Bible and tradition?⁸¹

Tillich’s “negations or delimitations of man” cannot “even produce the Word of God for him or ourselves.” Both theologians were on different tracks regarding the iconic character of proclamation (prophetic versus doctrinal), and their styles

⁷⁶ Ibid., 55.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 55-56.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 59.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 62.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 138.

⁸¹ Ibid., 184.

of writing together with their own over-assertions concerning each other's notions, separated them in emphasis but not in material content over the nature of grace.

Tillich further illustrated his prophetic notion of grace in an important essay of 1929, *Protestantism as a Critical and Creative Principle*. Prophetic criticism “stands beyond life” even as it “brings life into question.”⁸² In this respect it is quite similar to dialectical theology in that it also proclaims that which is “beyond both being and spirit.” However, dialectical theology was “limited” in that it “overlooked the indissoluble relationship between the theological ideal and all other ideals.”⁸³ This, in effect, had weakened its critique of other cultural domains, “for example, the criticism that had been advanced by ‘religious socialism’, and therefore to strengthen the existing forms and powers of the secular life.”⁸⁴ Barth thought just the opposite arguing that:

If there is really a prophetic view and interpretation of the opposition which the Church needs directly or indirectly from the world, if it is really God's diction which the Church thinks it sees in this ‘contradiction’, then in any circumstances what [it] has to glean from it can only be a demand for this conscientious concentration on its own business.⁸⁵

Tillich continued on to claim that prophetic criticism finds its “fulfillment in a sphere that stands beyond the critical situation. This is expressed in the word

⁸² Paul Tillich, “Protestantism as a Critical and Creative Principle” in *Political Expectation*, 12.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸⁵ Barth, *CD* 1/1, 74.

‘grace’.⁸⁶ This notion of grace is therefore, “*the presupposition of prophetic criticism.*”⁸⁷

A comparison between the *Gestaltung* of the criticism, both in concrete form and in the abstract, led to Tillich’s own evaluation of the Kantian form of rationalism. He considered it “inappropriate” (*unangemessen*) to “establish any especially intimate (*besonders*) relation between this form of criticism” and that of Protestantism. This would allow Protestantism to once again withdraw “from the concrete decision of the Kairos and thus in actuality make a decision for the status quo.”⁸⁸ This seemed to be the problem with dialectical theology with “Brunner among others” the chief suspects. Tillich elaborated by stating that if Kant is chosen as the “creator of criticism” then the absurd situation would arise whereby “everything is criticized” and “then in principle nothing is criticized; and what already is enjoys an advantage that remains unquestioned.” Kantian criticism had its origins “in a form that actually destroys all form.”⁸⁹ The only way that prophetic criticism could unite with rational criticism lay in the “possibility of appropriating (*aufzunehmen*) the concrete ideal.”⁹⁰ But this was to “presuppose that prophetic criticism is itself supported by some being” which bears the character

⁸⁶ Tillich, *Protestantism*, 15.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 18. German text in Paul Tillich, *Theological Writings*, ed. G. Hummel (Berlin: De Gruyter Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1992) 134. Italics in German text.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

of the “beyond”.⁹¹

The *Gestalt* of grace provides the ground of this transcendent notion which “must belong to reality.” But grace cannot be perceived as the “highest perfection” of the rational, nor can it be seen as “something objective because it is present.” The over objectivizing of the *jus divinum* of Catholicism or the “demand” of Protestant orthodoxy regarding Scripture or ‘pure doctrine’, “should be suppressed as blasphemous and culpable.” Tillich judged that dialectical theology had “demanded” that it was necessary to give up the whole notion of the form of grace. Dialectical theology spoke of the ‘Holy Spirit’ but this necessarily includes the *Gestalt* of grace for “This idea is unavoidable, for it is the presupposition of any criticism uttered with ultimate power and authority (as the word of God).”

The eschatological dimension of grace Tillich defined as “anticipation” that is “a temporal image of a perfect consummation that is coming.” That which is coming “cannot yet be appropriated” and in this agreed with Barth’s eschatological views on I Corinthians 13. Yet, Tillich thought that Barth “overlooks the fact that the discussion of eschatological fulfillment is possible only by ‘anticipation’ through the form of grace.”⁹² Tillich went on to claim that “in every living form a hidden form of grace . . . is identical with its power to be.” The *Gestalt* of grace appears, not in the essence of living existence, but where the conflict between being and freedom “is overcome.” This is the “very goal towards which the life of

⁹¹ Ibid., 22-23.

⁹² Ibid., 26.

all forms is directed.”⁹³ In this way autonomy is subdued by a theonomy of grace.

To avoid being objectified, grace in its historical manifestations must “itself be subjected to criticism.” Tillich believed that modern Protestantism had only undertaken a negative critique in the “rejection of the Catholic objectification of grace and of the autonomous secularization of it.”⁹⁴ Scripture was “viewed as a perfect union of prophetic criticism and of religious form.” However, a literalistic interpretation of the biblical witness led to a “new objectification” and the “symbolic character of Scripture as an anticipation of the form of grace was not appreciated.”⁹⁵ For Tillich it may be presumed the biblical doctrine of the Covenant, understood in an over-literalistic manner, would objectify grace to a mere forensic *Gestalt* and lose its representative validity. Defining the symbolic character of religious language would occupy Tillich in the future as will be illustrated. At this juncture in his thought, Tillich was still seeking to explicate an icon of grace that would maintain the nature of its own reality and not be weakened by its own character as prophetic criticism. His doctrine of the *Kairos* attempted to make clear the *locus* of the *Gestalt* of grace.

The supreme example of the moment of historical *Kairos* “is expressed in the idea of Christ . . . For Christian thought Christ is the center of history in which

⁹³ Ibid., 28.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 29.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 30.

beginning and end, meaning and purpose of history are constituted.”⁹⁶ Faith affirms whether history is a history of salvation in Tillich’s estimation. If so, Christology becomes the “definition and description” of the center of history, and is the “basis on which the interpretation of history rests.”⁹⁷ In the claim that Christ is the center of history, Christianity “*considers a personal life which is completely determined by its relation to God, the principal meaning in history.*”⁹⁸ This consideration of a personal life would play a definite role in Tillich’s concept of the New Being in his later systematics. Christ, as the center of history, conquers the ambiguity of time and the meaninglessness of existence. Tillich explained:

Therefore being grasped by the center of history means being grasped without limitations and conditions, by an absolute power. The fate in which we are grasped by a center of history in such a way is named ‘predestination’ in religious terminology; the decision in which we grasp that which grasps us, is named ‘faith’.⁹⁹

Grace, Christology, divine initiative and the doctrine of election are all implied in this statement, which are the main subjects of theology for Tillich. Like Barth, he saw the danger of “humanistic attempts to draw Christ into the realm of universal or highest humanity; that is, to make him a representative of human possibilities.” This was the error of Schleiermacher and the German idealist theologians and both Barth and Tillich recognized the danger of reducing Christ

⁹⁶ Paul Tillich, “The Interpretation Of History And The Idea Of Christ” in *The Interpretation of History*, *ibid.*, 251. German text in *Theological Writings*, 189-212.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁹⁸ Italics in German text.

⁹⁹ Tillich, “The Idea of Christ”, 260.

to “arbitrariness and ambiguity.”¹⁰⁰

To avoid this peril the unconditioned meaning must be seen “not as demand but as an existent” fulfilled in the “sacramental reality” of Christ “in which the holy is grace and present, not only demand and future.”¹⁰¹ The power and authority of Christ comes from more than just “His theoretical knowledge or from His prophetic inspiration” but through “a faculty of making people participate in His powerful existence.”¹⁰² Compare this with Tillich’s later assertion in his *Systematic Theology*, “By analogy, one must say that participation, not historical argument, guarantees the reality of the event on which Christianity is based.”¹⁰³ The “transforming power of the New Being in Jesus Christ”¹⁰⁴ is the ultimate guarantor in Tillich’s schema. Modern Christology then, must concern itself with the transforming power of the moment of *Kairos* as the form of grace which “gives us an expectation of an eternal future in which meaninglessness is conquered.”¹⁰⁵ Tillich was on the way to his complete understanding of the character of Christ, however, the full exposition of his christology still remained to be worked out in the future. For the immediate present in the new decade Religious Socialism and

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 261.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 262.

¹⁰² Ibid., 262-263.

¹⁰³ *ST II*, 114.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 115.

¹⁰⁵ Tillich, *The Idea of Christ*, 265.

its ramifications in Tillich's personal life were to remain center stage.

The Socialist Decision

The rise of the National Socialists led by Adolph Hitler in the 1920s and early thirties became the scourge of religious Germans everywhere. While neither Barth or Tillich thought that they would face any problems from this regime at the time, their socialist viewpoints put them on a direct collision course with the Nazi government when it took complete power in 1933. As the economic and political situation deteriorated Tillich and most of his colleagues joined the Social Democratic Party, though he was never an enthusiastic or overly active member. Tillich also became a contributor to the magazine, *Neue Blätter für den Sozialismus*, edited by August Rathmann. Tillich had a dream in 1931 that, as he told his friends, "You will all see sheep grazing on the Potsdamer Platz one day." His prophetic dream was to come true, for fifteen years later after the bombing of Berlin, a photograph was published in a New York newspaper showing that very thing.¹⁰⁶ As the situation became worse, Tillich became so exasperated with the ineffectiveness of Christians to stand up to the Nazi tyranny that when asked once by his friends, "Professor, can you tell us whether there are any Christians in the world any more?", he shouted in reply, "No, not a single one. The only Christians in the world today are Jews!"¹⁰⁷ Such passion and 'political incorrectness' would

¹⁰⁶ Pauck, *Tillich*, 124-125.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.

lead to his dismissal from Frankfurt and his emigrating to the United States as a political refugee in the very near future. As it was the shared destiny for both Barth and Tillich to be forced to leave Germany in the 1930s, a comparison of their political thoughts and involvements is necessary to understand their respective ideas about covenant and grace and the way it could manifest itself in the current situation.

While Tillich railed against the rise of the Nazi Party and was having nightmares over Germany's future, Barth seemed not to take the situation as seriously. After Hitler became the Reich's chancellor in 1933, for example, Barth wrote his mother that he did not believe "this signified the beginning of great news in any particular direction." Furthermore Germany was "a body inwardly and outwardly much too heavy to be moved or changed through such movements."¹⁰⁸ Barth was not totally oblivious to the chaotic situation when he likened German politics to "sitting in a car which is driven by a man who is either incompetent or drunk."¹⁰⁹ Barth was critical of National Socialism's anti-Semitism and its idea of a 'master race' because it threatened democracy.¹¹⁰ Barth's Swiss nationality may have been a factor that prevented him from estimating the ultimate threat of Nazism but it never prevented him from overt dissidence against its injustices. The Barmen Declaration had demonstrated this admirably, but by the

¹⁰⁸ As quoted in Frank Jehle, *Ever Against The Stream: The Politics of Karl Barth, 1906-1968*, trans. R. & M. Burnett (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans, 2002) 46.

¹⁰⁹ as quoted in Busch, *Barth*, 217.

¹¹⁰ Jehle, *Politics*, 47.

time of its writing, Tillich had already left Germany.

Tillich's equivalent declaration against the National Socialists appeared in ten theses published in a book sent to Hitler entitled *Die Kirche und das Dritte Reich* of 1932. It was subsequently condemned by J. Stark, a professor of Hitler's, with these words:

The book I question affords a valuable commentary on the intellectual level of numerous 'evangelical' theologians. Never have I seen such an accumulation of ignorance, superficiality, presumption and malicious enmity to the German Freedom Movement.¹¹¹

The same year a disturbing incident brought Tillich into the forefront of anti-Nazi dissidence. In July of that year fighting broke out between Nazi students, Storm troopers, left-wing and Jewish students. Bloodshed ensued and Tillich reverted to his World War One experience of bringing in the wounded to safety. Enraged by the incident Tillich made a public speech in defense of the students and demanded that the Nazi students be expelled from Frankfurt University.¹¹² Later, Tillich wrote this concerning Hitler:

At the time of our emigration it was not so much his tyranny and brutality which shocked us, but the unimaginably low level of his cultural expressions. We suddenly realized that if Hitler could be produced by German culture, something must be wrong with this culture.¹¹³

The "Ten Theses" were intended for the Church and expressed Tillich's fears

¹¹¹ As quoted in Mark Kline Taylor, *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries* (London: Collins Liturgical, 1987) 116.

¹¹² Pauck, *Tillich*, 127.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 128.

about the syncretism practiced by German Protestantism and the Nazi movement. By “opening itself up” to National Socialism and rejecting Socialism, Tillich felt that Protestantism was “going to betray its commission to the world.” In giving up its “consecration of God-given authority” Protestantism actually “promotes the perpetuation of class conflict.” Furthermore, “Protestantism must prove its prophetic-Christian character by setting the Christianity of the cross against the paganism of the swastika.”¹¹⁴ Any joint suppression of Socialism and Catholicism “will lead to future disintegration of German Protestantism.”¹¹⁵ Such were the stakes for religion in Tillich’s mind at this time. In the writing of his next book the die would be cast concerning his future as a professor in Germany.

Die sozialistische Entscheidung published in 1933, has been described by one commentator as his “most creative political philosophy.” Tillich was warned by Max Horkheimer that “certain sentences in the manuscript could cost him his life.”¹¹⁶ In fact, two months after its publication Tillich was dismissed from the University of Frankfurt as a political dissident. He was, in his own words, trying to “lay bare the anthropocentric roots and political consequences of nationalism.” Tillich’s experiences of the First World War had revealed “the demonic and destructive character of the national will to power, particularly for those who went to war enthusiastically and with a firm belief in the justice of their national

¹¹⁴ Taylor, *Tillich*, 117, (translation by Andrea Böcherer).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹¹⁶ Ronald H. Stone, “On the Boundary: Protestantism and Marxism” in Mary Ann Stenger & Ronald H. Stone, *Dialogues of Paul Tillich* (Mercer University Press, 2002) 155.

cause.”¹¹⁷ Firmly convinced that war would occur again under the Hitler’s regime, Tillich issued his strongest critique yet of the Nazis branding them as “enemies of socialism.” The *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartie* as a group with “the word *socialism*” in its name “must be brought to a real socialist decision” as they “threaten the future of the nation and of Western civilization.”¹¹⁸ With such an indictment of the Reich government it is no wonder that Tillich’s book was condemned and burned by the Nazi authorities.

The *Socialist Decision* claimed that “*The salvation of European society from a return to barbarism lies in the hands of socialism.*”¹¹⁹ Nazism is described as a “revolutionary form of political romanticism” that presents a distorted reading of the mythical concepts of origin, blood, soil and nation.¹²⁰ The National Socialist movement had co-opted these concepts and imbued them with a flavour of the sacred and deceived German Christianity into thinking that the Nazis were protecting religion. But religious truth and personal salvation were not the issues, “What is sacred to them is the nation, its freedom and power.” It was a deception, Tillich alleged:

The genuflection of the National Socialist party before the Protestant churches, therefore, does not signify that a secular movement here is

¹¹⁷ Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1966) 95.

¹¹⁸ Paul Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, trans. F. Sherman (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) xxxi.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 161. Tillich’s italics.

¹²⁰ Stone, “On the Boundary”, 155.

seeking an arena in which to place itself under the judgement of the unconditional demand.¹²¹

Catholicism with its structure and hierarchy seemed able to withstand the Nazi incursions, while Protestantism was more vulnerable to ‘leading groups’ and its proclamation is “either accommodated (*anpaßt*) to the demands of the ruling groups, or else becomes so transcendent that it allows the social forces to work unhindered, and thereby serves their interests. (*Interesse*)”¹²² The present reality of the political and social situation could provide no adequacy or security. Socialism, as a movement, must accept the fact that “disharmony” is the reality and therefore “must direct its faith toward a future that stands in complete contradiction to the present.” Transcendent and immanent expectation is the revolutionary energy needed for socialism in a dialectical manner. Tillich contended that, “*If socialism expects the coming of a harmonious world, it must reckon with a leap that can in no way be explained in terms of present reality.*” It would then be prophetic in its proclamation once again in the “expectation of a new being.”¹²³ The “new being” here was not identified in Jesus Christ explicitly as it would be in Tillich’s later theological writings.

The elements found in the ‘socialist principle’ were grounded in “*the power of the origin, the shattering of the belief in harmony, and an emphasis on the*

¹²¹ Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 35.

¹²² Ibid., 35-36. German text from Paul Tillich, *Christentum Und Soziale Gestaltung: Frühe Schriften zum Religiösen Sozialismus, Gesammelte Werke, Band II* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerke, 1962) 219-365.

¹²³ Ibid., 69.

demand.”¹²⁴ The three elements are to be combined within the concept of “expectation” (*Erwartung*) providing a symbol to “the socialist principle and the power it contains.”¹²⁵ In this way then, socialism stands against the autonomy of the “self-sufficient world.” In Tillich’s description “expectation is tension (*Spannung*) with a forward aim (*Richtung*)” directing itself “towards what is not now, but shall be, towards something unconditionally new that never has been but is in the making.”¹²⁶ Conservative Christianity altered the prophetic element by “attempting to refer humanity’s final expectation to the destiny of the individual soul”, a severance from historical destiny, i.e., “the transformation (*Umwandlung*) of the world.”¹²⁷

This statement sums up Tillich’s criticism of Barth’s ‘supranationalism’ as it separated the believers out from the world, where they could neither see the manifestation of the unconditioned in culture, nor influence the destiny of culture by being able to shape it in any material way. Expectation included action (*Tat*) for Tillich, a realization through human activity of that “which will come to pass, and, insofar as it *will* come, it is not dependent on human activity (*Tun*).” The activity of human response to the that which *will* come is the response to the divine initiative of theonomous grace revealing itself in the appearance of the

¹²⁴ Ibid., 100.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 101.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 102.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 102-103.

unconditioned. Tillich finished with these powerful words:

*Only expectation can triumph over the death now threatening
Western civilization through the resurgence of the myth of origin.
And expectation is the symbol of socialism.*¹²⁸

Conclusion

On April 13, 1933, Tillich's name appeared on a list of intellectuals to be 'purged' along with others from the Frankfurt faculty including Horkheimer. He was given one more chance to retain a professorship in Berlin if he would withdraw *The Socialist Decision*. Tillich laughed in the official's face and soon the book became a "symbol of courage and resistance" to Tillich's socialist friends "contributing to their resolve to resist the Hitler absurdity."¹²⁹ At the behest of Reinhold Niebuhr and Horace Friess, Tillich was invited to New York's Union Theological Seminary and to lecture at Columbia University. On November 4, 1933, he arrived with his family to take up residence in the United States. Indeed, Tillich's socialism had led him to a momentous decision to flee Germany and his most dire predictions concerning Hitler and the Third Reich were unfortunately to become barbaric realities.¹³⁰

In effect, the demonic had triumphed instead of the moment of *kairos*. His

¹²⁸ Ibid., 16

¹²⁹ John R. Stumme, *Socialism in Theological Perspective: A Study of Paul Tillich, 1918-1933* (Missoula, Montana : Scholars Press, 1978) 49.

¹³⁰ see Pauck, *Tillich*, 123-138, for a full account of Tillich's last months in Germany.

conception of a religious socialism for Germany had found itself ineffective against the formidable evil of the Third Reich. After Tillich's emigration to the United States and the conclusion of the Second World War his abiding passion for socialism waned, to be replaced by a new concentration on the demonic as symbolized by the concepts of estrangement, alienation and the abyss. There was to be no other political stance for Tillich as he sardonically noted:

It was a mistake when the editor of *Christian Century* gave to my article in the series 'How My Mind Changed in the Last Ten Years' the title 'Beyond Religious Socialism.' If the prophetic message is true, there is nothing 'beyond religious socialism.'¹³¹

However, the prophetic message did not lead to a new *kairos* because it was not controlled by the "unique and primary *kairos*" i.e., the *logos* character of the "appearance of the Christ in history" that would exclude the "antirational."¹³²

As Heimann has pointed out, the derivative *kairoi* cannot be identified by a *logos* criteria "in derived form."¹³³ Marxism, so much espoused by Tillich in his political writings, did not provide a proper christological critique. Heimann stated:

Tillich's error in associating Marxist utopianism with its doctrine of revolution rather than with its doctrine of man, which, in an atheist system, occupies the place of theology.¹³⁴

A "sacred void" of waiting seemed to be the net result of Tillich's disappointment with the practicality of religious socialism in post-war Germany.

¹³¹ Paul Tillich, "Autobiographical Reflections" in *The Theology Of Paul Tillich*, 12.

¹³² Eduard Heimann, "Tillich's Doctrine Of Religious Socialism" 317.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 319.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 320.

The heteronomous character of modern culture, both German and in its most capitalistic form Anglo-American, prompted Tillich to continue his “quest for a new theonomy.”¹³⁵ We have seen how this theonomy is manifested in the existence of the ‘New Being’ exemplified in the Jesus as the Christ. A trinitarian implication abided as well in that “being moved by the Spirit is the *prius* of faith” and “to be moved by the Spirit or to be grasped by the unconditional means to be drawn into the reality and the life of a *Gestalt* of grace.”¹³⁶ An analysis of the human predicament leads to existential questions in Tillich’s understanding of the concept of correlation which would be clarified later in his systematic theology. Therefore the demonic and heteronomic state of affairs are to be answered in the *Gestalt* of grace. Tillich would later affirm the doctrine of salvation “by divine grace alone”¹³⁷ and reiterate the Christological assertion that where “there is New Being, there is grace, and vice versa.”¹³⁸ Tillich’s concept of grace would continue to mature but as Alexander McKelway has pointed out, the concern with grace in his later writings was also emphasized in “this early part of his theology.”¹³⁹ Any overt biblical connection was still yet to come.

¹³⁵ *ST III*, 252.

¹³⁶ Tillich, “The Formative Power Of Protestantism”, 211.

¹³⁷ *ST III*, 408.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 274.

¹³⁹ McKelway, *Tillich*, 136.

CHAPTER 7

THE EARLY DOGMATICS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF THE COVENANT

The effect of Anselm on Barth's theology as we have seen, was profound.

Fides Quaerens Intellectum provided a starting point within the reference of faith that reinforced Barth's contention that philosophy (including phenomenology) could not be the starting premise of theological discourse. That premise was the domain of the revelation of the Word himself, Jesus Christ. Barth's subsequent *Dogmatics* would proceed from a Trinitarian base to a christological doctrine of election. In this chapter the primary concentration will be on the development of this doctrinal assertion as it unfolded in the context of Barth's growing dissatisfaction with Hitler and the establishment of the ultimate idol; the *Reichskirche*. The practice of the German nationalistic movement and its appropriation of Christian symbol and dogma led to Barth's contributions to the Barmen declaration, a document of covenant and ethic to only one leader, Jesus Christ.

In 1932 Barth published his first half-volume of *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*, the title being taken advisedly for the book was "bound to the sphere of the

Church, where alone it is possible and meaningful (*sinnvolle*).”¹ No philosophical existentialism was to be followed (unlike the dogmatics of 1927) for that would be following the line from Schleiermacher, Ritschl and Hermann leading to the “plain destruction of Protestant theology and the Protestant Church.” The Roman Catholic concept of the *analogia entis* was denied as well, being “an invention of the Antichrist”; though the Church Fathers, Anselm and Aquinas, would be quoted with “no sign of horror.” Barth would continue to occupy himself with scholastic doctrines such as the Trinity and the Virgin Birth with great respect for the “mystery” of these ideas. To avoid them would be to allow “all kinds of worthless substitutes that had led many preachers and their followers to “discover deep religious significance in the intoxication of Nordic blood and their political *Führer*.”² So also Barth distanced himself from the dialectical theology movement insisting that his dogmatics were not of that ilk. This undertaking was *from* the Church, *for* the Church and this was Barth’s stated premise without qualification.

The first volume commenced the huge enterprise of Barth’s mature theology, as the *Church Dogmatics* would ultimately entail the publication of thirteen volumes and, even at that, the project was never completed.³ To try and reduce this imposing body of writing has daunted Barth’s interpreters since the early

¹ *CD I/1*, xii. German text from Karl Barth, *Die Lehre Vom Wort Gottes: Prolegomena Zur Kirklichen Dogmatik* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1932) ix.

² *Ibid.*, xiv.

³ Barth once wryly noted that his dogmatics were “not altogether unlike *Moby Dick*, the white whale” in size. See Karl Barth, “Forward To The English Edition” in Otto Weber, *Karl Barth’s Church Dogmatics: An Introductory Report on Volumes I:1 to III:4*, trans. A. C. Cochrane (London: Lutterworth Press, 1953) 7.

nineteen-fifties. For the purposes of this work however, a more monistic approach is appropriate; for the focus on the doctrine of the Covenant and its related topics (election, grace, etc.), allows for a descriptive *thematic* procedure. To argue that Barth's doctrine of the Covenant is the basic "root-metaphor" has been undertaken before as Stuart McLean has contended. He purports that this understanding of the Covenant is linked to Barth's "interpretation of reality" and is "basic" to his theology. Covenant is the "context-giving metaphor" that shapes the "appropriate ordering and use of other metaphors."⁴ McLean is explicating this in reference to an anthropological approach to one volume of Barth's *Dogmatics* (III/2); but his method is instructive nonetheless. This is not a claim that this metaphor is *the* most important in Barth's theological frame of thought; but that as a possible *saturated phenomenon* it provides a critical insight into the way Barth formulated his iconic concepts. As such, this mode of investigation stands as an heuristic attempt to place both Barth and Tillich in the context of a phenomenological approach which will elucidate both the iconic and idolic in their understandings of divine initiative and grace, *pro nobis*.

The Doctrine of the Word of God

Barth set out to develop his new dogmatics from the perspective of the medieval scholasticism he had been exposed to in Göttingen, especially his study of Anselm and Thomas Aquinas. The task of a dogmatic *Prolegomena* was to be

⁴ Stuart D. McLean, *Humanity In The Thought Of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981) 6.

the Church proclamation of the Word of God and the revelation of God in Triune form. This comprised the contents of this first volume, with the topic of ethics being deferred to the heading of the doctrine, “The Command of God.”⁵ Barth stated his christological emphasis from the outset:

Dogmatics presupposes that, as God in Jesus Christ is the essence (*Sein*) of the Church, having promised Himself to do it, so He is the truth, not merely in Himself, but also for us as we know Him solely by faith in Jesus Christ.⁶

The obedience of faith in the listening to Jesus Christ is coupled with the impossibility of any dogmatics outside the Church.⁷ But faith is not “a determination of human action” it is the “gracious gift (*Zuwendung*) of God to man, the free personal presence of Christ in his activity.”⁸ Faith comes from the Divine initiative, from an implication of the:

grace of divine predestination, the free gift (*Gabe*) of the Word and Holy Spirit, the act of calling (*Berufung*) the Church, which must always come upon the theologian from the acting God in order that he may really be what he does and what his name inculcates (*entspricht*).⁹

Following the lead of Anselm’s dictum “faith seeking understanding”, existential theology, as *apriori* for dogmatics, is totally inadequate. For Barth, the Church must maintain its being as an *actus purus*, that is “a divine action which is self-originating

⁵ *CD I/1*, xvi.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17. Barth also stated that “Dogmatics is possible only as a *theologia crucis*, in the act of obedience which is certain in faith”, *ibid.*, 14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 18. Translation amended.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 21. Translation amended.

and which is to be understood only in terms of itself and not therefore in terms of a prior anthropology.” Grace is the gift of “personal address (*Zuwendung*) and not a transmitted (*übertragener*) material (*dinghafter*) connexion (*Zustand*).” Therefore, dogmatics must begin with “the present moment of the speaking and hearing of Jesus Christ Himself, the divine creation of light in our hearts.”¹⁰ As God’s creatures, ‘graced’ and addressed, the proclamation of God in Holy Scripture is to be accepted as though “God Himself speaks.”¹¹ The enculturation of this Word does not invalidate or marginalize its authority, as Barth understood Tillich to claim, with his “human cleavage between sacramental daemonism and secular exorcism.”¹² This is the time of the *regnum gratiae* for Barth, an “event of divine election, confirmed and maintained and therefore characterized as a genuine indication of the antithesis of judgement and grace which . . . God Himself acts towards men.”¹³ Therefore, all human speech of a prophetic nature “is not grace, but service (*Dienst*) of grace or means of grace.”¹⁴ Barth defines this proclamation as *sacrament* for it attests “the event of divine revelation, reconciliation and vocation which does not merely fulfil but underlies the promise.”¹⁵ But, *contra* Tillich, the sacramental

¹⁰ Ibid., 41.

¹¹ Ibid., 52

¹² Ibid., 48.

¹³ Ibid., 48-49.

¹⁴ Ibid., 52.

¹⁵ Ibid., 56.

Word, incarnate in Christ and witnessed to by Scripture, must not be reduced to a mere symbology. Tillich was quoted from his *Religiöse Verwirklichung* of 1929:

That it should be said of the Word of God!-- ‘in the choice (!) of this symbol lies the spiritual character of the self-impartment (*Selbstmitteilung*) of transcendent (*Jenseits*) being . . . But it is false to equate the Word as a symbol of the self-impartment of transcendent being with the word as the physical medium (*Mittel*) of the self-comprehension (*Selbsterfassung*) of the human spirit and in this way to mix up God’s Word and the word of Scripture or the word of preaching.¹⁶

Barth was quite wary of such a statement because it seemed as though Tillich had equated both Christ and Buddha as symbols “in so far as the unconditionally transcendent can be viewed in them”, for symbols convey truth upon the “inner necessity for the symbol-creating consciousness.”¹⁷ This statement further exacerbated Barth’s grave concerns over Tillich’s christology calling for a renunciation of all “special talk about God, all use of symbols whatsoever.”¹⁸ We will examine Tillich’s notion of symbol in the next chapter; but here it may be said that Tillich’s description of the biblical text and Church proclamation and its uses of symbol were that of an expression of a reality, in this case *grace*, which was “not detached” from its object (Jesus Christ the Word) but “grasped by it.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibid., 63. Translation amended. English translation of Tillich’s article in Paul Tillich, “The Formative Power of Protestantism” in *PE*, 211. Barth seems to have missed the import of the passage in its context of the reality of grace and divine initiative.

¹⁷ *CD I/1*, 2.

¹⁸ Ibid., 63.

¹⁹ Tillich, “Formative Power”, 211.

In spite of such emphasis on the nature of grace in Tillich's writings, Barth continued to be adamantly opposed to Tillich who "remained too incorrigible a historian of thought" as well as:

too much an heir of liberal theological resentment against the Church . . . too moulded and set systematically by the pseudo-eschatological 'situation' of the immediate post-war years . . . Both Ragaz and Tillich regard their own as dynamic and mine as static . . . What am I to say to that?²⁰

Barth continued his thoughts on Church proclamation with his understanding of the relationship between human hearers and the revealing God in terms of "event." This event is based on the "authoritative (*bevollmächtigten*) vicariate of Jesus Christ."²¹ The "invisible-visible centre" of God's revealed biblical witness is fulfilled in the time of Jesus Christ, "this absolute event", which is the freedom of God's grace.²² Because of the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the Word revealed, the divine *Immanuel*, "God with us", the event of grace "becomes actual for us *hic et nunc* as the promise received and grasped in faith because it is *illic et tunc*."²³ Revelation itself does not "differ from the person of Jesus Christ . . . To say revelation is to say 'The Word became flesh.'"²⁴ Even to utter the phrase "God with us" is to:

²⁰ *CD I/1*, 75.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

²² *Ibid.*, 116-117.

²³ *Ibid.*, 120.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.

say something which has no basis (*Grund*) or possibility outside itself, which can in no sense be explained in terms of man and man's situation, but only as knowledge of God from God, as free and unmerited (*unverdiente*) grace.²⁵

This establishes the theological order of a Christology *first* and only then a move towards an anthropology. Against Tillich, the Word of God is more than a mere 'symbol' because it corresponds "to the possibility which God has chosen (*gewählt*) and actualised (*verwirklicht*) at all events in His Church."²⁶ It is personalized in Jesus Christ for "From Him alone it may and will be experienced what the Word of God is. Of ourselves we can only say how it is, i.e., how He is."²⁷ In Tillich's view the human speech that says "how He is" is expressed in symbolic forms, but must proceed from the "*prius* of the reality of grace."²⁸ On this important point they seem to agree, the difference lying in the value of symbolic language and its *locus*. The anthropocentric starting point between them still remained markedly different. To personalize Christ was not to posit humanity as the benchmark for, "The doubtful (*problematisch*) thing is not whether God is person, but whether we are."²⁹ For Barth then, it would be an ambiguous (*zweideutig*) enterprise to "set the

²⁵ Ibid., 120.

²⁶ Ibid., 132-133. Again Barth seems to be misrepresenting Tillich's intention to establish the difference between the mere words of Christ (or words about him) over that of the "total being" of Christ which conveys the reality of grace in its symbolic expression. Barth did not believe that Christ's words and being could be separated in any manner. See Barth, *ibid.*, 138 and Tillich, "Formative Power", 211.

²⁷ *CD I/1*, 137.

²⁸ Tillich, "Formative Power", 211.

²⁹ *CD I/1*, 138.

doctrine of the Word of God in the framework (*Rahmen*) of an anthropology.”³⁰

The speech of God is the act of God whose “*passio* in history is as such *actio*” for God’s Word is “itself God’s act.”³¹ Yet this speech is shrouded in the mystery of God but made manifest in faith without a human correspondence from our side “even though one would be ready to go to the ultimate depths and outermost bounds of human existence to find it.” But in this search by human existence (or terms thereof), God’s Word can only be found in the divine rule of God, a “capture (*Verhaftung*) of man.” Christ as the Word of God is the “epitome (*Inbegriff*) of God’s grace” and humanity is not left to its own devices but is possessed by God. Yet an important question appears at this point, how exactly does the possessive Word of God manifest itself in human reality? How can it be identified as divine speech and not merely human words?

Barth asserted that the “speech of God is and remains the mystery of God supremely in its secularity.” The demarcation of this event from other human events is not readily apparent. Even through the Church, in its preaching and sacramental practice, in its biblical interpretation, in its human speech and conglomerates of human philosophies the “veil is thick.” Therefore, the Word of God is given in a “form which as such is not the Word of God and which as such does not even give evidence that it is the form of the Word of God.”³²

³⁰ Ibid., 140.

³¹ Ibid., 144, 147.

³² Ibid., 165.

Barth draws an important distinction between *enigma* and *paradox* here, a “twofold indirectness of vision”:

First the Word of God meets us in a form that is to be distinguished from its content, and secondly the form as such is an enigma, a concealing of the Word of God. The relevant concept here is that of paradox. A paradox is a communication which is not only made by a δόξα, a phenomenon, but which must be understood, if it is to be understood at all, παρὰ τὴν δόξαν, i.e., in antithesis to what the phenomenon itself seems to be saying.³³

However, Barth counsels that theology makes a “more sparing use of the term” to avoid any confusion. There can be no comparison with the self-presentation of God in the Word, for human reason and fabrications are fallen, and therefore the form of God’s Word is found in the “form of the cosmos which stands in contradiction to God.” Yet, even in its enigmatic and concealed form, the proclamation, in all its secularity, is in “every respect a Word of grace.”³⁴ How might this “cosmic form” manifest itself in human existence?

Tillich is once again drawn into the fray with his insistence that the Church and its proclamation should not start from the Bible and tradition but on a “radical experience of the borderline situation (*Grenzsituation*).”³⁵ Tillich was explicating the existential concern regarding mortality and finitude, the instance when a human faces the possibility of non-existence. “The human boundary-situation is encountered when human possibility reaches its limit, when human existence is

³³ Ibid., 166.

³⁴ Ibid., 169.

³⁵ Ibid., 183.

confronted by an ultimate threat.”³⁶ Tillich believed that the central Christian doctrines, i.e., God and Christ, had been “radically questioned” and therefore were “entirely hopeless in the widest circles and especially among the proletarian masses.”³⁷ The *apologetic* concern overrides the doctrinal by taking seriously the existential crisis in human existence. The power of the New Being “manifest in Jesus as the Christ” opens the individual to the possibility of new life in a “theonomous” culture and in the expressions of the “spiritual substance which in the cultural forms is presented indirectly and unintentionally.”³⁸ Barth’s response was distinctly negative in tone:

By means of the negations or delimitations of man which according to Tillich we can obviously carry out for ourselves we do not even remotely produce the Word of God for him or for ourselves.³⁹

Any search for the “receptacle”(Gefäß) of human experience is pointless in Barth’s estimation and that was exactly what Tillich appeared to be doing. Human faculty must be about the task of “renunciation”(Verzichten) so that God’s Word can truly be known and this can only be “the work of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁰ To remain a free act of grace, there can be no human predisposition, no possibility of knowledge, for it is foreign to human cognition. Knowledge of God remains an

³⁶ Paul Tillich, “The Protestant Message And The Man Of Today”, in *PE*, 197.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 202.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 204-205.

³⁹ *CD II*, 184.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 185.

“inconceivable *novum*” that can only be received as “the Word from Christ but also the *pneuma* by which it is known” or it cannot be known at all. There can be no Cartesian proof of God from human assurance.⁴¹ As an act of grace, the knowledge of God is therefore an act of election and grounded entirely in its own determination. Grace “actualizes” faith allowing the respondent to answer in the affirmative to the command of God. Barth would later summarize this grace-event with this phrase, “Where the actuality exists there is also the corresponding possibility.”⁴²

The “corresponding possibility” of revelation manifests itself in a threefold manner: first in the proclamation of the Church, second in the witness of Scripture, and third (and most importantly for Barth) in revelation. This tripartite structure becomes the “unimpaired distinction” (*unzerstörter Verschiedenheit*) in the Church’s Trinitarian formulation as “Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness.”⁴³ The divine initiative of revelation is propounded by the actuality of inter-trinitarian decision:

*God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself through Himself. He reveals Himself. If we really want to understand revelation in terms of its subject, i.e., God, then the first thing we have to realise is that this subject, God, the revealer, is identical with His act in revelation and also identical with its effect (Wirkung).*⁴⁴

In one grand gesture Barth performed an act of “spring cleaning” of the “speculative

⁴¹ See especially Robert E. Cushman, “Barth’s Attack Upon Cartesianism And The Future In Theology,” in *The Journal Of Religion*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 4 (1956) 207-223.

⁴² *CD II/1*, 5.

⁴³ Barth, *CD I/1*, 295. *KDI/1*, “. . . der Offenbarer, die Offenbarung und das Offenbarsein”, *ibid.*, 311.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 296. Editor’s italics.

theologia naturalis” however, Tillich was not so sanguine in his opinion of Barth’s placement of the Trinity. He contended:

It was a mistake of Barth to start his Prolegomena with what, so to speak, are the Postlegomena, the doctrine of the Trinity. It could be said that in his system this doctrine falls from heaven, the heaven of an unmediated biblical and ecclesiastical authority.⁴⁵

The trinitarian symbols for Tillich are dialectical for they reflect the reality of life, “namely the movement of separation and reunion.”⁴⁶ And as such, they are to be understood as a correlative to the human predicament of finitude, estrangement, and ambiguity.⁴⁷ An inversion then exists between Barth’s postulation of the Trinity first and the answer to human finitude following, as opposed to Tillich’s placement of the existential question first and the (much later) correlative answer found in the trinitarian symbols.

Barth proceeded from the notion that the Triune God, in revealing divine nature by gracious act, also reveals the divine nature *as* gracious act. Trinitarian reflection was more than mere Church dogma; it is the principle mode of God’s entire self-revelation focused on the mediation of Christ:

The true theme of the biblical witness is the . . . concept [that] God’s action in His revelation, revelation in answer to the question what God does, and therefore [is] the predicate in our statement . . . the theme is primarily the second person of the Trinity, God the Son, the deity of

⁴⁵ *ST III*, 285.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 284.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 285-86.

Christ.⁴⁸

In this way, that which cannot be “unveiled” (*enthüllung*) becomes “unveiled” (*enthüllbaren*) by distinguishing “Himself from Himself, that is:

to be God in Himself and in concealment (*verborgen*), and yet at the same time to be God a second time in a very different way, namely, in manifestation, i.e., in the form (*Gestalt*) of something He Himself is not.⁴⁹

Thus “being for humanity in a different way” has covenantal overtones, as Barth explains in an extended Old Testament exegetical paragraph:

for “the name of God is actualised, i.e., in the covenant with its divine promise and claim, with its record deposited within the Law, everything takes place that does take place through the name of Yahweh . . . Yahweh is thus God a second time in a very different way in the fact that He elects a people, makes it His people and rules it as His people.”⁵⁰

This assertion follows the basic triadic structure of the *Church Dogmatics* in general: “*Deus extra nos, Deus pro nobis, Deus in nobis.*”⁵¹ As to the symbol of the Trinity itself, Barth recognized that, “It is not the form (*Gestalt*), but God in the form, that reveals, speaks, comforts, works and aids.”⁵² Like Tillich, he saw the reality behind the symbol that allowed the veiled God to become “unveilable for men.” However, God controls this form, certainly not the other way around.

⁴⁸ *CD I/I*, 314-15.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 318.

⁵¹ Kurt Anders Richardson, *Reading Karl Barth: New Directions For North American Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2004) 162.

⁵² *CD I/I*, 321.

The giving of this form is always an act of grace for it comes in “God’s free loving-kindness.”⁵³ The doctrine of the Trinity, Barth wrote, “is not and does not seek to be anything but an explanatory confirmation (*Bestätigung*)” of the “revealed name of *Yahweh-Kyrios* joining the Old Testament with the New.”⁵⁴ God’s name, as Father, Son and Spirit is the “one God in threefold repetition (*Wiederholung*)” sharing “equality in essence or substance.”⁵⁵ God is revealed in “three modes or ways of being (*Seinsweisen*).”⁵⁶ In Trinitarian form God is both *in se* and *pro nobis* for; “In all three modes of being God is the one God both in Himself and in relation to the world and man.”⁵⁷

The placement of this doctrine so early in his dogmatics answers the question “Who is God?” in contrast to “what or whether is God?”, for as Robert Jenson points out, this revelation of God cannot be understood without “reference to his relation to Jesus Christ.”⁵⁸ This christological emphasis, proceeding from the *opera trinitas ad extra sunt indivisa*, was made clear in this early stage as the “unity of the Father, Son and Spirit among themselves corresponds [to] their unity

⁵³ Ibid., 322.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 348.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 350-51.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 355. Here Barth follows Quenstedt’s *tropos hyperxeos* or *modus entitativus*, *ibid.*, 359.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 360.

⁵⁸ Robert Jenson, *God after God: The God of the Past and the God of the Future, Seen in the Work of Karl Barth* (New York: The Boobs-Merrill Co., 1969) 98.

ad extra.”⁵⁹ This is demonstrated in Barth’s perception of the meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity that “the One who reveals Himself according to the witness of Scripture can in fact be our *God* and how far He can in fact be *our God*.”⁶⁰ In sum, God, in three modes therefore, is “ours in advance” (*im voraus der unsrige*), “equiprimordially.”⁶¹

An important question that might be asked at this juncture is whether Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity acts as a “saturated phenomenon.” There can be no denying that as a God-revealed symbol it has the characteristics of that which is deemed “irregardable.”⁶² Yet can the Trinity be seen as iconic in character? One way of viewing this doctrine is not to perceive it as phenomenon at all, as it may be argued that the concept of the Trinity is a human formulation of the three ways in which God is revealed. Therefore, the phenomenons of saturation reside in the relation of the triune entities *intra nos*, and apperceptably, *extra nos*. Barth would not approve of such a phenomenological move, for in his estimation, God, in triunity, “is identical with His act in revelation and also identical with its effect.”⁶³ The concept of the Trinity does not proceed from a human *Gestalt*, but is “simply a

⁵⁹ *CD I/1*, 371. Translation amended.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 383. Author’s italics.

⁶¹ John Webster, “Translator’s Introduction” in Eberhard Jüngel, *God’s Being Is In Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth, A Paraphrase*, trans. J. Webster (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001) xv.

⁶² Marion, *BG*, 212. The “irregardable” is that which is “Neither *visible* according to quantity not bearable according to quality, but absolute to relation . . . unconditioned by the horizon.”

⁶³ *CD I/1*, 296.

development of the knowledge that Jesus is the Christ or the Lord.”⁶⁴ However, as an *icon* revealing the gaze of the infinite this still must be manifested by the image of Jesus as the Messiah. So having established the fundamental and theological primacy of the Trinity, Barth moved on to an increasingly more *christological* emphasis in his following *Dogmatics*, a concentration described by some as even “*christo-monist*.”⁶⁵ In many ways that charge could be leveled at Tillich as well, who presented his christology of the “New Being” without conceptual regard for the doctrine of the Trinity in his own *Systematics*. In any event, a hint of Barth’s future direction lay with his remarking on the “battle (*Kampf*) of Jesus Christ Himself. . . . for the one eternal covenant of God with men sealed in time, for the acknowledgment (*Anerkennung*) of the perfect self-unveiling (*Selbstenthüllung*) of God.”⁶⁶ However, Barth had another battle on his hands -- one for academic survival against Nazism. This was a struggle of the icon of Christ as head of the Church versus the idol of Hitler as leader of the *Deutschkirche*.

Barmen to Basel

The year after the publication of the first-half volume of the *Dogmatics*, the situation in Germany began to take a turn for the worse. Barth wrote that his:

attitude and activities underwent a great change. This did not affect the content or the direction of my ideas so much as their application.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 334.

⁶⁵ see Robert Jenson, *God After God*, 68 for a succinct refutation of this claim.

⁶⁶ *CD I/1*, 319.

And I owe this change to the 'Führer'.⁶⁷

The continuing rise of Nazism prompted Barth to "rage in my study" and make the dire prediction, "No good will come of this." When Hitler finally took complete control of the government on 30 January 1933, Barth, ill with influenza in his bed, saw "my dear German people beginning to worship a false god."⁶⁸ Barth believed, after reading Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, that the National Socialist policy was bent on the eradication of "Christian belief and its expression."

The syncretistic tendencies of the German churches led Barth to state his feelings in an essay entitled, "The First Commandment As An Axiom Of Theology" in response to Gogarten (who had joined the "German Christians") and Brunner's theology of natural revelation.⁶⁹ Reiterating the impossibility of an *Anknüpfungspunkt* as an axiom for theology in any "inherent analogy"⁷⁰, Barth proceeded to contend that combinations of "Revelation *and* reason", "Revelation *and* religious consciousness" (Schleiermacher), "Revelation *and* ethos of culture" (Ritschl), "Revelation *and* history of religion" (Troeltsch) and currently, "Revelation *and* Creation" could only lead to the question that:

One can only ask oneself and the whole of modern theology of 'and' whether there might not be a serious objection against that freedom,

⁶⁷ Busch, *Barth*, 222.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁶⁹ S. W. Sykes, "Introduction" in *The Way Of Theology In Karl Barth*, ed. H. M. Rumscheidt (Allison Park, Penn: Pickwick Publications, 1986) 14.

⁷⁰ Karl Barth, "The First Commandment As An Axiom Of Theology" in Rumscheidt, *The Way of Theology*, 64.

against that ‘and’, in view of the responsibility of theology to the first commandment.⁷¹

In all cases that “and” would also apply to “Hitler *and* Christianity.” A serious issue arose whether those members of the Social Democrat Party (such as Tillich) should maintain “private socialist convictions”, or declare their affiliation in a more public manner as formal members of the party.⁷² After correspondence with Tillich on the matter, Barth declared that “Anyone who does not want me like this cannot have me at all.” Furthermore, this stance gave Barth a negative prominence with regards to Hitler and the installation of the *Reichsbischof*. Barth’s composition of the tract entitled *Theologische Existenz heute* (a copy being sent to Hitler) was considered the “first trumpet blast of the Confessing Church,” which had grown out of the “Pastors Emergency League”(Pfarrernotbund) founded by the former naval war hero, Martin Niemöller.⁷³

Barth’s fears that the German Reformed Church was under the influence of the “German Christians” were exacerbated when Ludwig Müller set himself up as the “Reich bishop at the head of the Evangelical Church.”⁷⁴ Predictably, Barth was aghast that “Christians and theologians have shown themselves to be a much weaker, more glutinous and more ambivalent group” than ever previously. On November 13, 1933, Barth became the object of denunciation at the German

⁷¹ Ibid., 73.

⁷² Busch, *Barth*, 225.

⁷³ Ibid., 227.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 229.

Christian rally at the Berlin Sports Centre. In an inflammatory speech by Dr. Reinhold Krause, calling for the eradication of the Jewish Old Testament, the removal of non-German from liturgy and confession; the “Rabbi Paul” as well as “dialectical theology from Paul to Karl Barth” came under verbal attack.⁷⁵ In response, the members of the *Pfarrernotbund*, denounced the Church government because of its dereliction of Christian duty.

Barth perceived that the problems of the “German Christians” were symptomatic of the much deeper issue of an “error that had devastated the Evangelical Church for centuries.”⁷⁶ This was the notion that “alongside God’s revelation, . . . man also had a legitimate authority of his own over the message and the form of the church.” Barth’s non-compliance over giving the Nazi salute before his lectures (he always opened them with prayer) was numbering his days as a professor in Bonn. Consequently, 1934 was to prove to be a decisive year for both Barth and the Evangelical Church. In the spring of that year Barth visited Paris giving lectures on Calvin to the Protestant Theological Faculty as well as preaching at the Lutheran Church in the rue Blanche. While in Paris, Barth met again two men that would become an integral part of his religious development--Pierre Maury and Willem A. Visser’t Hooft. Maury became an important catalyst for Barth’s understanding of Covenant and Election as in the future.

The dismissal of Niemöller from his pastoral charge after a disastrous meeting

⁷⁵ Ibid., 232.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 236.

with Hitler in January led to the Evangelical Church calling a Synod, first by the laity on January 3 and 4 (before the Niemöller incident) and later on February 4 in Barmen comprising all the representatives of the denomination.⁷⁷ In both Synods Barth drafted the confessional documents, with the final draft of the Barmen Declaration appearing at the end of May 1934.⁷⁸ Barth's contribution came while "The Lutheran Church slept and the Reformed Church kept awake."⁷⁹ When the Lutherans took a three-hour nap Barth "revised the text of the six statements, fortified by strong coffee and one or two Brazilian cigars." Barth believed that the Declaration had dealt with the "problem of natural theology" by designating Jesus Christ as the "one Word of God whom we have to trust and obey in life and in death."⁸⁰ Barth could only give allegiance to the Lordship of Christ; and his convictions led him to refuse to give an oath of loyalty to the *Führer* in the proscribed form. Barth recalled that:

I did not refuse to give the official oath, but I stipulated an addition to the effect that I could be loyal to the *Führer* only within my responsibilities as an Evangelical Christian.⁸¹

The result was inevitable. Barth was dismissed from his teaching position, a

⁷⁷ Arthur C. Cochrane, *The Church's Confession Under Hitler* (London: Westminster Press, 1962) 133.

⁷⁸ see Cochrane, *ibid.*, Ch. VII for the details of the Synod and the events that led to the final adoption of the Barmen Declaration. For a full text of the document see Clifford Green (ed.), *Karl Barth: Theologian of Freedom* (Minneapolis, Minn: Fortress Press, 1991) 148-151.

⁷⁹ Busch, *Barth*, 245.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 255.

secular covenant broken; and returned to his native Switzerland, to Basel, in July of 1935 to assume a new contract at the University as professor of theology.

Switzerland and the Doctrine of the Election

Barth continued his teaching at Basel but his fame grew abroad as well. An important event was his journey to Geneva in June 1936 to participate in the “Congrès international de théologie calviniste”, “jubilee celebrations”⁸² in remembrance of the 400 years of the Reformation. The concern of this gathering was to discuss the “problem of predestination.”⁸³ Despite being “hopelessly bogged down in the old dilemmas”, a lecture by the French theologian Pierre Maury which was a “reconsideration of the christological significance” and the “basis of the doctrine of election in our time” made a “profound impression”⁸⁴ on Barth.

In the fall of that same year Barth traveled to visit the Reformed churches in Hungary and Transylvania and to lecture in Debrecen and Klausenburg on the subject of election and predestination. The content of these lectures was to be published in the journal “Theological Existence Today” entitled “*Gottes Gnadenwahl*” and was the basis of his later dogmatic renderings and therefore

⁸² Ibid., 277.

⁸³ Ibid., 278. Barth summarized his understanding of the discussions and issues of the conference in *CDII/2*, 188-194.

⁸⁴ Karl Barth, “Foreword” in Pierre Maury, *Predestination and other papers* (London: SCM Press, 1960) 16.

deserves close attention. Grace is totally free and “gracious election, predestination, means grace in grace.”⁸⁵ Following Maury, Barth recognized the profound connection of christology and election, that Jesus *is* election “for the understanding of election is the chosen one Jesus Christ.”⁸⁶ The doctrine of election is the sharp point (*Spitze*) of all dogmatics and the end of the doctrine of God”, a “regulative principle.”⁸⁷ This “regulative principle” applies not only to the will of the gracious God, but to creation as well. Elective grace is the ground of both the inter-trinitarian nature of God and is the basis of God’s activity toward the created order. Barth was later to develop this in Volume Three of his *Dogmatics*, “The Doctrine of Creation” in four parts.

Barth further reiterated his new position on election in his Gifford Lectures given in Aberdeen in 1937-8. Using the Scots Confession of 1560 as his basic text, Barth articulated the bond between Jesus Christ as “God’s *decision* for man” and “Jesus Christ as *man’s election* for God.”⁸⁸ Yet Barth would not let the issue of election become capricious, for “Grace is not arbitrariness.” The character of God’s beneficence toward humanity in the event of predestination was not to be seen as “that strange abyss we call a paradox.” God’s mercy is an intrinsic “unfaithfulness”

⁸⁵ Karl Barth, “Gottes Gnadenwahl” in *Theologische Existenz heute*, Vol. 47 (1936) 10. Translations mine unless otherwise noted.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸⁸ Karl Barth, *The Knowledge Of God And The Service Of God According To The Teaching Of The Reformation: Recalling the Scottish Confession Of 1560*, trans. J. L. M. Haire & I. Henderson (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938) xvii.

toward divine justice, indeed God is “*just* when He is merciful.”⁸⁹ The asymmetry of the event of election Barth elucidates as a christological assertion:

While it would be monstrous for us to make our human capacities and merits the ground for demanding that God must have fellowship with man, yet it is perfectly normal that God should have fellowship with man at that point, where He Himself as man has taken man’s place and where He therefore finds Himself again in man, thus finding again in a human life and death, real, proper and active obedience.⁹⁰

Compare this christological perception with that of Tillich who recognized that:

Only by taking suffering and death upon himself could Jesus be the Christ, because only in this way could he participate completely in existence and conquer every force of estrangement which tried to dissolve his unity with God.⁹¹

Tillich, of course, was not writing about election at this particular point, but the comparison is instructive for it shows that where Barth’s Reformed studies led him towards the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, Tillich maintained a more symbolic and Lutheran christology of *participation* in the Christ-event. Although, as we have seen, Tillich perceived grace as freely given through justification by faith *through* grace, he never made the same connection like Barth of Jesus being the first intention of election. Tillich contended that “double predestination is not a genuine religious symbol” for it is a “wrong consequence, as are all theological consequences which are not rooted in existential participation.”⁹² Predestination

⁸⁹ Ibid., 72.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 73.

⁹¹ *ST II*, 123.

⁹² *ST I*, 285.

was far too rooted in “causality and determination” and, in this sense, did not really exhibit the free character of justifying grace. But if taken *existentially* as both an affirmation and denial of the modality of God’s relation to humankind, then it can purport the “highest affirmation of the divine love, not its negation.”⁹³

In an article, published in English in 1937, Barth opens up the possibility of some form of iconic manifestation in human existence. Revelation brings newness in the person of Jesus Christ of which “There are indeed tokens of this reality, there are witnesses and testimonies to it, but it has no analogies and is nowhere repeated.”⁹⁴ The account of the words and deeds of Jesus in the New Testament are tokens as is the virgin birth and the “miraculous token of the empty tomb.”⁹⁵ In fact all of Scripture itself is a token of revelation. Church proclamation and the sacraments stand as tokens as well. The life of the believer in participation in the work of the Holy Spirit is a another form of the token. However these tokens have no iconic value in themselves , they only refer back to the ultimate “token” of God, Jesus Christ. Barth does not open up a phenomenology here, he is still insistent on the christological inferences and does not explicate how these events might become icons for human perception.

In the course of finishing the first volume of his dogmatics (in two parts) Barth left any other formal deliberations of the doctrine of election until the second half

⁹³ Ibid., 286.

⁹⁴ Karl Barth, “Revelation” in J. Baille & H. Martin (eds), *Revelation* (London: Faber & Faber, 1937) 46.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 65.

of his volume two, *The Doctrine of God*. Neither election nor covenant play a dominant role in the concluding volume of *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, but nor are the matters ignored entirely either. Barth describes the Old Testament Covenant in terms of its placement in the “pre-time” of God’s revelation. The Covenant, even in its Old Testament context, maintained its christological focus for it is the expectation of Christ. The superfluity of all the Old Testament Covenants provides a “genuine ‘once-for-allness’ and a “once-for-all times” that is promise but never complete attainment.⁹⁶ This is the true “*mysterium*” given in the mystery (*Geheimnis*) of the Old Testament.⁹⁷ Barth cautions that Christ, as the summation of the all the pre-existing covenants, must not be regarded as “mere sign or symbol, a mere witness to the real togetherness (*Zusammenseins*) of God and man.”⁹⁸ Unlike Tillich who saw that “Jesus as the Christ” the “bearer of the New Being” symbolizes the unification of “essential and existential being”⁹⁹, Barth contended that Christ pointed beyond the “empty space of metaphysical ideal truth” to an approaching history.

“Divine sign-giving” of this christological nature still remains shrouded in mystery. Human perception of the mystery of revelation comes by the “free grace of God [in] that objective revelation is really shown to man so that he really sees

⁹⁶ *CD II/2*, 82.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁹⁹ *ST II*, 121.

it.”¹⁰⁰ A character of anthropological witness is concomitant with this revelation for in the “existence of sign-giving” we must:

look away to the human form in which revelation had penetrated to man *Deo bene volente*, i.e., to the existence of men who are already convicted by God by means of sign-giving, who have therefore already discovered that they are the children of God.¹⁰¹

The attestations of both the Old and New Testaments of preaching and sacrament are the primary tools in which this sign-giving event occurs. But this witness is controlled by the Word of God, that is Jesus Christ, who Barth later referred to as the “controlling (*regierend*) sign of all signs.”¹⁰² A curious *aporia* arises here for if the witness by human speech and iconic fabrication is controlled by grace embodied in Christ, the “sign of all signs”, what criteria might be used in judging the accuracy of any depiction? If the Bible is the norm then Holy Scripture becomes the icon, or if it is located in the ethical witness of the elect, an issue Barth will discuss at the end of the second volume of the *Dogmatics*,¹⁰³ then how can any idolatry be detected? The possible answer lies in Barth’s understanding of the orbicularity of theological discussion, the *circulus veritatis Dei*, by which faith and participation in the sphere of Jesus Christ “forms the household rule from which

¹⁰⁰ *CD I/2*, 233. This is an extension of the the “tokens” of Barth’s article of 1937.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 234. Barth later referred to the “sacramental significance” in human relationships as the neighbour is a “visible sign of invisible grace.” *Ibid.*, 436.

¹⁰² *CD II/1*, 199.

¹⁰³ Chapter VIII, “The Command of God”, *CD II/2*.

we cannot except ourselves.”¹⁰⁴

Barth moved from his polemical attitudes against all forms of anthropology and natural theology that had dominated his theological thinking to date. He now oriented himself towards “the doctrine of God and described in positive terms who and what God is.” In effect, as Barth admitted, he had been saying ‘No’ and the time had come to say ‘Yes’. Grace was to become “more urgent” than “the message of God’s law, wrath, accusation and judgement.”¹⁰⁵ The “knowability” of God’s grace does not follow the rules of the world, “this sphere”¹⁰⁶, but results from the initiative of God alone. Jüngel clarifies this point and sees Barth’s meaning in this manner:

As object of the knowledge of God, God differentiates himself from all other epistemological objects precisely in his being-as-object, which *cannot* be defined in terms of the objectivity of other objects.¹⁰⁷

Barth explained that, “Only because God posits (*setzt*) Himself as the object is man posited as the knower of God. And so man can only have God as the self-positing object.”¹⁰⁸ Our knowledge of God resides in a correspondence with the divine act

¹⁰⁴ *CD II/1*, 254.

¹⁰⁵ As quoted in Busch, *Barth*, 284. This is not so much of a theological shift as it is the logical outcome of Barth’s continuing study of the Reformed tradition. G. C. Berkouwer’s assessment in *The Triumph Of Grace In The Theology Of Karl Barth*, trans. H. R. Boer (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956) 37, is pertinent here; “We do not find a transition from crisis to grace, or from disjunction between God and man to fellowship between them, but rather a relationship between these polarities which Barth was concerned to set forth in varying emphases and accents.”

¹⁰⁶ *CD II/1*, 21.

¹⁰⁷ Jüngel, *God’s Being*, 56.

¹⁰⁸ *CD II/1*, 22. German text is from Karl Barth, *Die Lehre Von Gott* (Verlag Der Evangelischen Buchhandlung Zollikon, 1940).

of condescension established and signified by the Covenant. Our capacity and freedom to even love God comes as an unearned gift.” Consequently, as Barth often re-iterates, “God is known only through God alone.”

The self-communication of God takes on a primary significance for Barth both as knowledge and encounter. “God’s Word is therefore the covenant-making turning (*Zuwendung*) of God Himself towards the man turned away from Him.”¹⁰⁹ Language of debt becomes prominent here, for humanity is unable to respond adequately to God’s gift of grace. Moreover, as Jüngel points out, God allows this grace, and the divine nature, to be revealed in a “*sacramental*” manner, “In so far as God reiterates his own objectivity in the creaturely objectivity which is foreign to him, God’s being-as-object is sacramental reality.”¹¹⁰ God is both revealed *and* hidden at the same time. To communicate with humanity is to speak to the “basic reality and substance of the sacramental reality . . . [which] is the existence of the human nature of Jesus Christ.”¹¹¹ If the humanity of Jesus Christ is the foundational sacramental event and description of the God of grace, what possible sign that reveals this inbreaking of eternity into temporal reality can be manifested? Barth describes this *aporia* this way:

as this first sacrament, the humanity of Jesus is at the same time the basic reality and substance of the highest possibility of the creature

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 44.

¹¹⁰ Jüngel, *God's Being*, 65.

¹¹¹ *CD III/1*, 53.

as such. Not of and by itself, but of and by God's appointment (*Anordnung*) and grace, the creature can be the temple, instrument and sign of God Himself.¹¹²

Barth, however, does not give the Cross this *signum* as does Tillich, for he continues on to describe that God's revelation (both unveiled (*Enthüllung*) and veiled (*Verhuellung*) at the same time) is manifested as an *association* that occurs:

in such a way that God determines and creates a definite creaturely reality subject-object relationship to be the instrument of the covenant between Himself the Creator and man as His creature.¹¹³

This associative covenant is the sign of God's relatedness through grace, an *analogia relationis* that is to be understood as Christ being *analogans*, and humanity his *analogatum*.¹¹⁴ This *analogia relationis* is the basis for Jüngel's thesis of his work on Barth's understanding of the divine character of God as "Being-in-Act" and also resembles Marion's notion of "God Without Being."¹¹⁵ For both, Barth's description of God's activity in the determination of Christ and humanity in the elective act, as signified in the Covenant, reveals God *in se* as the

¹¹² Ibid., 54.

¹¹³ Ibid., 55. Translation amended.

¹¹⁴ Jung Young Lee, "Karl Barth's Use Of Analogy In His Church Dogmatics" in the *Scottish Journal of Theology* (1969) 137. Lee (142) propounds the theory that Barth usage of the term *analogia relationis* is derived from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Creation and Fall* (London: SCM, 1959). Barth also uses the term *analogia attributionis* "a similarity of two objects which consists in the fact that what is common to them exists first and properly in the one, and then, because a second is dependent upon it, in the second." see *CD II/1*, 238.

¹¹⁵ Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida And The Language Of Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) 19, has pointed out the similar project by Barth to avoid the attempt of Thomas Aquinas to develop "a doctrine of analogy of attribution in which certain limit-concepts (words like 'good', 'pure' and 'wise') can only refer properly to God and improperly to the created order. All other predications are deemed metaphorical." In the same vein, see Marion, *GWB*, xxiii, for the same observations on Aquinas.

giver of grace, and Christ being the manifestation of this eternal gift. God, for Barth, cannot be delineated in terms of either Scholastic metaphysics or an Enlightenment critique, as both begin from anthropological categories.¹¹⁶

The possibility of distortion in the receiving of God's gift of grace is recognized by Barth in terms of idolatry. We receive "images" (*Bildern*) and create "counter-images" (*Gegenbildern*) that betray our inability to depict the hidden God and instead project depictions of our "own glory."¹¹⁷ A question arises then about the validity of *any* human image, icon or *Bild* that attempts to describe God or the gift of divine grace. How is it possible to speak of or depict the divine *ineffabilis*? Graham Ward discerns that Barth was projecting an *analogia fidei* (derived from Anselm) that allows for responsible speech and imaging of the divine gift. Barth had spoken of the acceptance of the supreme "lordship" of God "over our bodies and souls" that could allow this speech. "Only as we know God's lordship will our own ideas of lordship have content, and within their limits, existence."¹¹⁸ This knowledge, as Ward points out, "is conditioned by transcendental *a priori* which govern and constitute what we perceive and how we understand that perception." There can be no anthropological knowledge of the same order as the knowledge of faith, all that

¹¹⁶ For a succinct analysis of Barth's "the-anthropology", "ontotheology" and the Postmodern critique see John Webster, "Rescuing the Subject: Barth and Postmodern Anthropology" in G. Thompson & C. Mostert, eds., *Karl Barth: A Future for Postmodern Theology?* (Hindmarsh, Australia: Australian Theological Forum, 2000) 49-69.

¹¹⁷ *CD II/1*, 182.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 75-76.

would be left in such a synthesis would be “the endless play of signifiers.”¹¹⁹

In Marion’s terms, the proper “gaze” of the subject can only be informed by the object of its vision, a purely subjective gaze would only lead to idolatry, and in the same way, a subjective speech could only reproduce the sound of its own voice, a narcissistic echo that cannot receive other than itself. Barth thoughts on this matter were often quite succinct; “In no respect then, does the force of our reference lie in our hands.”¹²⁰ Furthermore, as Ward notes, no human word can express the truth of God, only the “punctiliar intrusion” of the Word of God can suffice, creating a “sacramental language” that needs to be explicated, either transubstantially or consubstantially.¹²¹ This explication is what Barth endeavors to undertake in this volume of the *Dogmatics* as a discourse of the locution “*Deus dixit*”¹²², with the assurance that:

in spite of our incapacity, our viewing of the unviewable God and conceiving of the inconceivable God are made by God’s own capacity a genuine viewing and conceiving, the whole truth of which is the truth of God, and that in such a way that by the capacity of its object it is a true viewing and conceiving.¹²³

The hiddenness of God and human incapacity to comprehensively articulate

¹¹⁹ Ward, *Barth*, 16.

¹²⁰ *CD I/1*, 197.

¹²¹ Ward, *Barth*, 17. Ward’s suspicion of Marion is that “he develops a theology of transubstantiation and the icon which leads him dangerously close to neo-Platonism and the *analogia entis*”, 164. This assertion will be examined in the conclusion.

¹²² *CD I/1*, 296.

¹²³ *CD II/1*, 198.

the character of God and even the gift of grace, does not deter Barth from relating some sort of positive imaging and speech. Barth speaks of the “approximations” (*Annaehrung*) of human theological discourse, self-critical and incorrect. The task of theology is regarded metaphorically as a “little vanity (*Eitelkeit*) as in the ‘old wife’s stammering.”¹²⁴ Yet the attempt to “stammer” must be made in the consideration of Augustine to proclaim God in obedience and veneration: “And woe betide us if we rely upon on our impotence and omit to praise Him!”¹²⁵

Ward elaborates:

The reflection is founded upon God laying claim to our ‘views and concepts’. By revelation a relationship is forged between our viewing-image [*Bild*], our conceiving counter-image [*Gegenbild*] and a reflection [*Abbild*] of the Godhead.¹²⁶

The correlation between Marion and Barth seems clear; our “viewing-image (the idolic) is confronted by the “counter-image” (the gift, or the given) and a synthetic event occurs in the apperception of the “iconic”. But can any verifiable (in a theological sense) truth be found in any expression of event? Barth proceeds to argue the possibility that such a synthesis can occur under the rubric of the *theologia viatorum*.

An “encroachment”(Übergriff)¹²⁷ of God is established by call and self-positing of divine grace. This self-positing God can only be known in the

¹²⁴ Ibid., 203.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 204.

¹²⁶ Ward, *Barth*, 24.

¹²⁷ *CD II/1*, 206.

“necessary basis of our prayer and praise and thanksgiving. Only false gods can be present to us in other ways.”¹²⁸ Therefore, to speak of this God is to always acknowledge the definite “un-success” of our speech. Barth explains:

The point is that the authenticity of our knowledge will be delivered from every assault and disorder, but to all eternity it will still be an authenticity which is adapted for us men and creatures, corresponding to the authenticity of God Himself, yet also distinct from it.¹²⁹

This “theology of the pilgrims” will also bear the stamp of provisionality, analogical correlation, and a differentiation from the pure Word of God. Emotive participation in God’s revelation gives us the epistemic basis to understand and speak, for we are called to respond in thanks, joy and awe. A stance of faith and acceptance of the divine initiative of God, the gift of grace itself, allows for a “teleologically ordered”¹³⁰ dialectical speech from grace, about grace and for grace. Barth’s christological notions can only break the circularity of the analogical argument:

The substantiation (*Bestätigung*) of our faith and therefore the necessary confirmation (*Sicherung*) of our systematic deliberations (*Überlegungen*) and affirmations (*Feststellungen*) in respect of the knowledge of God must also come to us from without.¹³¹

That which comes from without is identified “under the name of Jesus Christ” and grace is more than a “general possibility” for it is “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 13:14).”

¹²⁸ Ibid., 207.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 209.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 236.

¹³¹ Ibid., 249.

Barth summarizes:

When we appeal to God's grace, we appeal to the grace of the incarnation and to this man as the One in whom, because He is the eternal Son of God, knowledge of God was, is and will be present originally and properly; but again through whom, because He is the eternal Son of God, there is promised to us our own divine sonship, and therefore our fellowship in His knowledge of God.¹³²

The Reality of God

“God is” and “God is He who is in His works,”¹³³ describe Barth's direction of theological exploration in the next chapter of his second volume II/1. John Webster regards this particularization by Barth of the being of God as the *ens concretissimum*, for “God is to be defined by reference to his own chosen path of self-definition.”¹³⁴ Barth brings a focus to this issue by stating:

What God is as God, the divine individuality and characteristics, the *essentia* or ‘essence’ of God, is something which we shall encounter either at the place where God deals with us as Lord and Saviour, or not at all.¹³⁵

God's “self-movement” can never lead back to any reciprocal “self-movement” of humanity, for God's disclosure is not “founded” on any human “foundations.”

Barth elucidates further:

God's righteous demand on man, and His faithfulness in covenant with him, are irresistible and irrevocable because for their confirmation

¹³² Ibid., 252, 257.

¹³³ Ibid., 260.

¹³⁴ John Webster, *Barth's Ethics Of Reconciliation* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) 43.

¹³⁵ *CD II/1*, 261.

they need only God Himself and no corresponding relation of man.¹³⁶ God's being is an event in covenantal decision, executed in eternity in and as a "self-contained reality. This gracious act is determinative of all human existence for:

The real person is not man but God. It is not God who is a person by extension, but we. God exists in His act. God is His own decision. God lives from and by Himself. God is.¹³⁷

Barth tries to avoid ontological speculation on the being of God and pays strict attention to that which *God does* and less to what God might be in theological parlance. "God is the One who loves, and, as such the *Good* and the sum of all good things."¹³⁸ Bromiley has summarized "'God is' implies 'God loves'."¹³⁹ God's gracious love seeks to have fellowship with creation without any "aptitude (*Eignung*) or worthiness" (*Würdigkeit*) by those who are beloved.¹⁴⁰ Barth's attempts to define God on other than essential or ontological grounds is echoed by Marion in his postulation of "God without Being." In an important paragraph he comments on Thomas Aquinas who:

Does not chain God to Being because the divine *esse* immeasurably surpasses (and hardly maintains an *analogia* with) the *ens commune* of creatures, which are characterized by the real distinction between *esse* and their essence, whereas God, and He alone, absolutely merges essence with *esse*: God is expressed as *esse*, but this *esse* is expressed only of God, not of the beings of metaphysics. In *this* sense, Being does

¹³⁶ Ibid., 270-271..

¹³⁷ Ibid., 272.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 276.

¹³⁹ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979) 70.

¹⁴⁰ *CD II/1*, 278.

not erect an idol before God, but saves his distance.¹⁴¹

In the same way Barth is seeking to “save the distance” of God with regard to humanity as the “Wholly Other” who turns to us in an “overflow (*Überfluß*) which is not demanded or presupposed by any necessity” but is the pure bounty of the divine essence.¹⁴² “God is” means “God loves” for “this act is His being, His essence and His nature.”¹⁴³ This nature then is pure gift, a self-phenomenology based on a triune ontic reality that not only gives out love (as unbounded gift) but *is* love (as unbounded act). And as Barth continues on to demonstrate, this gifted-ness comes, not by inner necessity or formal causality, but in the freedom of this “self-attestation” to “reveal His existence within the sphere of the reality that is distinct from Himself.”¹⁴⁴ This existence is a past and present reality because of Jesus Christ and therefore christology is the only ground for the understanding of the freedom of God.

From here Barth moves on to the contemplation of the divine perfections. Although God’s perfect being cannot be divided into discreet sections, as a heuristic device Barth pairs three contrasting dyads that emphasize the reality of the divine freedom; grace and holiness, mercy and righteousness, patience and wisdom. Grace is described again as the “distinctive mode” of God’s being for

¹⁴¹ Marion, *GWB*, xxiii.

¹⁴² *CD II/1*, 273.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 279.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 304.

it seeks fellowship without regard to the worthiness or “opposition” (*Widerstand*) of the recipient, for it is always efficacious.¹⁴⁵ It is an act of “condescension” (*Herablassung*), an act that is a “sheer gift” (*Geschenk und Gabe*) in the “strictest sense of the term.”¹⁴⁶ The unwarranted gift of grace is the true iconic expression of the being of God for:

Any other idea of God, in which He is not yet gracious, or not yet essentially decisively and comprehensively known as gracious, is really, whether it is affirmed or denied, a theology of the gods and idols of this world, not of the living and true God.¹⁴⁷

But if this grace is, in fact, “hidden and incomprehensible” to us, what possible icon (that is not a covert idol), could possibly allow us to gaze into the eternal?

Barth links the efficacy of grace, with its freedom as gift and its destruction of the resistance of rejection, in his summation of the covenant as both love and action. This reflects the character of God as merciful who in “free inclination” grants assistance to the estranged existence of humanity, the “turning to” a need by a sharing in sympathy towards the “distress of another” exemplified in the covenant.¹⁴⁸ The grace of compassion Barth describes as “not merely a gift of God, but God Himself the Giver who gives Himself as gift.”¹⁴⁹ And this is all manifested

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 353.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 355.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 357.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 369.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 371. “*nicht bloß eine Gabe Gottes, sondern er selber ist, der Geber, der als Gabe sich selber gibt.*”

in the “form” and “name of Jesus Christ.”¹⁵⁰ The form of the covenant in Christ reveals God’s righteousness as the “One He is, the One who is bound to His own nature, the One who is true to Himself.”¹⁵¹ In contradistinction to Tillich, Barth stated that “the unity of grace and holiness and the mercy and righteousness of God has nothing to do with a ‘paradox’ as has often been alleged.”¹⁵² Grace, as given in the covenant, has its own inner clarity and rationality and this intelligibility lies beyond the purview of the sophistries of human thought.

What of the pictorial icon? Barth concludes this volume with a short excursus into the beauty of God and its manifestation. God who loves us is worthy of our love and in that way is beautiful. However, for Barth, beauty and glory are interconnected, and any “of the leading concepts” of the Christian knowledge of God are given priority then it “inevitably becomes an idol.”¹⁵³ Aestheticism is as syncretistically dangerous as any other “ism” and can lead to false questions that separate the glory of God from innate beauty or any other attribute. There is only one perfect and beautiful image of God, “the concrete form of the triune being of God.”¹⁵⁴ This is iconically revealed in the event of the incarnation and in the beauty of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the face of Christ is uniquely beautiful, for “No other face is the self-

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 373.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 384.

¹⁵² Ibid., 425.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 652.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 659.

declaration of the divine loving-kindness towards men.”¹⁵⁵ This is the agency of the face of Christ alone. No human artifice should ever try to be a representation of this beauty and no Christian artists should endeavor to depict this. Honour can only be given to God by following and imitating through an accommodation of God’s elective determination.¹⁵⁶ So the question still remains, in what fashion can this determination be iconically depicted? Does Barth’s concept of the Covenant provide the icon?

The Covenant of Grace as Foundational Icon

Barth’s conclusive rendering of the doctrine of grace and election, under the rubric of the Covenant of Grace, occurred in 1942 with the publication of the second half of the second volume of his *Dogmatics--Die Lehre von Gott 2*. Written during the bleakest days of the Second World War, Barth remarked that the proofs for this volume were “corrected by night in a Federal guard-room.”¹⁵⁷ In the midst of all the turbulence and uncertainty in the world at the time, Barth was able to produce what some scholars believe to be the greatest exposition on the doctrine of grace, election and predestination ever written.¹⁵⁸ We will survey these scholars later but here one example from G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance may suffice:

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 666.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 674.

¹⁵⁷ *CD II/2*, ix. Barth served as a part-time reserve soldier in Switzerland during the war and considered the determination of the elect the end of “frontier-crossings” (*Grenzüberschreitung*) such as the invasive propensities of fascism, 417.

¹⁵⁸ see Jenson, *Alpha And Omega*, 18, for a quick summary of then extant opinions.

The sustained exposition of this theme [election], with its constant reference to Jesus Christ as the basis of election of the community and the individual, is one of the most original, profound and moving in the whole history of theology.¹⁵⁹

Barth begins by claiming that the “election of grace is the sum of the Gospel—we must put it as pointedly (*zugespitzt*) as that.”¹⁶⁰ It is the Gospel *in nuce*.¹⁶¹ The “movement (*Zuwendung*) of God” is described as “the institution (*Bundesstiftung*) of the covenant, the primal decision (*Urentscheidung*) ‘in Jesus Christ’, which is the basis and the goal of all His works—that is grace.”¹⁶² This event of grace is *particular* and *actual*, for it is centered on “the one man Jesus of Nazareth, in His covenant with this people, in His being and activity amongst and towards this people.”¹⁶³ The elect are represented by this Jesus who is the first object of election. Therefore, the “sum of the Gospel” is “grounded in the knowledge of Jesus Christ because He is both “the electing God and the elected man in One.”¹⁶⁴ In this sense, God *elects Himself* in Barth’s conceptualization.

¹⁵⁹ *CD II/2*, vii (Editor’s Preface).

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 13. German text from Karl Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik, Zweiter Band: Die Lehre Von Gott* (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag A. G. Zollikon, 1946).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 9. Hans Frei in his *Types of Christian Theology* (Yale University Press), 60, notes that “Not even the doctrine of predestinating grace serves an all-embracing explanatory function, although Barth sometimes and inconsistently came close to saying so.”

¹⁶³ *CD II/2*, 7.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 3. Joseph Mangina suggests that Barth’s doctrine might have better called by the title “He Who Chooses” or “He Who Elects” in his, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) 58.

Human predestination, therefore, is not the original intention of God's primal decision but a second-order determination. Barth elucidates:

Even human nature and human history in general have no independent signification (*selbständigen Sinn*). They point to the primal history played out within them between God and the one man, and all other men as His people. The general (the world of man) exists for the sake of the particular.¹⁶⁵

God is not bound by the actuality of the Covenant but only by a determination founded in freedom in which God eternally loves. All creation and human existence are the domain of God's glory in which He elects to be gracious. However, this gracious act of election also has the character of expectation and demand from the covenant-partner in which God is Judge. "God is for His covenant-partner both the One by whom he will be judged and also the One according to whom he must judge himself."¹⁶⁶ In effect, "being responsible" (*Verantwortung*) is the entire meaning of human existence. There can be "no dogmatics which is not also and necessarily ethics." As always, the Divine initiative is still maintained by Barth in his claim that:

The Yes cannot be heard unless the No is also heard. But the No is 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.¹⁶⁷

Covenantal grace is the Alpha and Omega of God's eternal determination in Jesus Christ, the Elected One. This is the foundational icon for Barth's theology as it is

¹⁶⁵ *CD II/2*, 8.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

“the sum of the Gospel.”

Critical Appraisals of Barth’s Doctrine of Election

Otto Weber considered that Barth’s treatment of the doctrine of election and predestination as “being conscious of treading utterly new and hazardous paths” in comparison with the Church “Fathers.”¹⁶⁸ Later, Herbert Hartwell stated that:

It is no exaggeration to say that the heart of Barth’s theology beats in this doctrine in which he radically departs from all past and present teaching on predestination, above all from Calvin’s doctrine of predestination.¹⁶⁹

Barth’s placing of election in its “pre-eminent place” in his *Dogmatics*, over the other doctrines such as providence and creation (*contra* Aquinas and Calvin) “leads him to transfer the crucial point of the *Heilsgeschichte* from the Incarnation . . . [to] an eternal decree of God before time.” This eternal covenant of grace is grounded in the “innertrinitarian love of God” as will be seen.¹⁷⁰ More recently, Colin Gunton has described Barth’s doctrine of election as a “radical newness” in both his placing the predestination as a “doctrine of God”, as well as its being misunderstood by “many critics” because of Barth’s lack of clarity on the subject.¹⁷¹ Barth had shifted from the *decretum absolutum* of Calvin’s *Institutes*,

¹⁶⁸ Otto Weber, *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics*, 93.

¹⁶⁹ Herbert Hartwell, *The Theology Of Karl Barth: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964) 105.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁷¹ Colin Gunton, “Karl Barth’s Doctrine Of Election As Part Of His Doctrine Of God”, *Scottish Journal of Theological Studies*, 25 (1974) 381.

focusing on the theological grounding of the knowable God in Jesus Christ, as opposed to the “unknown God” of Calvin.¹⁷² For Barth, God does not choose to be an electing God, but is in all “proper and essential life” a God of election *always*. “And how can we speak of the election of God without speaking of the concrete life of the very being of God?” is no abstract question for Barth, it is a “constituent (*Bestandteil*) part of the doctrine of God.”¹⁷³ Election itself has “priority over all the acts of God” in Gunton’s reading.¹⁷⁴ He discerned that the “heart of Barth’s radical restructuring” of the doctrine election proceeds in this christological manner:

If the history of this man [Jesus] is the electing action of God, then we need neither look at our own experience nor for a God different or lying behind this story.¹⁷⁵

The question then between Tillich’s *Gestalt* of grace, and Barth’s covenantal grace lies between the human apperception of grace and the character of the electing God. Tillich would later propound a “God behind God”, that is a reality of God lying behind human speech and understanding and not completely disclosed in the historical existence of Jesus. Just exactly how antithetical or similar the stances between Barth and Tillich still remain to be seen in the their future theological expositions. Gunton finds two important issues in Barth’s concept of

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 382.

¹⁷³ *CD II/2*, 79.

¹⁷⁴ Gunton, *Barth’s Election*, 384.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 385.

election. The first is the “license” for discourse concerning the primal decision. God appears to *be* the electing will itself and, in Barth’s words, “not an abstraction from or fixed and static result (*Ergebnis*) of it.”¹⁷⁶ The other contention concerns “the difficult notion that God is eternal event. It is a christological question for Gunton who writes:

How do we hold together such diverse statements that God is eternally and essentially the one who graciously elects himself and his people and that Jesus Christ, a man, *is* this eternal electing God?¹⁷⁷

Gunton finds the answers in Barth’s doctrine of revelation which is “something that happens in history that by its very nature authenticates itself to certain observers of that event as being unavoidably describable in sentences containing the word ‘God’.”¹⁷⁸ Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity is a description of the “threefold divine event: to say what God essentially is if this kind of thing happens.” This event of the Trinity, exemplified in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus *is* “election taking place.”¹⁷⁹ Election is seen by Gunton as “one of the most characteristic acts, perhaps the characteristic, act of the triune God.” The actuality of God implied in the “possibility and particularly, the freedom to become what he is not, to become man.” Grace, time and election reflect the innermost being of God, for it is impossible for God to become something other

¹⁷⁶ *CD II/2*, 181

¹⁷⁷ Gunton, *Barth’s Election*, 386.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 387.

then what God really *is*.

David Ford, using a narrative paradigm for an understanding of Barth's theology, focuses on the interpretation of the biblical narratives as a "dominant approach" that "supports his doctrine of election."¹⁸⁰ The Old Testament stories and sagas are, for Barth, related (as a *possibility*) to Jesus Christ "even more than the traditional typological exegetes" in Ford's opinion.¹⁸¹ Barth's doctrine of election, both in its categories of rejection and inclusion, are "relativized by Jesus Christ", all other forms are imperfect. Barth was analyzing the biblical narratives in such a manner to:

find the will of God making sense of the interweaving of good and evil by creating the master pattern, Jesus' death and resurrection, in which the relation of evil to good is finally defined.¹⁸²

On the other hand, Bruce McCormack proceeds in a more cautious fashion regarding Barth's doctrine of election. Tracing a Reformed lineage from Alexander Schweizer, he outlines the basic exposition of Barth's doctrine as a "material principle" but stops short of claiming that election functions in exactly this manner.

In McCormack's assessment:

It would be more accurate to say that if Barth's theology had a 'center' on the level of doctrinal expression, that center was an ellipse with two

¹⁸⁰ D. F. Ford, "Barth's Interpretation of the Bible" in S. W. Sykes (ed.) *Karl Barth: Studies of his Theological Method* (Oxford University Press, 1979) 56.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 67.

foci: election and Christology.¹⁸³

However, it might be argued that these “two foci” provide a bipolar material principle. In Barth’s theology it seems difficult to separate election from Christology and vice--versa. Barth claims that “Primarily, then, electing is the divine determination of the existence of Jesus Christ, and election (being elected) the human.”¹⁸⁴ Jesus is both Elected and Elector, the material and particular duality of the Covenant. Barth insisted that Lutheran dogmaticians were preoccupied with the notion of the doctrine of justification by grace alone.¹⁸⁵ For Barth, Scripture embodied both a formal and material principle in one. Later, in the *Church Dogmatics* II/2, Barth still maintained that predestination (or the doctrine of “divine decrees”) was not to be considered a “central dogma” for, as Christians, we are commanded “to take and to understand first the living God in His electing (*Wählen*), and in the specific relationship which He has established with man in Jesus Christ.”¹⁸⁶ The focus, then, remains christological in character.

Here a comparison with Tillich’s methodology will prove useful. In the first volume of his *Systematic Theology*, Tillich speaks of a “formal criterion of theology as that *“which concerns us ultimately. Only those propositions are*

¹⁸³ Bruce McCormack, “The Sum of the Gospel: The Doctrine of Election in the Theologies of Alexander Schweizer and Karl Barth”, *Toward The Future Of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions*. D. Willis & M. Welker, eds. (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1999) 493.

¹⁸⁴ *CD II/2*, 103.

¹⁸⁵ McCormack, “The Sum of the Gospel”, 476.

¹⁸⁶ *CD II/2*, 78. Translation amended.

theological which deal with their object in so far as it can become a matter of ultimate concern for us."¹⁸⁷ He continues by asserting that "*Our ultimate concern is that which determines our being or not-being.*"¹⁸⁸ Like Barth, Tillich brackets out the concerns of philosophy, history and science for they are not concerned *primarily* with the object of theology (defined as "ultimate concern"). If these disciplines express themselves symbolically or otherwise concern themselves with an existential state of being then they can be interpreted theologically, but only then. This is encompassed by Tillich's "Protestant Principle" elucidated in his later writings:

It is Protestant, because it protests against the tragic-demonic self-elevation of religion and liberates religion from itself for the other functions of the human spirit, at the same time liberating these functions from their self-seclusion against the manifestations of the ultimate.¹⁸⁹

Accordingly, the second principle regarding the existential state of being or non-being brings us to the Ground of all being. This question of being is brought about by the "shock of nonbeing."¹⁹⁰ This is the point of priority where "religion, faith, theology come to man."¹⁹¹ Osborne describes this as a "relational" or "immanent theology" and, as he points out, both theologians and philosophers

¹⁸⁷ *ST I*, 12 (Author's italics).

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁸⁹ *ST III*, 245.

¹⁹⁰ *ST I*, 186.

¹⁹¹ Osborne, *New Being*, 29.

have been scandalized by this conflation which creates a “crypto-” theory. But, as Tillich has expressed forcefully, there should be no conflict between philosophy and theology, “nor is a synthesis between them possible” either.¹⁹²

Tillich moves even closer to Barth with his postulation of the material norm found in the New Being embodied by Jesus as the Christ. In the next chapter we will look at this in more detail; but presently two important *loci* of Tillich need to be explored. The first is Tillich’s understanding of the sources, *die Quellen*, for all theological statements. The Bible is the “basic source of systematic theology” but not the *only* source “for it cannot be understood and could not have been received had there been no preparation for it in human religion and culture.”¹⁹³ It stands as a witness to the event of the New Being in the revelatory acceptance of Jesus as the Christ by the original authors. In Tillich’s exposition on historical theology, Barth is referred to as “pneumatic-existential” interpreter as opposed to a “scientific” commentator (such as C. H. Dodd).¹⁹⁴ However, Barth’s interpretation “lays bare the unbridged gap between both methods.” Tillich believes that any theology which is “dependent on predetermined results of the historical approach is bound to something conditional, that is , with something demonic.” Focusing on ultimate concern frees the theologian from all “sacred dishonesty.”

The second locus is the Schleiermachiian question of experience as a material

¹⁹² *ST I*, 26.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 35-6.

norm in theological discourse. Tillich's basic affinity with Schleiermacher has been discussed in chapter one, but on the subject of experience Tillich deviated from him by asserting that experience is not the source of theology; but "a medium through which the sources 'speak' to us, through which we can receive them."¹⁹⁵ This caveat regarding experience would also apply to "post-Christian" categories as Tillich explains:

Christian theology is based on the unique event Jesus the Christ, and in spite of the infinite meaning of this event it remains *this* event, and, as such, the criterion of every religious experience.¹⁹⁶

Therefore, experience is derivative of this event, for human religious feeling could "become an independent source of systematic theology only if man could become an independent source of all religious experience, the Spiritual power in him." Modern anthropological doctrine implies this unity, but Tillich takes the line of the Reformers' notions of sin very seriously at this point, for "revelation comes against [humanity] and to [humanity] and not from [humanity]." Like Barth, Tillich saw the danger of a theology which posits experience as an *independent* source of revelation as opposed to a *dependent* medium of systematic theology. And also like Barth, the christological focus was the material norm because the "New Being in Jesus as the Christ" is the "ultimate concern."¹⁹⁷ In the next chapter the relationship

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 40.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 46.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 50.

between Barth's doctrine of the Covenant and Tillich's notion of ultimate concern will be compared in greater detail.

The electing event of Jesus Christ was undoubtably of ultimate concern to Karl Barth. Webster contends that election, for Barth is "arguably":

the classic instance in the *Church Dogmatics* of Barth working out his conviction that the church's talk of Jesus Christ is to furnish the ground and content of all theological doctrine.¹⁹⁸

Furthermore, as McCormack points out, this ground is founded upon the *ontic* basis of election.¹⁹⁹ He notes Emil Brunner's dismay at Barth's notion of election concerning the pre-temporal character of the Incarnation "torn out of the sphere of history." Brunner contended:

The idea of the pre-existent *Divine Humanity* is an *ad hoc* artificial theory of the theological thinker, who can only carry through his argument that the Man Jesus is the Only Elect Human being by means of this theory.²⁰⁰

Brunner also reflects on the implicit universal salvation in the double predestined decree of Christ as both the Elected and the Rejected One. The answer is to be found in Barth's "objectivism" that, "in comparison with revelation, with the objective Word of God, the subjective element, faith, is not on the same level, but is on a much lower plane."²⁰¹ This "objectivism", for Brunner, threatens the validity

¹⁹⁸ John Webster, *Karl Barth* (London: Continuum, 2000) 88.

¹⁹⁹ Bruce McCormack, "Grace and Being: The role of God's gracious election in Karl Barth's theological ontology" in John Webster, *The Cambridge Companion To Karl Barth* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) 92-109.

²⁰⁰ Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine Of God: Dogmatics Vol. I*, 347. Author's italics.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 350.

of the subjective sphere for Barth's doctrine of election for it "means that everything has already taken place in the sphere of pre-existence."²⁰²

Bruce McCormack has pointed out an inconsistency between election for, in and by Christ, and Barth's doctrine of the Trinity. He asks, "What is the *logical* relation of God's gracious election to the triunity of God?" This is not a question of chronology but one of logic for it is concerned with the coherence of election and the trinity. It is an attempt to take Barth's phrase "the actual order of things"²⁰³ seriously: "It is to ask about the relation of act and being in God, of will and essence."²⁰⁴ As McCormack points out, Barth did not seem to ask this and this is, perhaps, because of the way his understanding of election developed. "Barth's mature doctrine of election only began to emerge from 1936 on--which means *after* he had completed his doctrine of the Trinity."²⁰⁵

The Covenant Explicated

After lengthy discussions on the place of electoral doctrine in previous dogmatics and a reiteration of Jesus as the self-determination and self-ordination of God, Barth proceeds to define his notion of the covenant in more definite terms. The covenant itself has been part of the foreordination of God in its establishment

²⁰² Ibid., 351.

²⁰³ *CD IV/1*, 45.

²⁰⁴ McCormack, "Grace and Being", 101. Author's italics.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., Author's italics.

“with man by giving up His Son for him, that He Himself might become man in the fulfillment of His grace.”²⁰⁶ Therefore, Jesus Christ is the electing God and the elected man and “electing is the divine determination (*Bestimmung*) of the existence of Jesus Christ, and election (being elected) the human.”²⁰⁷ As Christ is the “beginning of all God’s ways and works” so too, his election as incarnated human is also an election to suffering.²⁰⁸ Barth continues, “For this reason, the *crucified* Jesus is the ‘image of the invisible God.’”²⁰⁹ This image is the representation of the One who has undertaken a “severe self-commitment” (*schwerste Kompromittierung*) to the “actual onslaught and grasp of evil.”²¹⁰ Election is a christological determination, a christological double (or dialectical)²¹¹ predestination (for Christ is both elected and judged), an election of a community, not *prima facie* an election of the individual, other than Jesus Christ. As Barth pointed out in his *Gnadenwahl* of 1936, humanity itself is a “graced” (*begnadeter*)

²⁰⁶ *CD II/2*, 101.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 103. Regarding the use of the term “*Bestimmung*”, William Stacy Johnson has detected that using this word rather than ‘choice’ allows for a semantic richness that includes both past event and future intention. “It is an eternal determination at the beginning that reaches a concrete result within human history.” Cf., *The Mystery of God: Karl Barth and the Postmodern Foundations of Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997) 59.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 164. As Eberhard Jüngel asserts, this commitment of God to be present in estranged human existence in Christ threatens God’s eternal being. This leads to his maxim that in overcoming this “threat of negation” God’s being “*remains in becoming*.” Cf., *God’s Being*, 93.

²¹¹ Jüngel, *God’s Being*, 92.

entity.²¹²

God's honor dwells in the covenantal community, both in Israel and the Christian Church, as an arena for the effective visibility of the "self-presentation (*Selbst-darstellung*) of Jesus Christ and the act of God which took place in Him."²¹³ Herein lies the iconic responsibility of the community to provide the proper portrayal of the work of God in Christ. From the graced community the gift of Christ to the world must also be presented *as gift*, as any other portrait would be an idol. Barth counsels that in the *Gestalt* of the Church:

All that is implied in the nature and will of the electing God, all that God has given and gives and will give, all that is in any circumstance (*Umständen*) to be expected from Him, is what the community of God reveals in its final form as the Church.²¹⁴

Only after the establishment of the christological point of election and the mediating function of the community (both Israel and Christian) does Barth proceed to the election of the individual. However, this elected individual is not given the honor due only to Christ, this individual can only be described in terms of a state of relatedness to God as one *forgiven*. Indeed, for Barth, it is in the act of forgiveness, through the decrees of justification and predestination that the elected individual is brought into the "remarkable proximity" (*merkwürdige Nähe*) of the divine name, the "I am that I Am"

²¹² Barth, *Gnadenwahl*, 9.

²¹³ *CD II/2*, 205.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 211.

of Exodus 3:14. The efficacy of the covenant defines the boundaries of singularity and particularity for:

It is the individuality (*Einzelnen*) and solitude (*Einsamsein*) of God which constitutes the elect individual, and to which he owes the particularity of his name. Because and as God is this One, they--the elect-- are this or that person.²¹⁵

The ultimate purpose of any particularity in the elect individual is to be the “kind of [human] for whom Jesus Christ is.”²¹⁶ Knowing this fact that God is love and has loved in particularity in and through Christ, determines the individual’s place in the covenantal community. There is a responsibility on the part of God that calls for a reciprocity of the elect in the midst of this covenantal community. Barth turns to the theme of ethics and sanctification in the last chapter of this volume.

The Command of God

The obedience elicited by covenantal obligation finds its form in both grace and law for Barth. To avoid any Pelagianism creeping into this relationship, as a synergistic manipulation of God’s free grace, Barth reminds us that it is still a christological formation that gives any answer to the ethical dilemma.

The man Jesus, who fulfills the commandment of God, does not *give* the answer, but by God’s grace He *is* the answer to the ethical question put by God’s grace.²¹⁷

Ethics, therefore are divine. If the answer is the phenomenological gift of God’s

²¹⁵ Ibid., 343.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 410.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 517.

self in Jesus Christ, then a new ethical question may be asserted: does Barth's concept of divine ethics call the elect to embark on a journey to gaze upon the ultimate icon of this divine gift? Or (in spite of all christological adumbrations) does this call for obedience still retain a measure of anthropocentric effort that can only give the concept of covenant a tinge of human self-attestation in the ways we are called to be *witnesses* to this gift? How does one "endorse" this covenant by any human behaviour at all?²¹⁸ Timothy Gorringer frames the issue in this way, "The danger of such a command ethic can be that it seems to warrant an ethical occasionalism, and to be entirely arbitrary."²¹⁹ Has Barth overstated his case for election and its concomitant icon, when he claims that, "Jesus Christ does not exist, therefore, without the covenant with man which was made and executed in His name."²²⁰ In what *perceivable* fashion does this covenantal icon reflect the eternity of God both in its gaze and its reception?

John Webster underscores the Barthian problematic notion of the divine command that threatens "to undermine the reality of the human subject and agent which it seeks to establish."²²¹ The elect are christologically sublated in effect, for

²¹⁸ Ibid., 540. John Yocum in his recent work, *Ecclesial Mediation in Karl Barth* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) 65, states the *aporia* in this way, "... if the witness is a witness visible to other human beings, how can one eliminate the mediating role of the human actor, and preserve any content to the term 'witness'?" He finds no New Testament example of this.

²¹⁹ Gorringer, *Barth*, 153.

²²⁰ Ibid., 509.

²²¹ Webster, *Barth's Ethics*, 53.

Barth asserts that the person in Christ:

exists because Jesus Christ exists. He exists as a predicate of this subject, i.e., that which has been decided and is real for man in this Subject is true for him.²²²

The issue of human freedom looms large here; if the elect are subsumed into an onto-theological relationship with Christ, what are the limits, the barriers of an iconic lifestyle? More importantly, are the elect the icons themselves? Barth realizes that he is sailing close to the wind of this but stabilizes the issue by claiming that elective grace has a teleological thrust that comes from and in the form of the person of Christ himself. Covenantal grace, willed and determined by God manifests ethical involvement that leads to actions that “become the image of God.”²²³ Again, the elect are “the image (*Bilde*) of God and His action which [their] own action reflects (*abbildet*) and to that extent copies (*widerspiegelt*) the grace of God.”²²⁴ However, there is to be no deification of the elect, making them “a second Christ.”²²⁵ There can be no “abolition” (*aufgehoben*) of the “infinite qualitative difference” between God and humanity as Barth had claimed so long ago in his *Römerbrief* of 1918. So in what form can this elective grace be found if not in the ectype of the believer?

The *gestalt* of God’s elective command is neither an ideal or an obligation but

²²² *CD II/2*, 539.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 575.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 576.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 577.

the “reality fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.”²²⁶ This cannot be found in the Kantian imperative for “it reveals the fact that to obey it is not merely the highest duty but also the highest good.”²²⁷ However, a mere idea of the good as regulating principle would be false and idolatrous. Barth reminds us that the elect are called on to witness to a very specific narrative, that of Jesus Christ in his crucifixion and Resurrection. It is the death of Christ, as saturated phenomena perhaps, where Barth sees the judgement of God on the idol making of humanity:

The death of Jesus Christ is this act of divine proof (*Taterweis*). It is the execution (*Vollzug*) of the judgement . . . In the death of Jesus is the confrontation between God and humanity, in the command and the human ways and deeds, visibly and effectively, once and for all.²²⁸

The event of the death of Jesus on the cross of Golgotha “can never be more than a reference (*Hinweis*)”²²⁹, and, as such, loses its saturation as phenomenon. For Barth, human words must not either “introduce” or “exploit” the signification of this event.

Conclusion

If the crucifixion of Jesus can only be a referent in Barth’s scheme, then what mediates its significance to us? Is the biblical text itself, the words and accounts in scripture to be perceived as an icon? Barth would admit the iconic character of the Bible but not its form as *icon*, only that which it attests is iconic, i.e., the

²²⁶ Ibid., 606.

²²⁷ Ibid., 652.

²²⁸ Ibid., 748. Translation amended.

²²⁹ Ibid., 751.

crucified and risen Christ himself. The question still remains, how exactly is the meaning of the cross given to the elect? It is only in the agency of the divine Spirit of God that this hermeneutic can exist:

If the Holy Spirit does not speak itself, so that we see, that which we are to see in this prospect (*Ausblick*), then the mystery of the grace of God cannot be disclosed (*eröffnet*) through this fundamental reflection (*Überlegung*), even through this final reference.²³⁰

Perhaps the task of a phenomenological interpretation should concentrate on the givenness of the Spirit, but it is acknowledged that Barth's theology is somewhat deficient in pneumaticological terms.²³¹

An experience of the Spirit might also lead to an even greater emphasis on the "supranatural" that troubled Tillich in his assessment of Barth. The assertion of a sacramental Word of God and a cerebral doctrine of the covenant leads to the constant question regarding the absolute criteria to evaluate that which is posited as iconic. If one can only speak in biblical terms, or in the language of the Spirit, then only that language itself can be seen as iconic. This could (and has) lead to a idolatry of the Bible that has damaged the Church throughout the centuries. By the same token an over- adoration of icons, whether visual or sacramental, can become demonic as Tillich had pointed out. But Barth still needed to reckon with the reality of creation with all its idolatrous dangers, a creation that existed in the freedom of

²³⁰ Ibid., 751, translation amended.

²³¹ For a succinct summary of Barth's doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the various criticisms it has evoked see George Hunsinger, "The mediator of communion: Karl Barth's doctrine of the Holy Spirit" in John Webster, *Cambridge Companion*, 177-194.

God to be *for* humanity, and humanity free to be *for* God. And to this Barth turned in his subsequent volume of the dogmatics, the “Doctrine of Creation.”

CHAPTER 8

TILLICH: THE *GESTALT* OF GRACE IN THE SYSTEMATICS

Paul Tillich emphatically stated that “the centre of my theological doctrine of the knowledge of God is the concept of symbol.”¹ The implication of this claim will be the focus of this chapter. Nothing can be said about God which is “not symbolic” for “non-analogous non-symbolic knowledge of God has *less* truth than analogous or symbolic knowledge.”² Symbolic analogy, so important for Tillich leads to the postulation of the *analogia imaginis* which undergirds his christology as “an analogy between the picture and the actual personal life from which it has arisen” namely that of Jesus Christ.³ The *analogia imaginis* allowed the first disciples to create a picture, a *Bild* of Jesus as the Christ of faith. This symbol “participates in the reality of that which it stands.”⁴ What will be demonstrated in this section is how Tillich developed this symbolic theology, its contribution to

¹ Tillich, “Reply to Interpretation and Criticisms” in *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, 333.

² *ST I*, 131.

³ *ST II*, 115.

⁴ *ST I*, 239.

his separation from Barth, his post-war political apathy, and the paradox of the Incarnation leading to his striking doctrine of Jesus Christ as the bearer of the symbol of the New Being.

Tillich's Emigration and Life in America

After a stormy transit across the Atlantic, Tillich and his family arrived in New York harbor on November 4, 1933. Originally, Tillich had only planned to stay in the United States for one year, but this hope was soon to be dashed in spite of his attempts to secure a teaching position once again in Germany. However, the warm reception he received from Reinhold Niebuhr and many German colleagues who had previously emigrated to the United States raised his spirits considerably. Still, lingering insecurities remained for his faculty appointment at Union Theological Seminary was only contracted for one year. Speaking English proved difficult for Tillich for a time; but with the tutelage of two German-speaking students he made progress. Tillich's strong German accent never really left him and even in later years he was found somewhat difficult to understand.⁵ However, his comprehension of English was adequate and he became quite proficient in his ability to understand and compose difficult concepts in academic jargon. In spite of Tillich's assimilation of American culture and his acceptance by the academic world, he always felt that he lived in "two worlds";

⁵ For more interesting and amusing anecdotes of Tillich's English see, Wilhelm & Marion Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life & Thought* (London: Collins, 1977) 144ff.

a continuing experience of the boundary between the “Old” and the “New”.⁶ Tillich noted his feelings of living in two dimensions in his first printed autobiographical monograph, “On The Boundary”. Prompted by his experience of separation from Germany, he wrote of the “freedom of fate” that between “the border of home and alien land” produced the insight of “two inner forces, two possibilities of human existence.”⁷ He also had a suspicion that the American theological world had seen him as a Barthian as opposed to being a “radical theologian” as in Germany. Tillich explained:

But agreement with the Barthian paradox, the paradox of justification, does not mean agreement with the Barthian Supranaturalism; and agreement with the historical and critical achievement of liberal theology does not mean agreement with liberal dogmatics.⁸

Being allied with Barth in this way prompted Tillich to explain the differences between his theology and his Swiss colleague in a journal article entitled “What is Wrong with the ‘Dialectical’ Theology?” published in April 1935 in the United States and also in Germany the next year.⁹ Tillich took issue with the entire premise of Barth’s concept of God’s ‘Yes’ and ‘No’. Barth had separated them in his estimation and, as Tillich had earlier stated in 1923, they should be regarded as

⁶ Paul Tillich, “Autobiographical Reflections” *The Theology Of Paul Tillich*, 19.

⁷ Paul Tillich, “On The Boundary” in *idem*, *The Interpretation of History*, 67.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁹ Paul Tillich, “What is Wrong with the ‘Dialectical’ Theology?”, in the *Journal of Religion* (Chicago) XV, No. 2 (April 1935) 127-145. Translated as “Was ist falsch in der ‘dialektischen’ Theologie?”, in *Die Christliche Welt* (Gotha), L, No. 8 (April 25, 1936), 353-364. Cited by M. K. Taylor in *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries* (London: Collins Liturgical, 1987) 104-116. German text in Paul Tillich, *Der Protestantismus Als Kritik Und Gestaltung: Gesammelte Werke Band VII* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1962) 247-262.

paradoxically connected. Tillich had seen in the *Epistle to the Romans* that Barth had used the phrase ‘impossible possibility’ with regards to the sovereign will of God which had “given rise erroneously to the name ‘Dialectic Theology’.”¹⁰ Yet this statement seemed paradoxical itself, for it is “only a constant repetition in other words of the idea expressed in the paradox.” All human possibilities of philosophy, science, art, and history are “radically separated, for man is a sinner and the possibility of natural sinlessness is an abstraction that can have for us absolutely no meaning.”

This meant for Barth that “liberal theology is heresy.” Tillich saw that Barth had “from first to last, preserved the sovereign prerogative of God as expressed in the first commandment.” If Barth was to be criticized it is only possible “when it deals with that which escapes Barth when judged by his own standard.”¹¹ Tillich, as he had earlier stated, believed the flaw in Barth’s concepts lay in his “supernaturalism”. This had caused a great rift between Bultmann, Gogarten and Barth who had started the Dialectical movement as ‘subterranean’ workers; but now had gone their separate ways.¹² The problem lay with Barth’s absolute nominalism with regards to the possibility of divine activity. Tillich felt that Barth’s assertions had denied the efficacy of human knowledge, however flawed, as a “preliminary erring knowledge about God and man. Erring knowledge is not

¹⁰ Taylor, *Tillich*, 106.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹² *Ibid.*, 109.

utter ignorance, especially when it begins to doubt its accuracy and to ask for true knowledge.” The “whole history” of religion had been reduced to “a ‘Witches Sabbath’ of ghostly fancies, idolatry, and superstition” in Tillich’s estimation. Barth’s criticism of the religious syncretism and complete identification with religious history and God’s revelation seemed appropriate enough; but the Church’s doctrine of the Logos “is not only truer from the standpoint of dialectic but in the end signifies much more for every unbiased contact with extra-Christian piety than does Barth’s de-divinizing of the history of religion.” However, an important anthropological question remained; “What is this human entity? Can it be thought of only as something without the divine, without the capacity for receiving answers from the divine and for asking questions of the divine?”¹³

Tillich had agreed with Barth in a repudiation of the so-called “natural theology.” He saw that Barth was “right in combating the identity in nature of God and man and in rejecting all attempts to find a point in man where he may be able to find and lay hold of God.”¹⁴ Mysticism also was to be rejected as it might “permit union with God in the depths of man’s own human nature.” But note Tillich’s Augustinian caveat:

Apart from the Augustinian *transcende te ipsum* there is no access to God. But this precept does contain within itself the demand to proceed *throughself beyond self* (*durch sich über sich*). Therefore, the other statement, *in interori anima habitat veritas*, is more basal in the dialectic of Augustine. We can find God *in* us only when we

¹³ Ibid., 111.

¹⁴ Ibid., 112

rise *above* ourselves. This transcendentalizing act does not signify that we possess the transcendental. The point is that we are in quest (*Frage*) of it.¹⁵

Tillich also warned that this was not to reduce anthropology to the ideas of Feuerbach; but to provide a “solution of the anthropological question, which is the problem of the finiteness (*Endlichkeit*) of man.” Though Barth might not agree that “finiteness is not sin”, guilt and despair “are to be understood as sin in the revelation of God.” Therefore it would be wrong of Barth to insist that sin would make any knowledge of God an impossibility. “On the contrary, in the experience of guilt (*Schuld*) and despair (*Verzweiflung*) the question of perplexing knowledge about God is as radically presented as it ever can be apart from revelation.”

The sense of the God-likeness (*Gottsebenbildlichkeit*) was affirmed by Barth in concept, yet denied as “a personality independent of revelation”, which led Tillich to conclude that Barth’s dialectic was “unintelligible” (*unverständlich*). He summarized Barth’s position:

In general, Barth leaves unexplained how revelation can communicate anything to man if there is nothing in him permitting him to raise questions about it, impelling him towards it, and enabling him to understand it.¹⁶

Tillich was proposing over and against Barth his “correlative” theology derived from an existentialist anthropology in which the questing nature of humanity, in

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 113.

its subsequent questions, would be answered in the symbols of the Christian faith.

Tillich took issue with Barth's ideas concerning the relation of the Kingdom of God in regards to human endeavor. "It is a fact of church history that Barth made an end of the naive identification of the Kingdom of God with ecclesiastical activities, social programs, political reconstruction, or human progress."¹⁷ This would not have been possible without Barth's insistence on the unbridgeable gulf between the divine and the human, "But an instrument that is a mighty weapon in warfare may be an inconvenient (*ungeeignetes*) tool for use in the building trade." Barth's neglect to develop a doctrine of demons seemed to Tillich to be "one of the weakest points in Barthian teaching, and on this ground his refusal to recognize a theological ethics is also based."¹⁸ This seemed to be a conclusion that existence was two-dimensional "in dead matter and the form we give to it." The reluctance of Barthian theology to recognize this problem "does in truth forward demonic interests."¹⁹ In contrast, the truth and reality of dialectical thinking was to be three-dimensional.

Tillich, however, was not finished with his criticisms of Barth's dialectical theology. Later in 1936 he once again took issue with his "Grand Inquisitor" reference of 1923:

Karl Barth has said that my negative attitude toward heteronomy and

¹⁷ Ibid., 114.

¹⁸ Ibid., 116.

¹⁹ Ibid., 115.

my use of the word demonic to describe it represents a struggle against the Grand Inquisitor (as portrayed in Dostoevsky's 'The Brothers Karamazov') that is no longer necessary today.²⁰

The current state of affairs in the German Confessional Church led Tillich to believe otherwise: "The Grand Inquisitor is now entering the Confessional Church wearing the strong but tight fitting armour of Barthian supranaturalism." This "narrow position" of the Barthian school might have been a saviour of German Protestantism; but for Tillich "it also creates a new heteronomy, an anti-autonomous and anti-humanistic attitude that I must regard as a denial of the Protestant principle." Barth's theology seemed more Lutheran than Calvinistic and either way led to "an indifference to social questions".²¹

Similarly, Tillich's experience of Lutheranism was another boundary situation, one that explained his understanding of grace and justification. Acknowledging his debt to Martin Kähler as an influential teacher, Tillich wrote of his indebtedness "for the insight he gave me into the all-controlling character of the Pauline-Lutheran idea of justification." Justification, in Tillich's view, "rends" every human claim before God and shows the "decadence of human existence" which is overcome by the "paradoxical judgement" of God. Furthermore, his "Christology and Dogmatics were determined by the interpretation of the cross of Christ as the event of history," which allowed him to make a connection with Barth, as well as the analysis of the human condition by Kierkegaard and Heidegger. Liberal dogmatics, as such,

²⁰ Paul Tillich, *The Interpretation of History* (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936) 26.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

replaced the crucified Christ with the more assured historical Jesus, “Which dissolves the paradox of justification into moral categories.”²² Barth’s neo-Reformed attitude, on the other hand, seemed to discard the “scientific work of two hundred years” by retreating into a “New Supranaturalism.”

Higher biblical criticism also played an important role in Tillich’s pre-systematic theology as well. The *religionsgeschichtliche Methode* of Wellhausen and Gunkel spoke to his “spirit of prophetic criticism” informing his political attitude and being “decisive for the shaping of my life and thought.” So also Schweitzer and Bultmann in New Testament studies as well as Ernst Troeltsch “who caused my final transfer of interest from all mediating-theological and apologetic remnants in Church History and in the problem of historical criticism.” Reference was made to his early christological theses of 1911 where the question of “how Christian doctrine might be understood, if the non-existence of the historical Jesus should become historically probable.”²³

For Tillich, in direct contrast to Barth, the “foundation of the Christian belief is not the historical Jesus, but the biblical picture of Christ.”²⁴ Barth would later assert that in relation to the historical Jesus, we are confronted “immediately and directly with the being of God”; and that every human being must exist and have their being “in a history which stands in a clear and recognisable relationship to

²² Ibid., 32.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 34.

the divine deliverance enacted in the man Jesus.”²⁵ In effect, without the history of Jesus, we as God’s creatures would have no legitimate history of our own. However, as yet Tillich had not fully described his Christology, as there were other theologically pressing matters in his new career.

Tillich’s innate curiosity and love of travel led to an extended trip across America in 1935 and a nostalgic return to Europe in 1936. In June of that year, he met Barth in Switzerland, an “extremely animated friend-to-friend conversation in which we trade insults.”²⁶ Tillich iterated that at that moment in time he felt “closer to the early Christians than to the Reformation.”²⁷ Barth for his part believed that Tillich’s “existence in America is providential.” Whether that remark was a sincere thankfulness for Tillich’s escape from Germany, or a wry jibe the reader will have to interpret. In any event Barth and Tillich “parted as great friends.” It remains unknown whether Barth had read Tillich’s journal article by then. In any event, no more overt descriptions or deep criticisms of each of their theologies came from either of them for many years following. The growing war clouds and the deterioration of the European situation saw to that.

After Tillich’s return to the United States, as a result of two student petitions, he was granted full faculty status leading to tenure in 1940. Much thought went into exactly where he fit in Union Theological Seminary’s curricula. When queried

²⁵ *CD III/2*, 73.

²⁶ Paul Tillich, *My Travel Diary: 1936, Between Two Worlds*, trans. M. Pelikan (London: SCM Press, 1970) 117-118.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 118.

about his relationship to the theological studies then in existence Tillich responded, "I am a triboro bridge: systematics, philosophy, history."²⁸ A new position was created for him, a chair in philosophical theology, being the first of its kind in the United States. Tillich's academic future was now secure and a return to the German academic scene unnecessary. He now was free to speak to the American religious public in his own terms, as in J. Heywood Thomas' phrase "It is ironic that the person hailed as America's greatest theologian and philosopher is not an American."²⁹ His boundary existence made him "essentially a *European* theologian" who lived and wrote in the United States.³⁰ His individuality located him neither in a German theological or an American ethos; he stood apart as a Continental figure his entire career.

The rapidly deteriorating world situation before the outbreak of World War Two led Tillich to consider the place of Protestantism in religious affairs. The end of the "Protestant Era" seemed a real possibility because of the "mass disintegration" in Europe.³¹ The breakdown of feudal economics and early capitalism had given way to the "amorphous masses, in which the laws of mass psychology operate." This malaise had led to the condition of a "meaninglessness of existence" that had allowed for an agitation of the "less cultivated and less

²⁸ Pauck, *Tillich*, 176.

²⁹ J. Heywood Thomas, "Foreword" in Thomas O'Meara & Celestin D. Weisser, *Paul Tillich In Catholic Thought* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964) vii.

³⁰ Maurice B. Schepers, "Paul Tillich on the Church" in O'Meara & Weisser, 238.

³¹ Paul Tillich, "The End Of The Protestant Era?" in *PE*, 222-23..

disciplined elements” and “used them for their own purposes”, an apt description of the totalitarianist regimes then in place.³² The Protestant answer lay in the doctrine of justification by grace alone, “which means that no individual and no human group can claim a divine dignity for its moral achievements, for its sacramental power, for its sanctity, or for its doctrine.” The “prophetic spirit” a form of *semper reformandans*, must be in the center of the Protestant ethos, and every individual Protestant “is called upon to bear personal responsibility for this.” Even the Bible could not be called upon to “liberate” the individual from this prophetic criticism, “for the Bible is a subject of interpretation: there is no doctrine, no prophet, no priest, no power, which had not claimed a biblical sanction for itself.”³³ Tillich feared that those who were “embarrassed by the meaninglessness of their existence” would turn to the “opposing tendencies” such as fundamentalism or Barthianism, to name two. But these various movements use “unintelligible symbols which are powerless” for effective use in the present moment. Tillich explained:

Barthianism, for example, has shown its power to save the German church from paganization by giving theological aims to a group of struggling ministers, but it has not been able to reintegrate the younger generation or the masses of disintegrated proletarians or even middle-class persons.³⁴

The future survival of Protestantism was formulated by Tillich in three ways.

³² Ibid., 223.

³³ Ibid., 226.

³⁴ Ibid., 227.

The first was a reappropriation of symbols and “sacred objectivities.” A correlation of its rites and institutional life might be provided “a message which a disintegrated world seeking reintegration will accept.” Secondly, unlike Catholicism, Protestantism had the freedom to deny any “cleavage between a sacred and a profane sphere for the work and Kingdom of God.”³⁵ Third was a continued emphasis on the “principle of prophetic protest” that would contradict “man’s permanent attempts to give absolute validity to his own thinking and acting.”³⁶ In effect the “Protestant Principle” must be invoked again for Protestantism to save itself and continue to be effective in a world of competing autonomous claims. This would be the outline for Tillich’s theological work up to and including his systematic writings.

Tillich again returned to Europe in 1937 to attend the Oxford Conference on “Life and Work.” He reflected later that he felt that he had made an important contribution to the ecumenical movement by persuading the “Commission on Socialism and Communism and their Relation to the Ecumenical Movement” to include in their summary:

the assertion that it was entirely possible that God was speaking more clearly through men concerned for social justice who were enemies of the church than through those who spoke in the name of the churches but exerted no social responsibility.³⁷

³⁵ Ibid., 229.

³⁶ Ibid., 230.

³⁷ Pauck, *Tillich*, 194.

An address delivered before this conference re-emphasized aspects of Tillich's Christological focus. He encouraged the Churches to "reflect upon the great solutions of their past and to seek for a new solution" to be "expressed in some powerful symbol" which would be a correlation between Christianity and the "need of humanity of the present day in its questions and its despair."³⁸ This symbol was Jesus Christ, who "is the center of history"³⁹ and therefore "human history is ultimately to be interpreted in terms of salvation."⁴⁰ In like manner, the Resurrection, as symbol, "points to the truth that the totality of personal life, including the human body, belongs to the ultimate meaning of existence."⁴¹ Tillich would later expand this notion of the Resurrection in that "It expresses the eternal root of the New Being as it is historically present in the event of Jesus the Christ."⁴² The *historical* actuality of Jesus of Nazareth, confessed by faith to be "The Christ", takes on more importance here than in earlier writings, but there is a serious eschatological dimension in this history for it "moves toward the New Being" as the "end of history, namely the end of the preparatory period of history and its aim."⁴³

³⁸ Paul Tillich, "The Kingdom of God and History" in H. G. Wood, et al, *The Kingdom of God and History* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938) 105.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴² *ST II*, 159.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 162.

The Symbols of Grace in Tillich's later writings

During the war years Tillich was preoccupied with his teaching at Union Theological Seminary, broadcasting sermons into Germany and working with other German *emigres* in the New York area. Although maintaining his love of his native Germany, Tillich saw himself now as an American though not involved in politics at this time. He received an honorary doctorate from Yale University in recognition of his speaking out against the Nazi regime in the early thirties as well as his theological and philosophical work.⁴⁴ In spite of his busy schedule he did produce an important article that clarified his understanding of religious symbol. Published in 1940, just before America's entry into World War Two, Tillich spoke of the "figurative quality" of the symbol and its giving "something of a higher rank."

He explained that, for example:

Devotion to the crucifix is really directed to the crucifixion on Golgotha and devotion to the latter is in reality intended for the redemptive action of God, which is itself a symbolic expression for an experience of the unconditioned transcendent.⁴⁵

Symbols have "perceptibility" that give an excess of "surplus value", in regard to exploitive economic symbols, or the "idea of the 'Supreme Being'" as a symbol of ultimate concern.⁴⁶ This givenness of the symbol points through its own "innate

⁴⁴ Pauck, *Tillich*, 198.

⁴⁵ Paul Tillich, "The Religious Symbol", in the *Journal of Liberal Religion* (Chicago) Vol. 2, no. 1 (1940) 13 -33. Text from Paul Tillich, *Hauptwerke 4: Religionsphilosophische Schriften* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987) 253.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 254.

power” toward that which is the ultimate reality.

Tillich goes on to classify these religious symbols in three categories. First, “Objective” symbols are concerned with the “world of divine beings” that is, God as the “Supreme Being.”⁴⁷ The danger, of course, lies in turning God into an object, but the surplus of the symbol should “surpass every conception of a being, including even the conception of a Supreme Being.”⁴⁸ The second category deals with the “characterizations of the nature and actions of God.” The third group are those symbols that are the “natural and historical objects that are drawn as holy objects” and therefore become religious symbols.⁴⁹ Even personalities, such as Buddha or Christ, would fall into this category. But in response to the charge that Tillich had reduced Christ to a mere symbol he underscores that the “symbolic character of Christ involves also his empirical character.” Yet this “empirical aspect” cannot be separated from “symbolic intuition.”⁵⁰ Christ is not a “thing-in-itself” to be empirically scrutinized, but only understood in the experience of faith.

Lastly, the third group falls into the category of “pointing symbols.” Cultic rituals and symbols “such as the cross” fall into this grouping. Tillich thought that an “elaboration” of this class of symbols would be “tantamount to working out a theory of the phenomena of religion in general.” The sacramental would be found

⁴⁷ Ibid., 263.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 264.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 265.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 266.

in this category as a “transitional” symbol that carries the divine only when these symbols “are imbued with sacral power” in the religious act “oriented to them.”⁵¹ This caveat looms large in the discussion between the sacramental as symbolizing grace (albeit only transitionally) and the more enduring symbology of grace that abides in the disclosure of the infinite in a more permanent sense. Tillich elaborates in a pertinent footnote:

The Calvinist criticism of the mass (as ‘accursed idolatry’) forces it into the demonic and makes the eucharist a mere ‘pointing’ symbol: the beginning of its disappearance.

However, a phenomenological possibility remained for Tillich in that the symbol “freeing itself from all its demonizations and profanizations will come to life again through the power inherent in it, is always a real possibility *in abstracto*.”⁵² Contextual faith is the key which cannot be determined *a priori* nor on the “basis of something extraneous to it.” Unfortunately, Tillich did not provide an example of what might be construed as “extraneous.”

Critical replies by both Wilbur Urban and Edwin Aubrey led Tillich to respond and clarify some of his views. Aubrey took note of Tillich’s illustration of Golgotha as an “esoteric allegorical” interpretation that was Alexandrian in character. This, in his view, was the stance of the Barthians, who tended towards “a highly individualistic treatment of symbols.” He continued by asserting that, “This in turn tends toward arbitrariness, and incurs the risk of anathematizing that

⁵¹ Ibid., 267.

⁵² Ibid., 267, fn. 16.

has already become apparent in Barthian circles.” Aubrey did not think that Tillich was guilty of this , “but that the method has its dangers.”⁵³ One danger was taking the context of the symbol more seriously than the “emotional significance which arouse powerful reactions in the person who experienced the sign.”⁵⁴ Compare this with Marion’s notion of the *paradox* of the phenomenon (symbolic or otherwise) that the experience of the receiver is all important for:

The paradox not only suspends the phenomenon’s subjection to the I; it inverts it. For, far from being able to constitute this phenomenon, the I experiences itself constituted by it.⁵⁵

This reconstitution of the self in the experience of grace Tillich had earlier recognized as the “grasping” of the “reality of grace” and the being drawn into “the life of a Gestalt of grace.”⁵⁶

As the war drew to a close in the fall of 1944 and spring of 1945, Tillich became preoccupied with the state of the world and the future destiny of Germany. Recriminations for Nazi war crimes and the Holocaust were in the air and many of the refugees feared the results for the German people would be catastrophic. Tillich was installed as the provisional chair of a council that issued a declaration that stressed fair and democratic measures for the postwar re-construction of Germany, a purging of Nazi teachings in its surviving intellectual institutions,

⁵³ Ibid., 271.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 272.

⁵⁵ Marion, *BG*, 216.

⁵⁶ Tillich, “The Formative Power of Protestantism” in *PE*, 211.

and an effort to establish a program of political unity that “all anti-Nazi forces” could “eventually adhere.”⁵⁷ Unfortunately, the members of the council were divided among themselves and the bitter divisions led to its demise in the Autumn of 1945. Tillich’s involvement with this council led to his being invited to a White House dinner at the request of Eleanor Roosevelt and also being blacklisted for a time by the U. S. Army for his membership in what was mistakenly identified as a pro-German and pro-Communist organization. The net effect for Tillich was to scare him away from the political scene.⁵⁸ For him the time of the *kairos* had passed leaving only a “sacred void” of human expectation.⁵⁹

Tillich’s concern for the circumstances of post-war society were articulated in an essay entitled “The World Situation”, published in 1945. The “self-destructive forces” of a privileged industrial society led to the crisis in civilization; “The disintegration and transformation of bourgeois society is the dynamic center of the present world situation.”⁶⁰ Christianity must, to be prophetic and correlative in this new situation, “develop the church toward an inclusive reality that unites different existential interpretations” to provide a sense of “rational truth.”⁶¹ Religious

⁵⁷ Pauck, *Tillich*, 202. The declaration was printed in the first issue of the *Bulletin of the Council for a Democratic Germany*, published in May, 1944.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 204-205.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁶⁰ Paul Tillich, “The World Situation” *The Christian Answer*, ed. H. P. Van Dusen (New York: Charles Scribners’ Sons, 1945). Reprinted in Paul Tillich, *The Spiritual Situation in Our Technical Society*, ed. J. Mark Thomas (Mercer University Press, 1988) 4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

“escapism” was not an antidote but an “affirmation” of the “influences of divine grace” and its presence in the historical situation. Christianity must continue to relate this *Gestalt* of grace to the “history of divine revelation” and to its most “central reality--Jesus Christ.”⁶²

The following year, Tillich re-emphasized the need for a theonomous culture to express “in its creations an ultimate concern and a transcending meaning not as something strange but as its own spiritual ground.”⁶³ But a new dimension was to be added now that the *kairos* had seemingly passed, that of the “void.” Indeed, for Tillich, “Often one gets the impression that only those cultural creations have greatness in which the experience of the void is expressed” which brings about an experience of expectation, “of ‘not yet’, of a being broken from above.”⁶⁴ This was not to undermine the idea of theonomy in any way, it was to be its “strongest confirmation.” Tillich saw that Barth’s turn from a “theology of radical detachment from culture” to an “equally radical attachment to the fight against a demonically distorted cultural system” stood as an illustration.⁶⁵ However, healing remained an expression of salvation and “consequently can become a genuine symbol of the saving power of the ultimate.” Tillich was to become quite preoccupied with this

⁶² Ibid., 40.

⁶³ Paul Tillich, “Religion and Secular Culture” in *PE*, 57. Originally published in the *Journal of Religion* (Chicago) XXVI, No. 2 (April, 1946) 79-86.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 60.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 60-61. Tillich used the German word *Verdinglichung* to describe economically competitive culture, see Pauck, *Tillich*, 220.

symbol and its impact on the social sciences of psychiatry and psychology.

The Christian church, Tillich believed, had lost some of its theonomous symbols as well. The idea of the Church as the “mystical body of Christ” lost its symbolic power “when the church became a voluntary covenant of individuals and society became the realm of social contracts for preliminary purposes.” The past had shown how the Church, after losing this symbol, had tried to “re-establish theonomy on an autonomous foundation.”⁶⁶ In the same manner the idea of “personality” being a symbol for God had led to human personality being “driven into neurotic disintegration.”⁶⁷ All this was to be later explicated in Tillich’s systematic writings as he struggled to articulate that which would be a “new theonomy . . . an ultimate concern in all our concerns.”⁶⁸

As the new decade of the fifties approached Tillich began his preparations to finalize his systematic theology in book form. Essays were published and his first major contribution to the American religious scene appeared as *The Protestant Era*. But before his systematics were to be published two important events occurred in Tillich’s life that influenced the final outcome. One was his trip to Germany in 1948, and the other, an article on the Incarnation that was to outline his mature Christology and notion of the New Being.

The effect of Tillich’s European trip lay in the contrast between his American

⁶⁶ Ibid., 62.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 63.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 65.

affluence (he purchased a house in East Hampton) and the guilt he harbored about the hardships his relatives in Germany had undergone. Tillich saw that the postwar situation in Germany was “thoroughly tragic, a situation in which the element of freedom is as deeply at work as is the element of fate, which is the case in every genuine tragedy.”⁶⁹ The moment of *kairos* as authentic possibility had passed, now to be replaced by Tillich’s new interest in the existential concepts of anxiety and dread. Even in postwar America there seemed to be a new interest in the “fundamental question of human existence: ‘What am I?’”⁷⁰ Tillich would become concerned with the psychological well-being of humans and the correlating answers given by the symbols of the Christian faith. The representation of Jesus, confessed as the Christ, as the New Being was the most important correlating symbol in this schema. And the event of the Incarnation needed an existential understanding to explain this possibility. This reinterpretation may have resulted from Tillich’s “unexpectedly jovial” meeting with Barth in Basel, who seemed to appear older and “his face deeply lined. They disagreed about the Resurrection and talked of prophets and church administrators.”⁷¹ Whatever the immediate reason, Tillich’s essay appeared in 1949.

The Incarnation was an event of “universal significance, concerning the whole

⁶⁹ Tillich, “Autobiographical Reflections” in *The Theology Of Paul Tillich*, 20.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷¹ Pauck, *Tillich*, 211.

of being, and transforming the conditions of existence generally.”⁷² The biblical interpretation of this event does not “imply that God as such becomes man” but that the divine Logos appears as a human being.⁷³ Tillich continued:

The paradox of the Incarnation is not that God becomes man, but that a divine being who represents God and is able to reveal him in his fulness, manifests himself in a form of existence which is in radical contradiction to his divine, spiritual and heavenly form.⁷⁴

Hegel and German classical philosophy were wrong, in Tillich’s estimation, to “confuse the dialectical relation of finiteness and infinity” with the doctrine of the Incarnation. So also, Barth and his followers were wrong “in denying the dialectical interdependence of finiteness and infinity.”⁷⁵ But the Barthians were right in stressing the paradoxical character of the Incarnation.

The paradox of the Incarnation was the “manifestation of original and essential Godmanhood within and under the conditions of existence.”⁷⁶ Existence, Tillich saw, was being, in distinction to non-being, and in distinction from essential being.⁷⁷ This phenomenon was the appearance of “essential Godmanhood” in human reality without any loss of its essential character.⁷⁸ Only in the manifestation of the

⁷² Paul Tillich, “A Reinterpretation Of The Doctrine Of The Incarnation”, *Church Quarterly Review* (London) CXLVII, No. 294 (January-March, 1949) 133.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 141.

New Being has the unity between essence and existence been overcome. This is the ultimate “transition from potentiality to actuality.”⁷⁹ Tillich re-asserted that Barth was right in stressing the great gulf between God and humanity but at fault for not inquiring into the dialectical interdependence between them.⁸⁰ This anthropomorphism contained an “indestructible element of truth” that Barth refused to acknowledge.

The Incarnation of the New Being, seen in this manner, represented not only the essential unity between finiteness and infinity, but also the unity between individuality and universality, contingency and creativity, anxiety and courage, and from mortality to eternity.⁸¹ Tillich goes on to describe this “representation” as the “picture” of Jesus as the Christ. As such it is the metaphorical reading of the event of the Incarnation that is of value. Tillich elucidated:

The photographic implications of the event are, from the beginning, reduced to unimportance by its interpretation as the appearance of the Christ or as the Incarnation.⁸²

It is only the “transforming power” of the picture that impacts existence. Yet, this does not *create* existential thought; it is the victory over the structures of existence by the New Being that creates the picture that transforms finitude and the limitations of human existence. “The New Being is the prius of the Church just as it

⁷⁹ Ibid., 142.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 143.

⁸¹ Ibid., 144.

⁸² Ibid., 145.

is the prius of Christian experience.” This New Being is both the beginning and the eschatological end that orients existence. It is a correlative symbol for:

The New Being appears first as command and expectation, when the question is asked, when man understands his existential situation in which the contradiction and tragedy are manifests as the longing for salvation from it.⁸³

This departure from the Chalcedon creed seemed to many to be heretical.

George Tavard found Tillich’s formulation Docetic and the notion of “eternal Godmanhood” denigrating of the Jesus of History. Yet, for Tavard, a concreteness towards the divinity of Jesus, as opposed to a universal state of “Godmanhood” would suffice to bring Tillich more in line with orthodox Christology.⁸⁴ Others, such as J. Heywood Thomas pressed Tillich to define the essence of the New Being in more detail. In a lecture of 1953 he described the New Being as “a class with only one member” that was not “genus nor species but a power.”⁸⁵ Thomas thought that Tillich would have to “resort to some rather desperate dialectics in order to save his Christology from being in the end inadequate.”⁸⁶

A more positive approach to Tillich’s re-interpretation of the Chalcedonian formulation lies in the horizon of the *Bild* of the New Being. As a saturated phenomenon the Incarnation might be perceived under Marion’s postulation of the intentionality and surplus of meaning arising from intuition. Of course, the

⁸³ Ibid., 147.

⁸⁴ George Tavard, *Paul Tillich and the Christian Message* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1962) 173.

⁸⁵ J. Heywood Thomas, *Paul Tillich: An Appraisal* (London: SCM Press, 1963) 95.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 99.

event of the Incarnation is an historical occurrence attested to in the New Testament. Both Tillich and Barth are seeking to explicate the phrase “according to the Scriptures” in the terminology of their context. However, any new account of Scriptural events can only speak “on the basis of” and this is precisely the irony of any theological utterance. Barth has called this the task of “what we must say on the basis of the apostles and the prophets.”⁸⁷ Tillich is seeking to do just that; to speak in a new way about a biblical event and its relevance to a modern audience. This is the ongoing task of a theology of correlation. David Kelsey responded to Tillich’s theology in a more beneficial manner in his refusal to conclude that Tillich “begins” his theological reflections with anthropology.⁸⁸ What Kelsey seeks are the warrants that allow Tillich to move from the biblical pictures of Christ to the categories of the New Being that are espoused in his theology. Tillich’s use of symbol as an “expression of a revelatory event” contains “that which was revealed.”⁸⁹ This symbolic correspondence provides the warrant that allows for the phenomenological expressions of the events themselves. Kelsey elucidates:

This part of Tillich’s analysis of the dynamics of revelation yields the following warrant: If something is a genuine religious symbol, then, in the odd discernment and experience of the holy which we undergo in the presence of the symbol, it mediates to us a ‘healing’ power.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ *CD I/1*, 16.

⁸⁸ David H. Kelsey, *The Fabric Of Paul Tillich’s Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967) 16.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

The warrant therefore, for an existential interpretation of the Incarnation would follow the experience of both the “transforming power of the New Being” as well as the phenomenological transformation of the category of finitude. Regarding this transmutation as the *donation* of “bedazzlement” (the “holy” or “ecstasy” in Tillich’s parlance) Marion writes:

Finitude is experienced (and proved) not so much through the shortage of the given before our gaze, as above all because this gaze sometimes no longer measures the amplitude of the *donation*. . . Finitude is experienced as much through the excess as through the lack--indeed, more through excess than through lack.⁹¹

Following Marion’s terminology of “pure event” and “absolute phenomenon”, the depiction of the Incarnation that Tillich portrays mediates the horizon of the event itself. Tillich described this process in a later writing as a “corroboration” of the phenomenological and the ontological.⁹² Kelsey recognized that Tillich’s religious event “is not constituted by my act of having religious experience. There is something else quite independent of my act of reception, and that is the act of giving.”⁹³ Tillich had asserted that the Incarnation was an event “which *has happened*, and is independent of any interpretation of it.” It cannot be discovered through an existential analysis of human situations or structure, it is a saturated phenomenon for it is “unrepeatable, incomparable, a subject of report and not of

⁹¹ Jean-Luc Marion, “The Saturated Phenomenon” in Dominique Janicaud *et al*, *Phenomenology and the ‘Theological Turn’: The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000) 202.

⁹² Paul Tillich, “The Meaning and Justification of Religious Symbols” (1961) in *Hauptwerke: Religionsphilosophische Schriften*, 418.

⁹³ Kelsey, *Fabric*, 36.

analysis or deduction.”⁹⁴ The paradox of the Incarnation is a given, an event of universal significance, and as such not only a suspension “of the phenomenon’s relation of subjection to the *I*, it actually inverts that relation.”⁹⁵ This is the “power of the New Being” which forms the basis of Tillich’s christology, for “Without an understanding of ‘being’ and ‘the power of being’, it is impossible to speak meaningfully of grace.”⁹⁶

The Symbol of Grace

Grace is a function of Christology in the theology of Paul Tillich. His adumbration of this doctrine is found in his first volume of his *Systematics* under the heading “The Divine Love as Grace and Predestination.” Grace is active in its qualifying the relations between humanity and God and is “freely inaugurated by God” and is in “no way dependent on anything the creature does or desires.” There are two basic forms of grace for Tillich, one which “characterizes God’s threefold creativity” and the other that “characterizes God’s saving activity.” The first *Gestalt* is participatory in that it provides being to everything that is; the second *Gestalt* is paradoxical for “it gives fulfillment to that which is separated from the source of fulfillment, and it accepts that which is unacceptable.” There is also a third form of grace which “mediates” between the two preceding and “unites

⁹⁴ Tillich, *Incarnation*, 133.

⁹⁵ Marion, “The Saturated Phenomenon”, 210.

⁹⁶ *ST II*, 125.

elements of both”; God’s providential grace. This *gratia praeveniens* is preparatory for the “acceptance of saving grace through the processes of nature and history.”⁹⁷ Tillich passes over the doctrine of predestination quickly for Double predestination is an ontological contradiction in terms as it “establishes an eternal split within being itself.” As such it is not a “genuine religious symbol” unless it is taken in the sense of the “existential experience” that:

God’s act always precedes, and, further, that, in order to be certain of one’s fulfillment, one can and must look at God’s activity alone.⁹⁸

If it is seen in this manner, then predestination ‘is the highest affirmation of the divine love, not its negation.’ However, the logical structure of divine love can only be discussed in reference to its “existential foundation, the appearance of Jesus as the Christ.” The *Gestalt* of grace is only to be interpreted in the domain of christology. Tillich highlighted this relationship in his famous sermon collection, “The Shaking of the Foundations”:

what is demanded of you is only your being open and willing to accept what is given to you, the New Being . . . In the picture of Jesus as the Christ . . . he found himself accepted in spite of his being rejected. . . *Simply accept the fact that you are accepted!* If that happens to us, we experience grace.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *ST I*, 285.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 286.

⁹⁹ Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1949) 107, 162-63.

The 'New Being': Existence and the Christ

The ultimate symbol of grace is the Messiah, the Christ who does not “save individuals in a path leading out of historical existence; he is to transform historical existence.”¹⁰⁰ All the negative effects of finite being, exemplified by the concept of estrangement, are conquered by the New Being. This is the elemental paradox of Christianity; Jesus is the Christ.¹⁰¹ This paradox is elucidated in that in “one personal life essential manhood has appeared under the conditions of existence without being conquered by them.”¹⁰² The transformation wrought by the New Being is not only personal and communal, it is cosmic in implication. As the creator of all history and its ultimate goal, the New Being stands as an “absolute saturated phenomena” that transcends all limit- horizons, or boundaries, because of its (his) universal and all-pervasive quality.

The New Being, in its historical assertion, instigates the possibility of faith by those that participate in its power. Tillich explains:

The power which has created and preserved the community of the New Being is not an abstract statement about its appearance; it is the picture of him in whom it has appeared.¹⁰³

Tillich proposes there is an “*analogia imaginis*” at work here, an “analogy between

¹⁰⁰ *ST II*, 88.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 114.

the picture and the actual personal life from which it has arisen.”¹⁰⁴ This *Bild* was the product of the disciples and the witness of the New Testament, for the original producers of the picture had been grasped by its transforming power. The words and deeds of the New Being display this transforming potency; but it is his sacrificial death which overcomes existential estrangement. Tillich elaborates:

Only by taking suffering and death upon himself could Jesus be the Christ, because only in this way could he participate completely in existence and conquer every force of estrangement which tried to dissolve his unity with God.¹⁰⁵

The potency of the New Being manifests itself in the modal possibility residing in the nature of being itself. For Tillich then, the concept of the New Being “re-establishes the meaning of grace.”¹⁰⁶ “Realism” nearly represented grace in a “magical form”, while “nominalism” almost completely lost the concept. What is required of course is a new symbol of grace that allows “being” and the “power of being” to have their full meaning.

What is needed in a correlative methodology for Tillich, are symbols that represent the saturated nature of the phenomenon of the New Being in both his unbroken relationship with God and the “re-established unity between God and man.”¹⁰⁷ A static notion of essence is replaced by a dynamism that opens up new relational concepts regarding the picture of Jesus as the Christ. Unlike Friedrich

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 115.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 123.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 125.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 148.

Schleiermacher's description of Jesus as the *Urbild*, Tillich's concept of the New Being is not "unmoved by existence" because of its participation and ultimate conquest of existence.¹⁰⁸

The symbols that most represent the New Being in his subjection to existence and conquest of it are the "Cross of the Christ" and the "Resurrection of the Christ", respectively. Their interdependence leads Tillich to recognize that, in regards to the scriptural witness of the picture of Christ:

One could say that in the minds of the disciples and of the writers of the New Testament the Cross is both an event and a symbol and that the Resurrection is both a symbol and an event.¹⁰⁹

Both, however, are symbols "based on fact."¹¹⁰ Any hermeneutical attempt to disambiguate these symbols must avoid the distortions of literalism. Tillich states:

Their power must be re-established by a reinterpretation which unites cosmic and existential qualities and makes it evident that a symbol is based on things and events and participates in the power of that which it symbolizes.¹¹¹

Note Tillich's caveat that the New Being is not dependent on any symbols in which it is manifested; "It has the power to be free from every form in which it appears."¹¹²

Salvation and healing are rich metaphors that give universal significance regarding

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 150.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 153.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 154.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 164-65.

¹¹² Ibid., 165.

the *Bild* of the New Being. These semantic symbols speak of that which arises from “ultimate negativity and from that which leads from ultimate negativity.” This Tillich describes as condemnation or eternal death, which is the loss of “the inner *telos* of one’s being”, the exclusion from the Kingdom of God and eternal life. “Salvation is reclaiming for the old (the estranged) and transferring to the New Being.”¹¹³ There can be no “saving power apart from him” for the New Being is “the ultimate criterion of every healing and saving process.”¹¹⁴ The efficacy of this salvation is “dependent on man’s participation in it.”¹¹⁵ Yet the “objective reality” of the New Being precedes any humanly subjective participation in it.¹¹⁶ Tillich discerns the difference between the Lutheran emphasis on Justification by Faith and the “pietistic and methodistic” stress on Regeneration. Noting the “pitfall” of Melancthon’s placing the reception of the Holy Spirit *after* the act of faith, Tillich asserts:

Faith, justifying faith, is not a human act, although it happens in man; faith is the work of the divine Spirit, the power which creates the New Being, in the Christ, in individuals, in the church.¹¹⁷

Tillich comes down on the side of Regeneration, which is only possible through participation in the New Being. Grace remains free for “It is an act of God which

¹¹³ Ibid., 166.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 168.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 176.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 177.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 178.

is in no way dependent on man”; it is an act in which God accepts those who are unacceptable. “Accepting that one is accepted is the paradox of salvation without which there would be no salvation only despair.”¹¹⁸ The work of Sanctification by the New Being was to be discussed in the third volume of Tillich’s *Systematics*, Tillich concluded his formal christology in this, his second volume, with this summary:

the Christ is not an isolated event which happened ‘once upon a time’; it is the power of the New Being preparing his decisive manifestation in Jesus as the Christ in all preceding history and actualizing himself as the Christ in all subsequent history.¹¹⁹

Tillich continued to deal with the concept of grace in the last volume of his *Systematics*. The “Spiritual Presence” of the New Being in the “Spiritual Community” produces a theonomous state in which the moral imperative is grace. The “transcendent union” between the believer and the New Being manifests itself in the community as grace and establishes its own morality.¹²⁰ Grace, under the aegis of the Divine Spirit, functions as an absolute phenomenon as it “cannot be produced but is given.”¹²¹ The Lutheran doctrine of “Justification by faith” should be, in Tillich’s’s opinion, replaced by a more explicit formula “Justification by grace through faith.” And, most importantly:

Not faith but grace is the cause of justification, because God alone is

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 179.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 180.

¹²⁰ *ST III*, 159.

¹²¹ Ibid., 211.

the cause. Faith is the receiving act, and this act is itself a gift of grace.”¹²²

Here Tillich draws very near to Barth and the Reformed understanding of faith as the *apriori* work of God, enacted by the agency of Christ. Barth had written in 1953 that faith comes, “not in any impertinent way” but:

in a freedom which can only be given to man, which has nothing whatever to do with his own capacity, which rests only on the fact that by the revelation of His grace, by the word of His promise, God has put it in a position to do it, to postulate grace.¹²³

The reality of Love is the “motivating power” in Tillich’s theonomous understanding of morality. It is ‘unambiguous’ for it is grace in a threefold form; “Spirit, love, and grace are one and the same reality in different aspects.” Where there is the power of the new Being grace abides. Tillich continues, “Spirit is the creative power; love is its creation; grace is the effective presence of love in man.” The free gift of this grace is reiterated for it is “not the product of any good will on the part of him who receives it but that it is given gratuitously, without merit on his side.”¹²⁴ In spite of Tillich’s affinity with the Reformed tradition concerning the doctrine of free and unmerited grace his basic ontological concept remained unchanged. There could not be a return to any condemnatory elective decree:

The doctrine of the ambiguity of all human goodness and of the dependence of salvation on the divine grace alone either leads us back to the doctrine of double predestination or leads us forward

¹²² Ibid., 224.

¹²³ *CD IV/1*, 539.

¹²⁴ *ST III*, 274.

to the doctrine of universal essentialization.¹²⁵

The symbol that can only lead to an understanding of this essentialization, defined as the “elevation of the positive into Eternal Life as a matter of universal participation”,¹²⁶ is the Cross of Christ. For Tillich, “the ultimate concern of the Christian” is not the historical Jesus, empirically validated as such, but “the Christ Jesus who is manifest as the crucified.” The crucifixion is the most revealing event of Jesus’ humanity:

Jesus could not have been the Christ without sacrificing himself as Jesus to himself as the Christ. Any acceptance of Jesus as the Christ which is not the acceptance of Jesus as the crucified is a form of idolatry.¹²⁷

Tillich further clarified his final thoughts on phenomenology, Christology and the symbol of the Cross in a seminar conducted in 1963. Answering the queries of students, Tillich sought to explain his ideas in terminology often challenged by the questioners. The phenomenological method had raised the issue between human freedom and determinism in such a way as to render these ideas as “not usable.”¹²⁸ This method had allowed for an understanding of more than just causality but gave a description of “acts of freedom.” This clarified for Tillich the basic answer to the “religious problem of being grasped.” This is derived from both the New Testament writings of Paul and the reformers that followed, who “constantly strive” against any

¹²⁵ Ibid., 408.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 409.

¹²⁷ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics Of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001) 112.

¹²⁸ D. Mackenzie Brown, *Ultimate Concern*, 17.

notion that we can produce the presence of the Divine Spirit (as religious symbol for ultimate concern). “We cannot produce, but we are not unfree to receive or accept.”¹²⁹ And acceptance is the “necessary message of grace.”¹³⁰

Tillich’s radical ideas of Christ as a symbol ultimately represented by the form of the Cross brought much criticism and consternation from both students and other theologians alike. His adoptionist stance was inculcated with the statement that “in the moment Christ, or Jesus, went the way of the cross, he *could* become the Christ, and not before.”¹³¹ Kenneth Hamilton, one of the most vociferous critics of Tillich, found that his “theonomous metaphysics” prevented an acceptance of the unity of “whom the New Testament knows as the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹³² He sees that such an existential interpretation as espoused by Tillich allowed “sins and sinners” to “vanish in such a gospel, which limits the kind of Christ it will accept by the kind of salvation it desires.” Others, including George Tavard and Arthur C. Cochrane, believed that Tillich’s system did not need the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.¹³³ Also McKelway (with Barth’s implicit approval) who, although not going as far as the extreme critics had done, still

¹²⁹ Ibid., 17-18.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 117.

¹³¹ Ibid., 26.

¹³² Kenneth Hamilton, *The System And The Gospel: A Critique of Paul Tillich* (London: SCM Press, 1963) 172.

¹³³ Ibid., 173.

found the “lack of consistent focus on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ” disconcerting.¹³⁴ The separation of the Logos from the historical Jesus seemed too arbitrary and denigrates the biblical witness. McKelway lamented that if the “saving Word of God” in Jesus Christ had been “allowed to confront us in all its objectivity and truth as a reality” and that was not to “be adjusted to our experience”, there would have been no “distortion of Christ’s being.”¹³⁵

Tillich attempted to refute his critics both directly and indirectly. In a response to Catholic criticisms of his christology, he stressed that the historical-critical approach, be it positive or skeptical, could never “deliver a biographical picture of the man Jesus as the basis for faith.”¹³⁶ Only faith can provide the guarantee that the historical character of event of Christ provides a sufficient explanation to the transformation of estranged existence that one experiences. This led to Tillich’s second response that the statement ‘This man Jesus was also God’ must not be answered directly (as the ancients had tried to do) but be replaced by the question “What does Jesus, who was called the Christ, mean for us?”¹³⁷ Restatements of orthodox Christo-centric doctrines such as this led the Protestant theologian Nels Ferré to regard Tillich as “the most dangerous theologian” because if he ever left the mainline of the Christian faith, he would

¹³⁴ McKelway, *Tillich*, 177.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 268.

¹³⁶ Paul Tillich, “An Afterword: Appreciation and Reply” in *Paul Tillich In Catholic Thought*, ed. T. A. O’Meara & Celestin D. Weisser (Dubuque, Iowa: Priory Press, 1964) 309.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 310.

defect in favour of Tillich!¹³⁸ Yet in a candid assessment of both Barth and Tillich, he wrote:

It seems likely that he and Barth will leave behind well-fashioned, theological positions to represent our day; and yet Tillich, in many senses, is beyond our day—the voice of the theological ages.¹³⁹

Such were both the criticisms and the compliments for Tillich after the release of his *Systematic Theology*. Accolades and wealth were to follow.

The Later Years

In 1955, Tillich retired from Union Theological Seminary only to resume teaching at Harvard University Divinity School. His archives were later established in Andover and he later wryly lamented that Harvard “had made him famous.”¹⁴⁰ The price of this new-found fame led to his giving lectures all over the United States and Europe. World travel became a reality; visits to Greece, Japan, Egypt, Israel and Switzerland were all made. The travel led to a meeting with Karl Barth in December of 1963. Barth invited Tillich once again to his home in Basel and wrote in a letter to him:

Where shall we begin when we sit down together again? With the infirmities of age which obviously afflict us both? Or with the Ground of Being which unconditionally affects us both? Or with the difficulties you have with my books and I have with yours??¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Nels Ferré, “Tillich and the Nature of Transcendence” in Ferré *et al*, *Paul Tillich: Retrospect and Future* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966) 9.

¹³⁹ as quoted in O’Meara & Weisser, *Tillich*, 274.

¹⁴⁰ Pauck, *Tillich*, 253.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 263.

Barth later wrote of their last meeting together, "I warned him that now might be the time to get himself straight. But he didn't seem to want to do that very much."¹⁴² His last letter to Tillich summed up their relationship:

It is for me a very special phenomenon that we understand one another so well and cordially at the human level, but materially--and don't try to offer me a synthesis, in so doing you would only strengthen me in my opinion!--we can only contradict and oppose one another from the very foundation up.¹⁴³

In a similar way, Tillich enjoyed Barth's company, but he too voiced his continued opposition to Barth's theological approach. Yet a strong, if not grudging, respect for Barth's work continued to be held by Tillich, as Langdon Gilkey recalls (using Tillich's German inflected English):

Venn you're fighting against a tyrant, zen Barth is ze best man to have on your side. He drives a sharp wedge between heaven and earth, between the gospel and culture. And zat is good venn culture becomes demonic and claims ze authority and power of heaven. With Barth's sharp diastasis (separation), he gives to us ze power to resist ze tyrant who then represents Kultur, has in fact swallowed Kultur whole, and there is zen in Kultur itself no place to stand. Zat is why Barth's theology had such power in these days. It gave power to all those who wanted to resist Hitler and found in German culture no place from which to resist. Barth's message was appropriate for zat Kairos--more appropriate zen mine. I respect and have always respected Barth, not only for the originality and power of his theology but also for the clarity of his insight into the idolatry of Hitler and his courage for declaring it.¹⁴⁴

Tillich then fell silent and looked around at his colleagues with 'weighty seriousness

¹⁴² Busch, *Barth*, 470.

¹⁴³ Karl Barth, *Letters 1961-1968*, ed. J. Fangmeir & H. Stoevesandt, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981) 144.

¹⁴⁴ Langdon Gilkey, *Gilkey on Tillich* (New York: Crossroad, 1990) 204.

and yet also with great vulnerability' and continued:

But, I was *right* about the relation of culture to theology, even a theology of resistance against culture, and Barth was wrong, even about his own 'revelation theology' which is *full* of culture. *And* I resisted for the right reason, justice for the Jews rather than the freedom of their *evangelische* pulpit. *And* I left on an earlier train!¹⁴⁵

However, in his final estimation it was Barth who "became *the* man, and the savior of European Protestantism."¹⁴⁶ And, on his return to the United States, Tillich announced that "Barth and I are friends again!"¹⁴⁷

After receiving honorary doctorates from Harvard, Glasgow and the University of Berlin, the last most meaningful to him, Tillich's final professional move was to the Divinity School of the University of Chicago until his death in 1965. Tillich's anxiety over death was the fear of being eternally forgotten. In a sermon in the *Eternal Now* he wrote:

Is there anything that can keep us from being forgotten? That we were known from eternity and will be remembered in eternity is the only certainty that can save us from the horror of being forgotten forever. We cannot be forgotten because we are known eternally beyond past and future.¹⁴⁸

Tillich believed that eternal remembrance was symbolized by the Cross of Christ.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 205.

¹⁴⁶ Brown, *Ultimate Concern*, 63.

¹⁴⁷ Pauck, *Tillich*, 263.

¹⁴⁸ as quoted in Pauck, 285.

Conclusion: The Cross of Christ as Saturated Phenomenon

Tillich's phenomenological approach to ontology has been seen by reviewers as both positive and negative in about equal measure. As we have seen, much of the criticism of his Christology is based on both his repudiation of the absolute need for historical verification of the events of Jesus of Nazareth, as well as a perceived reduction of the character of Christ to a mere symbol. More pertinent to our analysis of Tillich's phenomenology of the Cross are those criticisms of his basic thesis of an ontological interpretation of this symbol centered on the overcoming of finite existence in the event of the crucifixion.

Tillich had asserted, over against the biblical interpretation of a pre-existent Christ, that in fact, "in the moment Christ, or Jesus, went the way of the cross, he *could* become the Christ, and not before."¹⁴⁹ The power of the New Being is not entirely contained in the pre-existent *Logos* of John's Gospel, as specified by a "high" Christology because "it removes the paradox for the sake of a supranatural miracle."¹⁵⁰ The Protestant Principle "according to which God is near to the lowest as well as to the highest" calls for a 'low Christology' which, in effect, is a "truly high Christology."¹⁵¹ This is an appropriate view as the human Jesus is involved in the ambiguity of finite existence made possible by the "eternal unity of God and

¹⁴⁹ Brown, *Ultimate Concern*, 26.

¹⁵⁰ *ST II*, 146.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 147.

man within the divine life.”¹⁵²

It has been noted how this principle of participation influenced Tillich’s view of the Incarnation. But this also raised the issue that, if “Jesus, as the symbol of the cross, retained the principle of self-denial and self-criticism”¹⁵³, how can finite estrangement be overcome by such self-abnegation? Indeed, as William Rowe pointed out, if the symbol of the Cross radically criticizes “all idolatrous self-elevation”¹⁵⁴ and, as Tillich admits, becomes itself in Christian history an idol of the holy, what gives this symbol its ultimate and unique referentiality?

The stress on the phenomenological plenitude of the symbol of the Cross and its corporate modality is adumbrated by Tillich in its nature as *manifestation*. The result of the Cross as saturated phenomenon is the *actualization* of “God’s participation in the suffering of the world.”¹⁵⁵ Robert Scharlemann regards the symbol of the Cross in its phenomenological redundancy as being for Tillich:

above critical reflection because it is grasped by radical reflection, and its presence cannot be removed by doubt because the response it elicits is that of a radically doubting response.¹⁵⁶

For Scharlemann this “paradoxical reality embodies God’s transcendence” and

¹⁵² Ibid., 148.

¹⁵³ Brown, *Ultimate Concern*, 74.

¹⁵⁴ William L. Rowe, *Religious Symbols and God: A Philosophical Study of Tillich's Theology* (The University of Chicago Press, 1968) 242.

¹⁵⁵ *ST II*, 175.

¹⁵⁶ Robert Scharlemann, *Reflection and Doubt in the Thought of Paul Tillich* (Yale University Press, 1969) 21.

provides an “obedience which is not fixed upon the historically given Jesus.”¹⁵⁷

The gaze of the human on the symbol of the Cross gives both a glimpse of eternal reality in the guise of “ultimate concern.” *God’s* “ultimate concern” for humanity is shown by Christ’s gaze from the Cross to humankind. “The true object of that concern can only be a paradoxical something---it has to be christological rather than only theological or only ontological.”¹⁵⁸ This is Tillich’s “distinctive contribution to systematic theological thought” in Scharlemann’s estimation.

In a more critical manner, Adrian Thatcher discerns a serious problem with Tillich’s paradoxical notion of conquest of the New Being over existential estrangement. This paradox implies a negation of the negative even in eternity for “the Divine life *is* the eternal conquest of the negative; this is its blessedness.”¹⁵⁹ This leads to problems with Jesus’ “essential manhood” and the possibility of his being an actual human being.¹⁶⁰ There seems no possible way for Thatcher to see how this essence could remain *undistorted* in the existence of Jesus as the Christ. He contends that:

The main difficulty with Tillich’s position is that Jesus first has to exist before he is able to conquer estrangement, and as existence is already a transition from essence, it is not possible for Jesus to retain his ‘essential nature’ under such conditions.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 188.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 189.

¹⁵⁹ Tillich, *St III*, 405.

¹⁶⁰ Thatcher, *Ontology*, 148.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 149.

This criticism has serious implications for the symbol of the Cross as an explicit symbol of grace without distortion. The sacrifice of Jesus *to* Jesus would negate the “individuation pole . . . in order that the new being might be made manifest.”¹⁶² Yet as Thatcher points out, this would also negate any sense of *individual* salvation and reaffirmation in the participation in divine grace.¹⁶³ The symbol of grace in the Cross of Christ would not have any salvific reality for it would not reflect the gaze of the eternal, but ultimately negate all that which is human. The phenomenon would only present a limited horizon, limited in finitude and human appropriation, unsaturated in character. Thatcher attempts to rectify Tillich’s Christology by a redefinition of actual existence and the abandonment of Tillich’s “dialectical mould” by invoking the presence of the “Divine Spirit” as the mediator of the “new being as it is manifest in Jesus Christ.”¹⁶⁴ Another option remains open by phenomenologically asserting that the symbol of the Cross itself *is ontologically distorted*, perhaps negating the negation of Jesus to himself and thereby restoring the participatory nature of grace *pro nobis*. Tillich saw this possibility as the basic preeminence of this Christian symbol over other religious symbols; “The basic superiority is the radical negation of the [or any] idolatrous possibility by the cross.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Ibid., 151.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 152.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 157.

¹⁶⁵ Brown, *Ultimate Concern*, 135-36.

In contrast, Richard Grigg provides a helpful insight into Tillich's "phenomenon of empowerment" as a "crucial component" of his "post-theistic thinking."¹⁶⁶ He argues that:

Reference to empowerment as a 'phenomenon' is meant to emphasize its being a matter of human consciousness and not of causal processes external to consciousness.¹⁶⁷

This empowerment results in Christian theology derived from the grace of God; but it is also a phenomenon working in the context of human consciousness.¹⁶⁸

Grigg notes Thatcher's criticism of Tillich concerning the Christological problem of the actualization of a true humanity that conquers finitude; but remains distorted by the very reality of the life of Jesus *in* the malaise of existence. He writes that:

it could be said that while Tillich's analysis of existence concentrates on the result of actualization in the structure of being, his analysis of life concentrates on the movement of actualization.¹⁶⁹

The symbol of the Cross may be seen as just that very premise, in all its distortion and reflection of evil, and that its negation of Jesus acts as the catalyst for the possibility of any resulting human actualization, empowerment or salvation. Its phenomenological saturation is bi-polar in character, for on the one hand it reflects the idolatrous gaze that only sees it as a sign of defeat; but on the other it

¹⁶⁶ Richard Grigg, *Symbol and Empowerment: Paul Tillich's Post-Theistic System* (Mercer University Press, 1985) x.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, x-xi.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, xiv.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

reveals the gaze of the crucified Christ, who in the moment of his agony pronounces eternal pardon, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."¹⁷⁰ In this act, the New Being shows his unity with the God of grace, a unity of participation that invites others to share in this reconciliation.

Grigg raises the important issue of the phenomenological and correlative task and the appropriate manner with which Tillich intended to accomplish his apologetics. In Grigg's judgement this "hermeneutical correlation" is more than a cultural philosophical analysis versus the Christian message rather:

it understands the philosophical questions as articulations of the structure of being that is the condition of possibility for one's experiencing anything at all, and understands the Christian symbols as providing a perspective on the depth of that structure.¹⁷¹

This observation coincides with the assertion of the phenomenological possibility that restructures the 'I' of transcendental thought. In effect, the "hermeneutical correlation" method reflects the "mutual dependence" of both the apologetic and the phenomenological modes of consideration. The phenomenon of the Cross seen in this way, provides a multi-valency by appearing as both call and stability. Grigg's analysis of the symbol of empowerment follows a path of a description of the Cross as saturated phenomenon providing "an indirect account of the particular awareness of being-itself afforded by a specific symbol."¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Luke 23:34 (NRSV).

¹⁷¹ Grigg, *Symbol*, 98-99.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 103.

Both Scharlemann and Grigg provide an understanding of the basic nature of Tillich's symbol of the Cross that is determinative for a phenomenological explication of its saturated characteristics. As paradox it shows the gaze of the infinite in both its reflection of doubt as ontological distortion and its restructuring of the transcendent thought and a renewed awareness of being. Tillich sought to remain consistent with his stated phenomenological task to unite a "an intuitive-descriptive element with an existential-critical element."¹⁷³ To conclude, Tillich believes the paradox of the Cross is the ultimate symbol that alone can provide salvation to those willing to be shaped by its offer of a new reality. This 'shaping' comes on the divine initiative of God for there is "nothing" in humanity which "enables God to accept" us. Indeed, humanity must accept that it is accepted by God -we must "accept acceptance."¹⁷⁴ As icon, the shape of the paradoxical Cross invites and manifests such acceptance. The final judgement of the paradox of the cross will be assessed in comparison with Marion's doctrine of the Eucharist in the concluding chapter.

¹⁷³ *ST I*, 107.

¹⁷⁴ *ST II*, 179.

CHAPTER 9

THE COVENANT: CREATION AND RECONCILIATION

With some trepidation Barth moved into this next phase in his dogmatics. For all his descriptions of the aseity of God and the infinite gap between deity and humanity Barth now proceeded to assert the fundamental goodness and value of creation. “Creation as such is not rejection, but election and acceptance.”¹ The great benefit of creation was the honor given by God to created beings and the sharing of the divine Being in the temporal context of life itself. Covenant is related to creation as its presupposition, creation related to covenant as the basis of its history. The creations of the creatures themselves will be highlighted by Barth’s claims of the music of Mozart representing (in some way) a parable of grace, which, as such, carries the possibility of being a saturated phenomenon. In this chapter we will also see Barth’s continuing assertive Christology for the humanity of Christ is the only paradigm for true creaturely existence as those summoned by the grace of God. The manifestation of this christo-anthropology is the focus of Barth’s discursive writings of his *Doctrine of Reconciliation*.

¹ CD III/1, 331.

The doctrine of the sacraments fills out the conclusion of this section, for it is here where Barth finally speaks of the iconic symbolism of Baptism, by *extensio* the Eucharist. This will lead to the final question of this essay, has Barth provided a proper iconic phenomenon to exhibit the gift of grace?

Conflict and Creation

Barth continued his resistance to the Nazi regime from Switzerland during the years of the Second World War. He felt compelled as a Swiss citizen and as a Christian to give an unconditional opposition to Hitler. Barth believed that the Christian Church had been wrong to “speak so thoughtlessly in nationalistic and militaristic terms during earlier wars” and should not now keep silent in the current conflict. Barth proclaimed to the churches:

They really should not object that the people of the democratic states are fighting against God; they should tell them that for God’s sake we may be human and must defend ourselves against the onslaught of manifest inhumanity with the power of despair.²

The pacifistic attitude of the Swiss state irritated Barth somewhat for he felt that, “They left every door and every gateway open for Goebbels’ propaganda to come steaming in, but wanted to stop us putting forward the real arguments against it.”³ This was “the blot” on the reputation of Switzerland in his opinion. Therefore, Barth continued his open support for the Allied effort against Germany by both his missives to various churches as well as in sermons and lectures. Some of Barth’s

² Busch, *Barth*, 303

³ *Ibid.*, 304.

speeches, radio broadcasts and lectures were considered politically undesirable by the Swiss authorities because he had called the government to stop exploiting the economically weak, to have more socialist representatives in the government, to lift the restrictions regarding freedom of the press and freedom of speech, to curtail the right of sanctuary and to cease the trade between Switzerland and the Axis powers.⁴ For this Barth was nearly banned from speaking publicly at all; but many supported his views and protected him from any penal action.

As copies of Barth's *The Doctrine of Election* were being smuggled into Germany, his work on the dogmatics continued unabated in the summer of 1942. Barth was attempting to flesh out his notion of the covenant with a new concentration on the doctrine of creation. Confidence in this project was not easy in coming, for he felt that he doubted he would have "turned to this particular material" if he could have trusted others to undertake the task.⁵ As it was Barth had "no confidence in their presuppositions" which were not:

the reception and answer of the divine self-witness, that is, only in faith in Jesus Christ, i.e., in the knowledge of the unity of Creator and creature actualised in Him.⁶

What emerged from this faith in Christ was the fact that "the omnipotence and righteousness of the Creator is that of His mercy." This assertion was irrefutable and fundamental for Barth as he asked:

⁴ Ibid., 310.

⁵ *CD III/1*, ix.

⁶ Ibid., 3.

How can that be otherwise when He is the Mediator between God and man , the Executor of the eternal covenant which God in His love concludes between Himself and man?⁷

The entire purpose and meaning of creation is the modality of the covenant enacted in Jesus Christ. Creation, as God's first work, has in view, "the institution, preservation and execution of the covenant of grace, for partnership in which He has predestined and called man."⁸ Creation is the history that has "fashioned the world as a sphere for man "to participate in grace" and become, as the elect, a being of gratitude for this gift of grace and a correspondent of it."⁹ On this basis then could Barth refer to creation as the "external basis of the covenant."¹⁰

This move from the covenant and its implied ethics to the doctrine of the creation drew criticism for Barth. After his arguments with Brunner and others concerning the possibility of a natural theology, this emphasis on a good creation appeared to be contradictory. But how could creation be viewed otherwise if it is the theatre of God's grace signified by the Covenant? If creation existed *separately* apart from the living God then a form of "double bookkeeping" would be required. Busch summarizes this problem this way:

the steps in this entire path [are]: first the interpretation of the covenant of grace in terms of the creation, and then creation without reference to

⁷ Ibid., 39.

⁸ Ibid., 43.

⁹ Ibid., 67.

¹⁰ Ibid., 94.

this covenant, and ultimately without any reference at all to God . . .¹¹

The *formal* presupposition of the creation then, is the covenant. The *material* presupposition of the covenant is creation.¹² As Busch points out, this is in accord with Barth's understanding of God's elective love that exists prior to the existence of humanity, for it is not "*brought by humans*, which would provide God reason to love them."¹³ This is the only actuality that can be legitimately appropriated, as Webster states it, "The creation is truly 'real' as a function of the encounter which God inaugurates with humanity; its reality is not antecedent to the event of that encounter."¹⁴ Barth asserts this reality as a work of God's love:

He wills and posits the creature neither out of caprice nor necessity, but because He has loved it from eternity, because He wills to demonstrate His love for it, and because He wills, not to limit His glory by its existence and being, but to reveal and manifest it in His own co-existence with it.¹⁵

However, both creation *and* covenant are the way and goal of the "free love of God."¹⁶ The meaning of creation is the "irruption (*Einbruch*) and revelation of the divine compassion."¹⁷ In Barth's lengthy exegesis of the creation saga found

¹¹ Ibid., 179.

¹² *CD III/1*, 232.

¹³ Eberhard Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2004) 182.

¹⁴ Webster, *Ethics*, 60.

¹⁵ *CD III/1*, 95.

¹⁶ Ibid., 97.

¹⁷ Ibid., 110. German text from Karl Barth, *Die Lehre Von Der Schöpfung, Erster Teil* (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1945)

in Genesis chapters one and two, the manifestation of light is “the symbol of the revelation of grace” that represents the knowledge of God.¹⁸ Being created in the “image of God”, both male and female, humanity finds itself, not as equal with God or even existing in a separate reality, but as a *tertium comparationis*, i.e., the analogy between God and humanity, an analogy of “free differentiation (*Unterscheidung*) and relation.”¹⁹ Following the Old Testament injunction against the fashioning of any icons to resemble God, Barth proceeds to define the iconic nature of Christ as an abolishment of this need for, if we have seen Him “we have seen the Father” as “the invisible God Himself has become visible in Him.” Furthermore, “In Him we have *the* image in face of which the question of the original is fully answered.”²⁰ Yet, for those who have not been privileged to see Jesus of Nazareth in the flesh, how does that facial image manifest itself as a phenomenon in the here and now? For Barth, the correspondence of the divine relationship between the “self-encounter” of the triune God is mirrored in the covenantal relationship with humanity and further exemplified in the encounter between man and woman as I and Thou. He specified that:

The relationship between the summoning (*anrufende*) I in God’s being and the summoned divine Thou is reflected both in the relationship of God to the man whom He has created, and also in the relationship between the I and the Thou, between male and

¹⁸ Ibid., 119.

¹⁹ Ibid., 185.

²⁰ Ibid., 202.

female, in human existence itself.²¹

G. C. Berkouwer has detected the “inner tension” in Barth’s perceptions of humanity and its relation to his christology. He states:

Barth builds his anthropology on Jesus as archetype, *Urbild*, and on God’s grace which preserves man’s ‘essence’; on the other hand the argument often stresses rather the creaturely dependence of the whole man on God, his Creator.²²

However, humanity participates in the nature of Jesus as the Christ, not the other way around. The gift of grace is a givenness that transforms the human character towards conformity with Christ, a destined act of metamorphosis as it were.

Since the covenant is the “internal basis of creation”; Barth describes the “act of creation as such is the revelation of the glory of God by which He gives to the creature meaning and necessity.”²³ The creature reveals the free love of the triune God as it is:

made visible outside His own being, His hidden glory revealed. And this is creation to the extent that it makes the creature the exponent, sign and witness of the divine meaning and necessity, and it is *given* to it to be the bearer of God’s intention, plan and order.²⁴

Does this not turn the creature into its own icon of the grace of God, a solipsistic reflection of a “new creation”, both male and female, that now stands as its own

²¹ *ibid.*, 196. G. C. Berkouwer in his *Man: The Image Of God*, trans. D. W. Jellema (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962) 74, fn. 19, contends that Barth has missed the Pauline point that the male-female relationship is not an analog of a *divine* distinction, but “a difference rooted in creation.”

²² Berkouwer, *Man*, 95.

²³ *CD III/1*, 228, 230.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 230. My emphasis.

neo-divine image?²⁵ Barth certainly does caution the creature to be “grateful” (*dankbar*) for this gift; but is also reminded that *all* creation is destined to serve God and that is the purpose of its historical existence.²⁶ The *tertium comparationis* and the freedom given to humanity has “nothing to do with man’s divine likeness (the *analogia entis*) or the foolhardy assumption of divine responsibilities.”²⁷

Barth affirms the actuality and realism of the covenantal doctrine of creation over against any nihilistic or idealistic claims of existence as mere “appearances, illusions and dreams.”²⁸ Reality and existence are in fact essential for a “higher Judge” has intervened:

between our consciousness and our supposed intrinsic and extrinsic being, and decided that our consciousness does not deceive us, that our being is no imaginary being.²⁹

For Barth this transcendental objectivism gives us a security in our “noetic-ontological X ” and allows us to posit existence and the fact of our own existential being.³⁰ This assurance comes in the act of faith; for if we purport the existence of

²⁵ “It was for the sake of the covenant that God first created man as male and female”, *ibid.*, 313. For Barth, the “prototype of human love and marriage” is analogous to the covenant broken by Israel with Yahweh, *ibid.*, 316.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 231-232. Creation is described by Barth as a “true sacrament” in its witness to Christ as the “goal of creation.”

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 265.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 344.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 346.

³⁰ Timothy Gorrige summarizes that Barth had reversed “the movement of European thought from Locke onwards” by finding surety in revelation rather than in sense data.” see his *Against Hegemony*, 173.

a loving Creator, then we also are real. This validates, within the sphere of faith, both an epistemology and a phenomenology that gives:

no other choice but the decisive recognition, without any shadow of ambiguity, of the reality of the created world and ourselves, and the life founded on this recognition.³¹

As the gracious God is, in the divine determination of the “I AM”, so too the creature also is an “I am” who is free then to respond with “Thou art” for that “which accompanies me is.”³² We learn of the alien God in hidden transcendence and also of our impossible alliance in covenantal relationship. All this is, of course, christologically based for the created world is to be understood “in light of the divine mercy revealed in Jesus Christ” fulfilled in time, for this world is the “arena, instrument and object” of this actuality and, as such, is the “best of all possible worlds.”³³

The Creature: The Form of Humanity

After the conclusion of World War Two, Barth returned to Germany on an extended lecture and preaching tour and a protracted time of teaching in Bonn. Among the ruins of Europe and the difficulty of many Germans, theologians, clerics and philosophers alike to come to grips with issues of national guilt and occupation, Barth continued his dogmatic work in an extended volume concerned

³¹ *CD III/1*, 347.

³² *Ibid.*, 349.

³³ *Ibid.*, 385. See however, John Macken, *The Autonomy Theme In The Church Dogmatics: Karl Barth And His Critics* (Cambridge University Press, 1990) 170, for his critique of Barth’s narrow conception of the “complexity and richness “ of creation by focusing on the covenantal drama too exclusively.

with anthropological issues. The task continued to be christological in disposition for “the man Jesus is Himself the revealing Word of God, He is the source (*Quelle*) of our knowledge of the nature of man as created by God.”³⁴ Humanity is not the sum total of the created order but is “the point in the cosmos where, in spite of its very different nature, its relationship with God is illuminated.”³⁵ Therefore, any cosmology, biblical or otherwise, is replaced by a christocentric anthropology as “God’s covenant with man is disclosed, the cosmos is shown to be embraced by the same covenant.”³⁶

The *enhypostasia* of Jesus is the archetypal form for true humanity. Barth elucidates Christ’s relation to God, the office of salvation, the disclosure of God’s sovereignty, and as more than the instrument of God, the *actuality* of salvation provides the prototype for true human *being*. Therefore, “we cannot speak appropriately about man generally and as such until we learn that the essence of man as seen in Jesus, is to be for God.”³⁷ In Barth’s christocentric absolutism for the study of the human essence, both scientific and philosophical anthropologies are found wanting (but not entirely inadequate). The idealism of Fichte and the existential philosophy of Jaspers, and even the theistic doctrine of the human purported by Brunner, do not provide a clear understanding of the human search

³⁴ *CD III/ 2, 3.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

for transcendence that is critical for Barth's anthropological concepts. "It is always in this act of self-transcendence that the human exists properly and concretely."³⁸ This is demonstrated in the tension between finite existence and an orientation to the future, a relationship to "another being which transcends himself and his natural and ethical life."³⁹ Therefore, a "theonomous self-understanding" would exhibit an attitude of accepting God's divine initiative as gift by and through revelation."⁴⁰

In the extended paragraph "Real Man" Barth continues his human definition coming only from the initiative of God and manifested in the election of Christ. In the subsequent election of men and women in the will of God, true ontology is established based on four broad themes. The first is the human status as one "summoned by the Word of God."⁴¹ The one summoned in the elective act of grace is also the one who listens and responds. Barth explains that:

The history of a being begins, continues and is completed when something other than itself and transcending its own nature encounters (*begegnet*) it, approaches it and determines its being in the nature proper to it, so that it is compelled (*genötigt*) and enabled (*befähigt*) to transcend itself in response and relation to this new factor.⁴²

The second theme is that of an *actual* history, actual for it is determined by

³⁸ Ibid., 116.

³⁹ Ibid., 111.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 125.

⁴¹ Ibid., 150.

⁴² Ibid., 158.

the event of the covenant of grace in the existence of the man Jesus, and the engagement of humanity in relation to the primal history of the transcendent Christ. This is a summary of the work of grace which elicits the third theme for Barth, the issue of gratitude.

The summoned and responsive human is to be “precisely defined as a being in gratitude (*Dankbarkeit*).”⁴³ This ontological status is important for our understanding of the iconic in the thought of Barth, for it defines the parameters of not only human acceptance of the *gift* of grace, freely bestowed in the divine economy, but also the nature and form of the response and its implications and depictions in temporal existence. If the elect are called to recognize the benefit (*Wohltat*) of divine graciousness as well as the “obligation (*Verpflichtung*) towards the benefactor”, in what form does this recognition take place? Barth notes that if this gratitude was to be manifested by a “certain attitude” that fully “discharged the obligation of thanksgiving” then both benefit and gratitude would “simply have been the two sides of a transaction based on mutual self-interest.”⁴⁴ True thanksgiving, *eucharista* derived from *charis*, provides an “intersubjectivity” in the “history of the God-man relationship and constitutes the being of man.”⁴⁵

The phenomenological character of the gift of grace can never be measured in

⁴³ Ibid., 166.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 167.

⁴⁵ McLean, *Humanity*, 31.

transactional terms for there can be no adequate reciprocity by the recipient. Grace seen in the terms of Jean-Luc Marion is a paradox, for “the gift, reduced to givenness, decides to give itself as unsolvable debt given to an enemy”⁴⁶ for without grace humanity is just that in relation to God. Barth contends that “To see this acceptance as such is to see real man in his own action, not merely as the object but as the subject of the history in which his being consists.”⁴⁷ Furthermore, to be a being of gratitude is also to be a being with the “character of responsibility (*Verantwortung*).”⁴⁸

To be responsible for Barth is to offer oneself “as the response to the Word of God, and conducting, shaping and expressing [oneself] as the answer to it.”⁴⁹ Yet, how can we direct, form and articulate that which is infinite and eternal with such humanly finite means? Where should our gaze be directed towards this end? For Barth, “The Yes in which man answers the divine Yes, man’s knowledge of God and obedience to Him, can never have more than the force and reach of an echo.”⁵⁰ Yet the mandate still is in force in that the graced human has been granted the freedom to accept the subjective status as a creature and child of God and still

⁴⁶ Jean-Luc Marion, “Sketch of a Phenomenological Concept of Gift” in Merold Westphal (ed.), *Postmodern Philosophy and Christian Thought* (Indiana University Press, 1999) 142.

⁴⁷ *CD III/2*, 168.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 175, the word “Himself” is inappropriately capitalized in the English text.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 188.

“bears irrefutably the character of a partner with the divine subject . . .”⁵¹ This covenantal partnership is the next topic that Barth will turn to.

The image of this partnership is borne as a “sign here below of what [the partner] really is seen from above, from God.”⁵² Indeed, our humanity has a real part to play in the mystery of the Christian experience of faith. Human nature reflects the incarnational nature of Jesus as “His divinity . . . corresponds exactly this form of His humanity---His being as it is directed to His fellows.”⁵³ This is in complete accord with the basic trinitarian nature of God who is eternal love itself. The Gift is the copy of the Giver to be exemplified in the response of the gifted. This response, grounded in a christological prototype, has a “parabolic determination”⁵⁴ that brings authentic human essence into encounter with the other. As Christ is in “encounter” so are we.⁵⁵ An ethics of encounter implies a human action that “carries with it the twofold correspondence that the other has summoned me and I him.”⁵⁶ This human action, eye to eye, in mutuality of speech, hearing

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 207. William Stacy Johnson summary is apt here, “Note the radicality of the claim: Jesus is divine precisely by the virtue of his being truly human”, *Mystery*, 82.

⁵³ *CD III/2*, 209.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁵⁵ “Jesus enacts what all human beings were created to fulfill . . . Jesus has achieved the ‘real’ or ‘actual’ humanity that all the rest of us are meant to become”, Johnson, *Mystery*, 82.

⁵⁶ *CD III/2*, 261. Barth later refers to the status of men and women in the connubial relationship as the “Old Testament Magna Carta of humanity.”, 291.

and assistance is to be performed with “gladness.”⁵⁷ McLean notes, ‘Humanity, as the image of God, is a ‘sign’ pointing to man’s fulfillment in the covenant relationship to God.’⁵⁸ Might this be an anthropological *marque iconique* that could lead to a false veneration of the human? Barth seems to tread close to this possibility in his elucidation of the divine image, “Man generally, the man with the fellow-man, had indeed a part in the divine likeness of the man Jesus, the man for the fellow man.”⁵⁹ As Johnson points out this divine likeness is one in which “human ‘relationality’ reflects the divine ‘relationality’.”⁶⁰ The iconic point of grace and givenness would seem to lie in human referential activity for Barth.

Time is also perceived as gift in Barth’s deliberations. “To say ‘man’ or ‘time’ is to say God. It is God who gives him time.”⁶¹ Time has a *gestalt* that comes in the “form of prevenient grace.”⁶² But time is not iconic in character for it is not eternity. Barth describes eternity as not timeless as it is “the simultaneity and coinherence of present, past and future.” What is iconically eternal is God’s

⁵⁷ Ibid., 265.

⁵⁸ McLean, *Humanity*, 43.

⁵⁹ *CD III/2*, 323-4.

⁶⁰ Johnson, *Mystery*, 87.

⁶¹ *CD III/2*, 525.

⁶² Ibid., 526. Richard H. Roberts in his, *A Theology On Its Way?*,⁵⁴ asserts that “The fact that grace cannot coexist with but destroys nature in the act of confirming it constitutes the ambiguity of the doctrine of time in the *Church Dogmatics*.” It might be argued that time, for Barth, does not destroy nature, but fulfills and completes it as covenantal time.

'love; "*Amabar, amor*, and therefore, *amabor*."⁶³ This is the assured hope of the elect and the object of their witness, incomplete and distorted by finitude and sin, but still blessed by the gracious God.

God's providential care in establishing the created order as *theatrum gloriae Dei*, has the element of "mirroring" about it. Barth asks, "What recognizable (*erkennbare*) character is proper to creaturely occurrence in relation to what it has to accompany under God's providence?" God's activity in the history of the covenant is imaged in the history of the creature. However, "The mirror can confront it only as a reflector."⁶⁴ The "phenomenon of gods and their worship, of sacrifices, prayers and the like" are not to be identified with the original in creaturely existence, yet there still remain echoes of the acts of God.⁶⁵ These echoes can only occur in the purview of God for there can be no idea of a *creatura corredemptrix*. The creature must only recognize that it occurs "from within outwards, from the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ to all other occurrence, from God's grace to the world."⁶⁶ Barth does not proceed at this point to focus on the cross as symbol of grace in the world *par excellence*; but continues on the provisional care of God for the creature as "witness, herald and

⁶³ *CD III/2*, 546.

⁶⁴ *CD III/3*, 49. German text from Karl Barth, *Die Lehre Von Der Schöpfung, Dritter Teil* (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1950).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

proclaimer of the grace of God.”⁶⁷ In the covenant of grace “the creature is not the means but only the witness and sign, the liturgical assistant as it were to God, who is the only effective Minister.”⁶⁸

The immanent presence of God, the “Divine Accompanying”, means, for Barth, that God, “affirms and approves and recognizes and respects the autonomous actuality and therefore the autonomous activity of the creature as such.”⁶⁹ However, a continued awareness of the “qualitative distinction between divine and creaturely potency . . . must be brought into play and relentlessly kept in play at this juncture.”⁷⁰ The theological concept of *concursum* must be approached warily here for God’s will is not phenomenologically limited by any notion of “givenness” or determination of the creature.⁷¹ The human creature is not subsumed into the divinity of God in any formal sense; but there abides a divine respect for the activity of the creature in freedom for response and praise. There still is a sense of the divine *gubernatio* that guides and directs (in the “context of God’s wider purpose”)⁷² the effects of human

⁶⁷ Ibid., 64.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 92.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 111. Barth reminds us that we can only render “accounts *to* [the work of God] rather than *of* it.”, *ibid.*, 109.

⁷¹ Ibid., 113.

⁷² Ibid., 154 and especially, 168.

activity, for “the effect I produce is no longer mine.”⁷³ Now, in Barth’s thinking, there is an opening for a wider theology of culture that brings serious implications to that which the creature might venerate as icon, be it a concept or image. As the theology of the cross has been deferred until the next volume, so also are Barth’s understandings of the secular parables and lights.

A prominent secular witness to the grace of God appears in Barth’s extended paragraph on the topic of theodicy and that which he specifies as the “alien factor” *das Nichtige*.⁷⁴ Barth asks:

Why is it possible to hold that Mozart had a place in theology, especially in the doctrine of creation and also in eschatology, although he was not a father of the Church . . . ?⁷⁵

The tragedy of the Lisbon earthquake and the issue of God’s justice was answered for Barth in Mozart’s “peace of God which far transcends all the critical or speculative reason that praises and reproves.” Mozart seemed to possess a special affinity with the “light of creation” for he heard creation, “Unresentfully and impartially, [as] he did not produce merely his own music but that of creation, its twofold and yet harmonious praise of God.” Barth went so far as to claim that :

the golden sounds and melodies of Mozart’s music have from early times spoken to me not as Gospel but as parables of the realm of God’s

⁷³ Ibid., 152. Barth refers to this as the “*analogia operationis*”, 102. Therefore, “Each individual thing” has a value based on the ‘formative economy which assigns to all things a place and time and function.’, 192-3.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 289. See John Hick, *Evil And The God Of Love* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons, 1968) 132-150 for a comprehensive analysis of Barth’s use of *das Nichtige*.

⁷⁵ *CD III/3*, 298

free grace revealed in the Gospel. . .⁷⁶

Because of Mozart one can not charge creation with the “slander” that has a “share in chaos because it includes a Yes and a No, as though oriented to God on the one side and nothingness on the other.”⁷⁷ Does not Mozart have an iconic status in Barth’s thought? Has Barth, in his listening to the genius of this man and his music, been brought to that which gives a glimpse (or sound) of the eternal? Barth seems to be saturated by this aural phenomena. As Jean-Luc Marion asserts, the icon becomes the “gaze of God” in the “disfiguration of Christ” and “allows the trace of the invisible to appear, which envisages us.”⁷⁸ Barth also notes that Christ has overcome *das Nichtige* in kenotic fashion by letting “Himself be injured and humiliated in making the assault and repulse of *das Nichtige* His own concern than leave His creature alone in this affliction.”⁷⁹

Nevertheless, it is hard to discern just how Mozart’s music can give this christological insight at any more than at an emotive level. Gorringer contends that Barth allows a mediating that is quite “independent of the Word” but also acknowledges that Barth in his “austerity” never overdeveloped this notion.⁸⁰

We shall see that other artistic icons will be underscored in some of Barth’s later

⁷⁶ Karl Barth, *How I Changed My Mind* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1966) 71-2.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 299.

⁷⁸ Jean-Luc Marion, *The Crossing Of The Visible*, trans. J. Smith (Stanford University Press, 2004) 62.

⁷⁹ *CD III/3*, 358.

⁸⁰ Gorringer, *Against Hegemony*, 177.

writings.

The increasing demands and invitations for international lectures, as well as Barth's teaching responsibilities, led to the *Dogmatics* becoming increasingly "jealous of competition from any other undertakings."⁸¹ In spite of the scope and size of the volumes he did not want to create any "Barthian" school or have the writings be considered "static concepts" but to be viewed as "dynamic", a way, "not a house."⁸²

In 1951 Barth published his last volume of *The Doctrine of Creation* focusing on the topics of ethics and freedom. Once again Barth distanced himself from any existentialist philosophy (although admitting learning from Kierkegaard) for "after all negation is no supreme art nor the overthrow of all kinds of false idols a superlative task."⁸³ Barth was seeking a more affirmative tone and found that being dubbed "orthodox" was not an unhappy sobriquet. More displeasure was apparent in his chiding the "Neo-Calvinists in the Netherlands" for accusing him of being a "monist" and disparaging his appreciation of Mozart.

The problem of "special ethics", i.e., the ethical obedience required by the covenant, occupied Barth once again. In postulating the Word of God as the standard of all ethical behavior he saw that the covenantal encounter between God and humanity posits a standard of all reality. This reality is noetically established in

⁸¹ Busch, *Barth*, 374.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 375.

⁸³ *CD III/4*, xii.

the grace of God in Jesus Christ and it is “also the ontic basis of man’s creaturely being.”⁸⁴ To see Christ, is to not only say “Behold your God!” but to also exclaim *Ecce homo!*⁸⁵ When we gaze at Christ we see the real ontic reality that *is* humanity in the mirror of God’s grace addressed to us in Jesus Christ. What is reflected to us is the brokenness and guilt of the human condition caused by sin and yet a glimpse of the eternal in the gaze of God reflected in the grace of Christ. The reality that is revealed is that “This being is indeed a sinner a pardoned sinner, and a child of God in hope.”⁸⁶ And this also enables the pardoned human to be responsible before God in freedom.

Barth proceeds to expound on both Christian duty and responsibility in relationship, as covenant keeping and witness. Starting with the Holy Day, Sabbath keeping is to remind us that God’s decision of grace is not posited, affirmed, expressed, helped or justified by any other than God alone. This leads to confession as an event of human self-renunciation and prayer as an activity of obedience. Barth describes prayer as an act “in the form of what we might call an application” wholly directed toward God.⁸⁷ The difference between the two activities is that, “Confession is the free praise of God before the ears of the world. But prayer is the same free

⁸⁴ Ibid., 41.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 42.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 87.

praise of God in His ears alone.”⁸⁸ Barth is mindful that prayer itself is “a grace, a gift from God”⁸⁹ and, as such, petitionary prayer is covenantal in form for it presents the human as beneficiary of God’s grace and not initiator. Prayer is also an act of worship, as he explains:

What is meant by worship? It obviously means turning to God as such, quietness before His deity and its majesty, contemplation of its height and profundity, the expression of full, humbly marveling and joyfully yet also terrifyingly surprised submission to Him.⁹⁰

What perspective does the act of prayer give to the petitioner in Barth’s schema? Marion states this sense of perspective is in the guise of a paradox that “attests to the visible, while at the same time opposing itself” even to the character of a miracle.⁹¹ Barth sees that, in that act of prayer, the immutability of God is not threatened in any way, for God does not “lose face”; this being a “miserable anthropomorphism.”⁹² Barth contends that:

Any vacillation or questioning is the horrible confusion of God with that immovable idol. The worshiper of the idol must not be surprised if he calls upon it in vain.⁹³

Faith that God does indeed hear and act is the necessary prerequisite for authentic prayer as worship. However, Barth does not elaborate on the act of worship by

⁸⁸ Ibid., 88.

⁸⁹ Karl Barth, *Prayer And Preaching* (London: SCM Press, 1964) 16.

⁹⁰ *CD III/4*, 100.

⁹¹ Marion, *Crossing*, 1.

⁹² *CD III/4*, 108.

⁹³ Ibid., 109.

prayer and veneration here.

Tillich's notion of prayer is closer to what Marion is seeking to describe. Prayer is a powerful "revelatory situation" for Tillich, as it "fulfills its meaning, namely, to reunite the creature with its creative ground" and display the "marks of revelation--mystery, miracle, and ecstasy."⁹⁴ Like Barth, Tillich also perceived the need for faith:

Every serious prayer contains power, not because of the intensity of desire expressed in it, but because the faith of the person has in God's directing activity--a faith which transforms the existential situation.⁹⁵

Barth's focus on the *actuality* of prayer leads it away from the contemplative, while Tillich's concept allows for a more mystical approach.

The horizontal dimension of covenantal ethics is also demonstrated in the relationship between man and woman in the institution of marriage. The essential quality of this notion of special ethics is the "differentiation" in all human relationships.⁹⁶ Marriage displays an iconic nature for:

Marriage shows itself to be the ideal and archetypal form of human fellowship in the fact that the light of the very different fellowship between God and man falls almost directly upon it from the closest possible proximity, thus making its special reflector, image and likeness.⁹⁷

In love and marriage what is "mirrored" is the "faithfulness of the gracious God to His

⁹⁴ *ST I*, 127.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁹⁶ *CD III/4*, 117.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 197. On the difficult issue of Barth's relationship with Charlotte von Kirschbaum see Busch, *Barth*, 185-6 and Gorringer, *Against Hegemony*, 201-2.

covenant-partner, and the firmness with which the later remains united to Him.”⁹⁸

In the same fashion, the relationship between parents and their children and community relationships should also display the convenantal love of God. This manifests itself in a respect and preservation of human existence, for life itself is a gift. Barth counsels:

That we should spontaneously perceive and affirm the reception of life as a divine loan in its character as a favour shown, a possession entrusted and an opportunity offered to us, is obviously what is expected of us as those who possess it, who are alive.⁹⁹

For Barth, the only possible response for the gift of life is one of joy. The Christian is to acknowledge that Christ died for all humanity, men and women alike, and therefore are to be “for others”:

The whole credibility of the Christian service of witness as a human act depends on whether the work of active human love precedes and follows it, accompanying and sustaining it as the commentary and illustration of an eloquent parable.¹⁰⁰

The active life of love evinced by the elect has an iconic character about it because it follows the example of Christ’s love for the world and therefore is the measure of all human endeavor. This attitude and understanding gives meaning in vocation and honour to both God and the elect in turn.

⁹⁸ *CD III/4*, 204.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 341.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 504.

The Doctrine of Reconciliation

The circumstances in Barth's life, both politically and theologically, have a definite influence on this last volume (in four parts) of the *Dogmatics*. The Swiss press had become vociferous in their criticisms of Barth for his moderate stance on communism. In the spirit of reconciliation he advocated a view that anti-communism in its most virulent forms stood as reminder of the "Hitler in us." Although no proponent of communism (he remained a socialist), Barth tried to take an ecumenical stance of being *for* communists (as human beings loved by God) and against any form of government (be it communist, socialist or democratic) whose ideologies and "pernicious propaganda prevents people on either side from seeing anything but the splinter in the other person's eye."¹⁰¹ Barth also disapproved of the installation of a new stained-glassed window in the cathedral in Basle by taking the Calvinist view of the second commandment by not making an image in connection with Christian worship "even if it should be the most perceptive work of the most gifted artist."¹⁰² This seems to be somewhat contradictory in his thought given his appreciation of Mozart, Botticelli and Grünewald whose print of the Isenheim altarpiece hung above Barth's desk.¹⁰³ In any event the Basle congregation did not install the window.

¹⁰¹ Busch, *Barth*, 383.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 385.

¹⁰³ On Mozart and Grünewald see Robert J. Palma, *Karl Barth's Theology Of Culture: The Freedom of Culture for the Praise of God* (Allison Park, Penn: Pickwick Publications, 1983) 47-50.

Similarly, the program of ‘demythologizing’ of the New Testament as propounded by Rudolf Bultmann evinced Barth’s gravest suspicions of “running into the dead end of a theological anthropology”; a “talk of God” which was no more than a “talk of man in a rather elevated tone.” The first volume of the *Doctrine of Reconciliation* therefore, was written with attention to the “rampaging Bultmann controversy.”¹⁰⁴ Barth had originally thought to call this volume the *Doctrine of the Covenant* but decided against it and was to see the work as the “form of a paraphrase of ‘Immanuel’, which was at the same time a prospectus of the whole of the doctrine of reconciliation.”¹⁰⁵ This was the heart of all theology for Barth as it concentrated on the knowledge of Jesus Christ and “If one is on the right track here, the whole thing cannot be completely wrong.”¹⁰⁶

The “circumference” of the Church’s dogmatics revolves around the doctrine of creation (redemption) and the doctrine of the last things (consummation). “But the covenant fulfilled in the atonement is its centre.”¹⁰⁷ For the atonement to manifest its iconic character, symbolized by the cross, as a saturated phenomenon we follow Marion’s dictum taken from Cyril of Alexandria:

A paradox of the face, which finds itself fulfilled in this ‘strange paradox in Christ (παράδοξον), the Lord in the form of a servant,

¹⁰⁴ Busch, *Barth*, 387.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 377. Barth’s plan for the structure of the whole work came to him in a dream.

¹⁰⁶ *CD IV/I*, ix.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

the divine glory (δοξα) within the strictures of the human.¹⁰⁸

This paradox is to be seen in and on the cross of Christ, yet Barth has serious objections to “all representations of the crucified Christ as such. There is no going back behind Easter morning.”¹⁰⁹ What is intended here is to discern whether Barth had an adequate theology of the cross, using Marion’s phenomenology. If Barth does (and does not acknowledge it) then he and Tillich stand close to Marion’s project. If there is, in fact, an underdeveloped notion of the cross then Barth’s criticism of Tillich’s christology is unwarranted. It remains in the conclusion to ask whether Marion’s ultimate symbol of the cross, manifested in the moment of the Eucharist, is adequate in its intention as well. The question to be asked of Barth is whether his doctrine of the resurrection is overly assertive and depreciative of the paradox of the cross and the disfigurement of Jesus upon it. Does the cross stand as the ectype of the crucified Christ and in what fashion might that be represented in the realm of the phenomenological?¹¹⁰

The answer to this query may reside in Barth’s understanding of the cross and its relationship to the covenant. From the outset in this, the fourth volume of his dogmatics, the doctrine of the covenant is explicated in terms of the “presupposition of reconciliation.” In fact, the original fellowship between God and humanity, broken by sin, is “now fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in the work of reconciliation”

¹⁰⁸ Marion, *Crossing*, 1-2.

¹⁰⁹ *CD IV/1*, 344.

¹¹⁰ William Stacy Johnson frames the question this way, “Is there a contradiction between the theocentric recognition of mystery and the christocentric emphasis on grace?”, *Mystery*, 101.

which is described as *the* covenant.¹¹¹ This work of grace, as the primary thing to say about God and humanity, is “something which we can see only as it makes itself to be seen, only as it fulfills itself--which is what happened in Jesus Christ--and therefore reveals itself as true and actual.”¹¹² How does it reveal itself in the “form which it manifestly assumed in Jesus Christ?”¹¹³ In what way does the covenant, as invisible icon, mirror the cross as a visible icon, and give the gaze of eternity and not just a human self-reflection?

The human form that Christ assumed is that of a servant in humility. This is the true iconic feature of Barth’s christology and is the verity of true divinity. Barth explains:

What marks out God above all false gods is that they are not capable and ready for this. In their otherworldliness and supernaturalness and otherness, etc., the gods are a reflection (*Spiegelbilder*) of the human pride which will not unbend, which will not stoop to that which is beneath it. God is not proud. In His high majesty He is humble. It is this high humility that He speaks and acts as the God who reconciles the world to Himself. It is under this aspect first that we must consider the history of the atonement.¹¹⁴

The kenotic obedience of Christ is the “presentation” of this humility that “stands in the greatest possible contradiction to the being of God.”¹¹⁵ The grace of God is manifested in the “astonishing form” of the obedient Servant, “the way of the Son

¹¹¹ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 22.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 45.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 159. German text from *Die Lehre Von Der Versöhnung* (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1953)

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

into the far country”, a matter of the mystery of the deity of God and “His presence in the world.”¹¹⁶ For Barth, the event and history of the Incarnation is in no way a diminution of God. God, in Christ, is under the contradiction that is the plight of fallen humanity; but is *not* in contradiction amidst the inner-trinitarian relationships for any reconciliation would then be impossible.¹¹⁷ God *is* and *acts* as Christ *is* and *acts*, because “In Him there is not paradox, no antimony, no division, no inconsistency, not even the possibility of it.”¹¹⁸ In Christ therefore, God is honored by the “concealment” (*verbirgt*) of divine glory. “This concealment, and therefore His condescension as such, is the image and reflection in which we see Him as He is.”¹¹⁹ Barth caveats, that:

There is no lowliness which is divine in itself and as such. There is therefore no general principle of the cross in which we have to do with God (in principle). The cross of the New Testament is not a kind of symbol of an outlook which is negatively orientated, which speculates *à la baisse*.¹²⁰

What, then, is Barth’s view of the cross and can it, in Marion’s words, be an image that remains “bound under a ruled relation to a prototype without having to obey the laws and demands of the mimetic?”¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 177.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 185.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 186.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 188.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 191-92.

¹²¹ Marion, *Crossing*, 71-72.

The mimetic, for Barth, was a “going back” to the event of the cross, a re-crucifixion, and so “all theologies or pieties or exercises or aesthetics which centre on the cross--must be repudiated at once.”¹²² If a theology returns to the No of the cross and cannot move to the Yes of the Resurrection. There can be no cyclical return to the cross, no myth of “eternal recurrence” not even in the name of Kierkegaard or Luther. Barth asserts that we can only begin with the completed act of reconciliation founded on the eternal election of the covenant. In the present we are called to take up “our little cross” and to “receive in our name as the obedient Son of the Father the grace of everlasting life.”¹²³ Marion’s mimetic τύπος is found in the faithful reception of Christ by the elect as it is attested in the Word in Barth’s schema. It is our cross of obedience that functions as the saturated phenomenon, an anthropological notion that seems to stand in some sort of contradistinction to the rest of Barth’s theology. Be that as is it may, just how does the cross function in Barth’s christological scheme?

The cry of dereliction at Golgotha, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mk. 15:34), exhibits the solidarity of Jesus with the finitude of humanity in that “He cries with man in this need.”¹²⁴ By his death on the cross, Jesus accomplished that which humanity could not accomplish for itself; that of true

¹²² *CD IV/1*, 344. As Joseph Mangina points out; “This attitude makes [Barth’s] fascination with the Isenheim ‘Crucifixion’ by Grünewald all the more striking.” *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) 142.

¹²³ *CD IV/1*, 345.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 215.

reconciliation with God. Barth elucidates:

In this suffering and dying of God Himself in His Son, there took place the reconciliation with God, the conversion to Him, of the world which is out of harmony with Him, contradicting and opposing Him.¹²⁵

Sin was “killed on the cross” when Jesus Christ made himself the “bearer and Representative of sin”.¹²⁶ Barth entitled this section, “The Judge Judged in Our Place” so the agony of Jesus is the “No of God in and with which He again takes up and asserts in man’s space and time the Yes to man which He has determined and pronounced in eternity.”¹²⁷ Barth notes that the accounts of the Last Supper provide the “meaning and the purpose of the act” of the shedding of blood on the cross, that in the “offering of His life to the powers of death we have the constancy, the maintenance or the restitution of the covenant between God and man.”¹²⁸ But Barth is not interested in describing any sacramental efficacy here, and the fact that his dogmatics were never finished and his ecclesiology left incomplete, has been a disappointment to those seeking to find a finished doctrine of the Eucharist in his theology. We will return to this *aporia* later in the chapter. At this juncture Barth leaves the phenomenalism of the cross as mystery and transcendent of all human

¹²⁵ Ibid., 251.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 254. The German term *Stellvertretung*, as pointed out in the “Editors’ Preface” (vii-viii) can be translated in either a representative or a substitutionary sense. Gorringer, *Against Hegemony*, 228 ff., cautions against a too traditional (Anselmian) view of substitutionary atonement in Barth’s theology as is implied in the English translation.

¹²⁷ *CD IV/1*, 257.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 252.

judgement:

If we have to do with such a beyond, then in no case or form can it be on the basis of an independent human judgement or an invention or intuition reached in this way.¹²⁹

The visible sign of eternal love is found in the empty tomb depicted in the resurrection accounts. The act of God was mediated to the disciples without any “component of human will and action” as a “mediated perception” (*Vermittelt Erkenntnis*).¹³⁰ God’s gift, that which *is* given, is the bestowal of life to the obedient Servant, the Son of God. Barth underscores the fact that:

as very God and very man He is worthy of the divine gift of new life from the dead does not alter in the slightest the fact that He did not take this new life but that it was given to Him.¹³¹

In the positing of covenantal grace, the “event of Easter in its indissoluble connexion (*unlöslichen Beziehung*) with the event of the cross is an event which has its own content and form.” It is the *resurrected* Christ that also bears the marks of the wounds of crucifixion that image the saturated phenomenon of grace. Barth will not allow a “general principle” of the cross to overshadow in any way the triumph of the resurrection:

Because the resurrection has taken place just as surely as the crucifixion, the cross of Jesus Christ is to us light and not darkness, and it does not have to be changed from a ‘bare (*nackten*) cross’ into

¹²⁹ Ibid., 297.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 302.

¹³¹ Ibid., 304.

something better by the fact that we take up our cross.¹³²

It remains to be seen whether Marion or Tillich are guilty of such a move, and whether they have overlooked the phenomenon of the resurrection in their emphasis on the saturated visibility of the cross. The question abides however, of just how the empty tomb can reflect the gaze of eternity to the believer *hic et nunc* without the mediation of the written word of the testimony of the original disciples.

In what manner does the autonomous human create a false icon that reflects only that which is projected on it without the return of eternity? It is by “ignoring the grace of God and renouncing his responsibility to Him, man chooses himself, and in so doing even in this---decisive--respect he chooses that which is not.”¹³³ In this way, not unlike the Israelites fashioning the golden calf during the Exodus, the covenant is disparaged and the pride of humanity asserts itself over the grace of God. Yet, for Barth, the cry of dereliction on the cross reminds the world of its depravity and apostasy and the “depth of the most utter helplessness of the true human condition submitted to by Jesus. Does the image of the open tomb give such veracity of finitude by its saturated phenomenalism? Can it overcome the self-assertion of human pride by its vacuity? This seems to be unanswered by Barth, or perhaps even considered an impertinent question. If the cross were viewed separately from the resurrection then the notion of human death as the final answer might result. Barth

¹³² Ibid., 334. However, in spite of Barth’s denial of a “general principle” of the cross, G. C. Berkouwer sees “a new form of a ‘theologia crucis’ which is the foundation for an *ethics* of the cross.” cf., his *Triumph*, 132.

¹³³ *CD IV/1*, 422.

asserts:

In this light, as the Word of the cross understood in the light of the resurrection of the Crucified, the one Word of God is certainly the word of judgement on all the arrogant pretension with which man would judge and justify himself.¹³⁴

Barth feared that if the cross and resurrection were separated conceptually then there might result (as in Bultmann, and by implication, Tillich) in a bifurcation between an historical event (the crucifixion) and a mythological event (the resurrection), leading to a “kind of parthenogenesis of faith without any external cause.”¹³⁵

The ultimate icon that gives meaning to the redemptive work of God on behalf of fallen humanity is, of course, Jesus Christ who:

lives as the risen One, as the bearer of the right which God has given to man, as the recipient of His grace, completing the justification of man by His receiving of it.¹³⁶

Therefore, any *theologia gloriae*, for Barth, can have no meaning without a *theologia crucis*. But an “abstract” *theologia crucis* is devoid of meaning as well unless it is “the magnifying of the One who in His resurrection is the recipient of our right and life.”¹³⁷ Yet, Barth has still not completely explicated how this is manifested in temporal existence as a specific *phenomenon*. There is the spiritual claim that the ministry of the Holy Spirit, given out to the ecclesial community, is a “work which

¹³⁴ Ibid., 347.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 339.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 557.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 558.

takes place among men in the form of a human activity.”¹³⁸

The elect are called, in obedience, to acknowledge the “living “ Jesus Christ in the form attested in “Holy Scripture and proclaimed by the community.” But exactly how does the living Christ present himself to the believer as Lord? Not in a “featureless” way according to Barth, which would be at the “mercy of every possible conception and interpretation.” Yet, to ask what are the distinctives of this form is to ask a “secondary question” for the “sphere is a wide one” leading to various possibilities in the “subjective fulfillment proffered” to the believer.¹³⁹

Barth continues to describe the *gestalt* of Jesus Christ in terms of saturation:

for all His singularity and unity His form is inexhaustibly rich, so that it is not merely legitimate but obligatory that believers should continually see and understand it in new lights and aspects.¹⁴⁰

Does not the “multiformity” of Christ allow for iconic presentations in the fashion described by both Marion and Tillich? Barth shies away from this iconic freedom, however, for the authentic form cannot only be found in the “witness of Scripture and the proclamation of the Church.” Existential faith (Bultmann) and the re-enactment of Golgotha in the Roman Catholic mass (Urs von Balthasar) must not attempt to repeat the “being and activity of Jesus Christ.”¹⁴¹

Barth’s next volume of the *Dogmatics* appeared in 1955. He was becoming

¹³⁸ Ibid., 650.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 762.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 763.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 769.

more secluded in his academic and theological life working like “Jerome in his cell.”¹⁴² Commentators critiqued his supposed universalism to which Barth replied, “I don’t believe in universalism, but I do believe in Jesus Christ, the reconciler of all.”¹⁴³ In this new volume he sought to complete the true *theologia gloriae*, based on a *theologia crucis*, following the pattern (*exinanitio, exaltatio*) of the Son journeying in “far country” (IV/1) and now returning in glory to his eternal home.¹⁴⁴ Barth employs a christological typology¹⁴⁵ in his exegesis of the parable of the Prodigal Son, for it is the elder brother that brings Jesus to the cross. The abasement of the cross shows that Jesus, as the Servant of God, has in all humility addressed:

the Word of God to men, but in the glory of God He Himself is the answer to the otherwise insoluble question of human existence and the human situation.¹⁴⁶

In the participation of human existence as the Christ, the “free act of God” is to be characterized and described as God assuming the “being as man into His being as God.”¹⁴⁷ The connection between the human nature of God, in Christ, is not found in a common essence but in the “giftedness” of the human by grace. Barth

¹⁴² Busch, *Barth*, 392.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 394.

¹⁴⁴ *CD IV/2*, 21.

¹⁴⁵ Barth describes this typological move in these terms, “It is not the original. It is only a copy. But it is the copy of this original, and therefore to be understood only in its relationship to it.” 24.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 30. Compare Tillich’s phrase that the New Being conquers the “estranged character of existential being” and the “estrangement of actual existence.” cf. *ST II*, 119.

¹⁴⁷ *CD IV/2*, 41.

explains:

The grace of God manifested and effective in Him is the grace of this impartation (*Mitteilung*). As He is, it takes place that the divine essence in all its distinctiveness (*Eigentümlichkeit*) is gifted to the human, and the human in all its distinctiveness receives the divine.¹⁴⁸

The gift that Jesus, as the crucified and resurrected Christ, bestows on humanity is difficult to depict in the “plastic arts” for Barth. In comparison with the biographer of Jesus who can be corroborated with the biblical texts themselves, the artist is “quite intolerable.” To “freeze” the movement of God is to “take it out of its movement.” The picture of Christ is “far too static as a supposed portrayal of the corporeality of Jesus Christ in a given moment.” What neither the biographer or artist can produce is the “vertical movement in which Jesus Christ is “actual” in the incarnational event.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, “this cannot prevent us from saying that the history of plastic representation of Christ is that of an attempt on the most intractable (*ungeeignetsten*) subject imaginable.”¹⁵⁰

Does this “intractability “ of the subjectivity of Christ allow for no depiction whatsoever? As those gifted by God in the “infinite kenosis”¹⁵¹ of divine love is not something given by the saturation of the phenomenon and its ectypal relationship to the prototype? Marion allows for such a possibility in the “law of givenness”,

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 75. German text from *Die Lehre Von Der Versöhnung, zweiter teil* (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1955)

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 102.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 103.

¹⁵¹ Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. T. A. Carlson (Fordham University Press, 2001) xxvii.

its plenitude and its appearance. “Every painting participates in a resurrection, every painting imitates Christ, by bringing the unseen to light.”¹⁵² The distinction between idol and icon is a function of that which is desired; for the idol remains “proportionate to the expectation of the desire” whereas the icon “exceeds the scope of expectation.”¹⁵³ But Marion’s iconography implies more than a “plastic art” for the saturated phenomenon of grace, manifests itself both pictorially *and* conceptually. Barth, by denying the efficacy of the visible and aural icon, and despite his love of Mozart and Grünewald as parables of grace, does not allow for the concept of grace, as saturated phenomenon to have its full due, its complete plenitude. Similarly, Marion asks:

does invisibility indicate, in the case of the possible original, the pure and simple denial [*denégation*] of its reality? In other words, does the fact that the original remains invisible suffice to disqualify every possible original?¹⁵⁴

Barth, it appears, would answer ‘yes’, Tillich and Marion, ‘no’. Marion goes so far as to assert that to avoid the paradox of Christ offering the “visible image of the Father” is to go to the point of irreverence:

If every image offered of the invisible God is a caricatural usurpation, it would be necessary therefore to condemn Jesus Christ to death for blasphemy, which is exactly what happened (Matt. 26:66).¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Marion, *Crossing*, 27.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

Marion continues to call for a release of the icon from the “logic of the image”, an escape from the “tyranny of the image.” Can the icon release itself, or is this only possible by an anthropocentric effort? The resolution of this *aporia* is vital to the concern of a phenomenology of grace, as opposed to an epistemology of human knowledge that privileges the transcendent self over the divine generosity that allows human thought itself.

Barth locates the action of Jesus Christ not in a “phenomenon, or a complex of phenomena, but in a history.”¹⁵⁶ This history and its dynamic “is the reality, the *mysterium*, the sacrament of the being of Jesus Christ.”¹⁵⁷ The possibility of the knowledge of this history, as the history of salvation, is conveyed in the power of the Holy Spirit where takes place “the self-revelation of Jesus Christ as the One He is.”¹⁵⁸ But, in the same way, could not the Spirit provide the spiritual knowledge or insight that allows an iconic presentation of God’s grace its efficacy?

In Barth’s lengthy excursus on Jesus as the “Royal Man” and “The Direction of the Son” a theology of the cross appears, as a human move away from the self-centered I and towards the “hidden being” of Christ. The possibility of the recognition of his hidden being does not lie within human capacity for there is:

no organ or ability to see it . . . It can be a reality, not in the actualisation of a potentiality that we ourselves possess, but only as it is given us in

¹⁵⁶ *CD IV/2*, 106.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 125.

pure actuality.”¹⁵⁹

Human existence itself does not give one a “continuous demonstration of the being of Jesus Christ” but there are “proofs” (*Erweise*) of his love.¹⁶⁰ Even in the examination of the concealment of Christ there can be no indirect or analogical disclosure. Vision and knowledge of Jesus Christ, for Barth, must be the result of a “penetration (*durchbrechung*) and removal (*Beiseitigung*) of this hiddenness.”¹⁶¹

The secret of the cross is the also the secret of the “incarnation in all its fulness.”¹⁶² But, as Barth rightly asks, “how can the unknown become for us the known reality, reality in truth?”¹⁶³

It is not in any disclosure of the phenomenon of the cross that Barth finds his answer, it is to be discovered in the New Testament witness to the resurrection. In this event, the closure (in death) of the Crucified is overturned by the disclosure (*erschließen*) (in new life) of the Resurrected.¹⁶⁴ The judgement of Golgotha gives that which is darkness, the power of the resurrection gives that light which is an illumination that produces joy. It is in the ministry of the Holy Spirit as the indicator of all human relationship with Jesus, as spiritual corrective that calls for

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 285.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 286.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 287.

¹⁶² Ibid., 293.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 297.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 299.

obedience and as a divine instructor that both admonish and shows the way of Christ to the elect. The work of the Spirit is the actualisation of the cross and resurrection in the life of the believer, the present gift of the divine initiative. The cross remains the “sign of the provisional character” of the Christian life as a “tree marked for felling.”¹⁶⁵

What of the witness of the Church? Does its activity provide any iconic manifestations of grace? Barth provides a cautionary notion of the truth of the Church and the brokenness of its institutions and traditions.

The real result of the divine operation, the human action which takes place in the true Church as occasioned and fashioned by God, will never try to be anything in itself, but only the operation, the divine work of sanctification, the upbuilding of Christianity by the Holy Spirit of Jesus the Lord, by which it is inaugurated and controlled and supported.¹⁶⁶

This, of course, is the iconic nature of the Church, in its obedient response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Yet the triumph of Jesus Christ, in the divine “occasioning and fashioning” of the Church’s human action, overrides the idoloc tendencies of the Church by an “omnipotent act of the special divine mercy addressed to it.”¹⁶⁷ In this manner the Church provides a “provisional representation” (*vorläufigen Darstellung*) of the work of God in Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁸

John Yocum recognizes that Barth:

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 695.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 617.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 618.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 621.

is intent, then, on securing the possibility and necessity--even saving necessity--of a human history in which God acts continually to allow the Church to act in a way that represents the sanctification of all human beings in Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁹

As Barth approached his seventieth year, he confessed that “if I ever get to heaven, I shall first ask after Mozart, and only then after Augustine and Thomas, Luther and Calvin and Schleiermacher.”¹⁷⁰ Barth’s continued love of Mozart’s music had not led him to “identify salvation history with any part of the history of art.” Yet, as a parable of “the kingdom revealed in the gospel of God’s free grace” and not as Gospel itself, Mozart informed his theology in such a way that the pictures of both Mozart and of Calvin were side by side and at the same level in Barth’s study.¹⁷¹ This notion of the “parables of the kingdom of heaven” were to inform much of his discourse in the next volume of the *Dogmatics*. Barth admitted that there was a *Wendung*¹⁷² occurring in his theology; he had moved from a focus on the *deity* of God to a better understanding of the *humanity* of God in Jesus Christ. In his lecture of 1956, “The Humanity Of God” he allowed for a more theocratic possibility in culture:

Finally, it also remains true that God, as Creator and Lord of man, is always free to produce even in human activity and its results, in spite

¹⁶⁹ John Yocum, *Ecclesial Mediation in Karl Barth* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) 117. He also asserts that Barth, in his relinquishment of the possibility of divine-human cooperation, gives up the rationale for the “Church’s witness functioning as a genuine sign.” 119.

¹⁷⁰ Busch, *Barth*, 409.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 410.

¹⁷² “Change of direction”

of the problems involved, *parables* of His own eternal good will and actions.¹⁷³

Barth was expressing *in nuce* the idea of a theonomous culture grounded in the *encounter* between God and humanity, “a dialogue and history.” The iconic referent is dependent upon Holy Scripture, “according to which the covenant is *in full effect* and which Jesus Christ *witnesses to Himself*.”¹⁷⁴ Barth remained cautious however about the existentialism of Bultmann (and presumably Tillich as well) because he was concerned whether it was merely “a repristination of the theology of the believing individual who reflects on himself in solitude (this time on his reality and unreality) and explicates himself.”¹⁷⁵ With same concern he also asserted that there is “no theological visual art. Since it is an event, the humanity of God does not permit itself to be fixed in an image.” The “fundamental form” of the event was “prayer and the sermon.”¹⁷⁶

The Parables of Grace

In his next half- volume of the *Dogmatics* Barth takes up the issue of the iconic points of revelation in the history of humanity. God has spoken to the people of the covenant, both to Israel and to Christianity, in the words of grace; “Grace means that God expresses Himself before man, declaring Himself as the truth in his

¹⁷³ Karl Barth, *The Humanity Of God*, trans. J. N. Thomas (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1960) 54-55.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 55. Barth’s italics.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

existence.”¹⁷⁷ This truth is the witness of Jesus Christ and also the witness of the Church in Holy Scripture. Jesus can only be depicted as *event*,¹⁷⁸ for “He Himself lives only in the form which He has in the picture.” Webster regards this form of self-communication as a “Presence” which is a “function of ‘identity.’”¹⁷⁹ This ‘present form’ is depicted by the reality of the resurrection; for “If there is any Christian and theological axiom, it is that Jesus Christ is risen, that He is truly risen.”¹⁸⁰

Here at last, Barth opens up the possibility that there are “other lights which are quite clear and other revelations which are quite real.”¹⁸¹ However, they are always to be measured against the existence and reality of Jesus Christ, for if they are found wanting:

Such projects [become] irrelevant and unfruitful enterprises because the one Word of God {Christ} wholly escapes every conceivable synthesis envisaged in them.¹⁸²

Barth cites examples of the idols of the Old Testament, the mistakes of the German Christians in 1933, national flags given the same prominence as the

¹⁷⁷ *CD IV/3.1*, 82.

¹⁷⁸ On the act and event of Jesus Christ and his time in the present and eternity see George Hunsinger, *Barth*, 234ff.

¹⁷⁹ John Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998).

¹⁸⁰ *CD IV/3.1*, 44.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 101.

Lord's table and the pulpit, and even baptismal immersion tanks.¹⁸³ These words (and signs) can have prophetic genuineness when they are:

in the closest material and substantial conformity and agreement with the one Word of God Himself and therefore with that of His one Prophet Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁴

The formal aspects of these other words can only have validity in their being “commissioned, moved and empowered” to give witness to Jesus Christ.

Moreover, only Christ can have “ordained” and “acknowledged” the reflection of the “grace of its real presence.” Jesus’ speaking in parables in the New

Testament accounts are analogous to these words. In the parables the:

narrative is no mere metaphor but a disclosing yet also concealing revelation, self-representation and self-offering of the kingdom and the life, and therefore His own self-revelation.¹⁸⁵

These parables have provided the “prototype of the order” by which these other words might be determined in exact correspondence, in service and “enjoying its power and authority.”¹⁸⁶ But what of words not spoken in Holy Scripture or the confession of the Church? What of the secular parable, that which is found “in the strange interruption of the secularism of life in the world”?¹⁸⁷ Barth is adamant that

¹⁸³ Ibid., 102.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 111.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 112.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 113.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 117.

there are no “concrete phenomena” that are not “doubtful and contestable.”¹⁸⁸

Only the “prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ” can allow the words that are *extra muros ecclesiae* to have any valid attestation. However, as John McDowell has pointed out, the avoidance of the “treatment of these matters” appears to be “logically suspect.” He continues by claiming that:

A theology that does not discuss the phenomena of witnesses to the divine Word . . . is a docetic one that floats free of the contextuality of one’s hearing of that Word.¹⁸⁹

This view raises the seriousness of Barth’s claims to separate human agency and divine initiative, as well as any possible human fabrication of visible analogies to the import of grace. Barth’s attitude concerning Mozart seems to belie this very point.¹⁹⁰

Barth continues on to provide the formal criteria of the evaluation of secular parables in the witness of Scripture to Christ and a correspondence to the Church’s mission. The covenant, as witness to the elective determination of God, is the *form* of events (or theatre) in which the actualization of reconciliation occurs.¹⁹¹ Barth observes:

As the divine work of reconciliation does not negate the divine work of creation, nor deprive it of meaning, so it does not take from it its lights and language, not tear asunder the original connexion between

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁸⁹ McDowell, *Hope*, 200.

¹⁹⁰ Later in Barth’s life he wryly suggested that Mozart might be canonized as a Catholic saint! Busch, *Barth*, 493.

¹⁹¹ *CD IV/3.1*, 137ff.

creaturely *esse* and creaturely *nosse*.¹⁹²

George Hunsinger has detected in Barth's thinking the same pattern of the categories of Tillich of autonomy, heteronomy and theonomy.¹⁹³ All autonomous or heteronomous lights must be compared and evaluated in regards to the theonomous criteria of Jesus Christ as a pattern of coinherence.¹⁹⁴ Hunsinger explains:

In a theonomous situation, it might be said, a single truth is manifest in a variety of distinctive forms without either the center losing itself in the periphery or the periphery losing itself in the center.¹⁹⁵

Barth has dangled the reality that these other lights from the outer sphere are phenomena that provide learning; "However alien their forms, is not their language that of true words, the language of 'parables of the kingdom of heaven'?"¹⁹⁶ Might not Barth be guilty of an inconsistency with regard to the ecclesial (or cultural) icons as *parables of the sacred*? If secular parables are "distinctive as free communications of Jesus Christ,"¹⁹⁷ how much more so are ecclesial or pictorial icons? Barth seems to leave no room for this possibility here. Inasmuch as he has not dealt with an explicit theology of the sacraments to this point in his *Dogmatics*,

¹⁹² Ibid., 139.

¹⁹³ Hunsinger, *Barth*, 262.

¹⁹⁴ On coinherence see *CD II/2*, 177-81.

¹⁹⁵ Hunsinger, *Barth*, 263.

¹⁹⁶ *CD IV/3.1*, 125.

¹⁹⁷ Hunsinger, *Barth*, 270.

it would not be until the very last volume that this doctrine will appear.

A taste of Barth's impending doctrine of the sacraments occurs towards the end of volume IV/3.1. The witness of the victorious Christ is always to be understood in conjunction with the suffering Jesus as the "One who is smitten and afflicted by God, and it is in this way alone that He is the true Witness."¹⁹⁸ It is in this form as the "Afflicted of Gethsemane and Golgotha" that Christ exists as the "divinely crowned Victor." Therefore, living Christianity has its hymns and prayers and "above all" its administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper "experienced and seen and understood and expounded and proclaimed" as the presence of the Crucified. Barth notes:

Even in the most questionable feature of the Roman mass, namely, its character as a representation of the sacrifice of Golgotha, we must acknowledge that it does at least make this clear. And Evangelical preaching must never lag behind in this respect.¹⁹⁹

This form of the True Witness comes as a saturated phenomenon in its strangeness and the resultant shock of the opposition to what we call "natural feelings and desires and thoughts and beliefs and dreams." Barth continued to underscore that it is:

most unfortunate . . . that we do not willingly look to Him in this form [which] is so obscured by the preoccupation of so much Christian art with this subject, and especially by the inane misuse of the symbol of the cross right into our own times.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ *CD IV/3.1*, 395.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 415. We will return to Marion's notion of the cross in the conclusion.

But what of the parables of grace? Could not the icon of the cross (or the Isenheim altar, Mozart's *Requiem Mass*, etc.) give such a phenomenon? Barth's incipient Calvinism seems to be at work here and he takes nearly a Tillichian view of where God encounters the human subject:

It means that we must be ready to be told by Him that we shall find Him precisely where we do not think we should look for Him, namely, in direct confrontation with and at the very heart of our own reality, which, whether we like it or not, reduces itself with the crumbling and tottering of all our previous genuine or illusory possibilities and achievements to the one painful point where each of us is stripped and naked, where each is suffering and perishing, where each is engaged in futile complaint and accusation, where each is alone.²⁰¹

Barth continues in this existentialist vein in counseling that, in the encounter with the "man of Gethsemane and Golgotha" both in distance and proximity, there is:

a direct connexion between the utter lostness of man and his utter salvation as presented and brought home to him in the reflection of His form as this man.²⁰²

Tillich related Martin Luther's experience of utter despair (*Anfechtung*) "as the frightful threat of complete meaninglessness."²⁰³ At this boundary moment the utter despair and estrangement of the human condition of finitude and mortality brings the faith that in this "state of being [is] grasped by the power of being-itself."²⁰⁴ The symbol of the cross shows the "divine paradox of the appearance of

²⁰¹ Ibid., 416.

²⁰² Ibid., 418.

²⁰³ Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952) 170.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 172.

the eternal God-man unity within existential estrangement.”²⁰⁵ Barth will not go as far as this, leaving the iconic encounter with God relegated to the individual sphere of personal experience close to “*das Gefühl schlechthiniger Abhängigkeit*” of Schleiermacher.²⁰⁶ The encounter with God is mediated conceptually by the Word of God in Jesus Christ, but experientially in the subjective inner emotion of the believer. That which is overtly *iconic* becomes experientially *iconic* through the witness of the Spirit in the life of the elect. What of that which is idollic? Barth asserts that the “miraculous work of God” against any human concept, in all autonomy and freedom of grace, brings the confrontation by Jesus Christ over the “falsehood of sinful man.”²⁰⁷

The idollic attitude towards the True Witness does not “hear the sigh of this One judged in our place.”²⁰⁸ There is a “domestication” of the meaning of the cross, perhaps, in “such a way that the Word of His cross is changed into a word of the dramatic mortification which takes place and is fulfilled in man” in the “overcoming of the inward tension of his existence.” Barth certainly may have in mind Paul Tillich here, though other viewpoints are under critical scrutiny as well. Barth cautions:

Do we not see in them all the pictures of the crucifixion which move us perhaps but may still be admired at a safe distance from

²⁰⁵ Tillich, *ST II*, 159.

²⁰⁶ As quoted in Daniel J. Price, *Barth's Anthropology*, 74.

²⁰⁷ *CD IV/3.1*, 421.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 442.

their theme, carried for adornment by our ecclesiastical dignitaries and Christian ladies . . . [making] the great mystery of God little, and then supposedly great in its littleness?²⁰⁹

Can Marion's concept of the iconic, depicted in both the conceptual and visible icon, fall under this condemnation? Is the "mystery made little" by allowing any gaze towards the icon to have the possibility of the returned gaze giving (or opening) a window to the eternal promise? Marion argues forcefully that the gift gives both itself *and abandon*; "Poverty coincides with overabundance in the divine because God admits--what is shown by the Spirit--the distance of a Son."²¹⁰ Barth speaks of the bridging of the gap between the mystery of God and the life of humanity as vision and *telos*:

It is the point where God has no longer to speak nor man to hear from a distance. It is the point where God no longer has to give nor man to receive, where their conversation and history are both ended, where reconciliation, covenant, grace and the Jesus Christ active in and testifying to them may all be dispensed with even as ciphers, concepts and symbols, where prayer is ultimately superfluous even as a monologue.²¹¹

The Word of the cross is the form of this witness and testimony "behind and above which man cannot have recourse to any other" for this is the "only means of deliverance in the grace of God as the Lord of life and death."²¹² It is the "Word" and its hearing, not any symbol, that accomplishes this witness.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 443.

²¹⁰ Marion, *Idol and Distance*, 111.

²¹¹ *CD IV/3.1*, 445.

²¹² Ibid., 446.

Christians are also called, as partners in the covenant, to participate in the “shadow of the cross.” Participating in the affliction (*Bedrängnis*) of the Crucified, not in any atoning manner, the believer suffers “in reflection of and analogy to the suffering of the one man of Gethsemane and Golgotha.”²¹³ The Christian, for the sake of Christ, “bears the stamp (*Vorbild*) of the Crucified, in His reflection and image, in analogy to His great passion.”²¹⁴ In effect, the believer is the visible *icon* of the crucified One, for in the action, speech, attitude and conduct of the elect, there is brought before the world “a phenomenon which corresponds and therefore points to the self-witness of Jesus Christ.”²¹⁵ Barth relates the secular parable of an African boy who has played with a:

faithfully carved wooden lion-- it might have been an excellent dogmatics! and was dreadfully frightened one day when he saw a real living and roaring lion approaching.²¹⁶

The Christian, as a witness, must never make the mistake of presenting a “wooden lion” instead of the real Gospel. In sum, McDowell notes that:

these human voices, with all their inherent fragileness, are freely chosen and summoned to serve this task, although neither Christ is bound to them in some mechanistic sacramental fashion nor can these actions contribute to Christ’s Priestly and Kingly works.²¹⁷

²¹³ *CD IV/3.2*, 637. William Stacy Johnson corresponds the “little lights” with the “little passions” in individual Christians “exercising their vocation” in his *Mystery of God*, 148.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 641. German text from *Die Lehre Von Der Versöhnung, Dritter Teil: Zwierte Hälfte* (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1959).

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 658.

²¹⁶ *CD IV/3.2*, 660.

²¹⁷ McDowell, *Hope*, *ibid.*, 187.

Barth insists that the Church, as the community of the elect, can only speak in ‘wooden lion’ language, the speech of the secular.²¹⁸ Indeed, the words of sacramental institution are secular words but, as he contends, why should it be “impossible for God as the Lord of His creation and especially of His people to do this, to dispose of human speech in this sense?”²¹⁹ *Mutatis mutandis*, why is it not possible for the Lord of Creation to dispose of other forms of human iconography in this sense? This seems to be both Tillich’s and Marion’s point exactly. If God sanctifies “profane language” can not profane images, pictures, musical compositions *inter alia*, be sanctified as well? Even more so if the Church, as the body of Christ, is the “earthly-historical form of existence, of Jesus Christ, it is His likeness,”²²⁰ why should not its products-- speech, icons and sacred paraments be part of this likeness as well? What of the signs and symbols of the sacraments themselves? It is to this Barth turns in the last volume of his *Dogmatics*. The sacrament of the Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are not “empty signs” but are “full of meaning and power” in his estimation. How do they, over any other ecclesial *signum*, convey these potentialities?

²¹⁸ John Webster discerns that “The Church is in no sense a bearer of Jesus’ own prophetic self-utterance, but an indicator of a perfect and communicative divine activity”, cf. his *Barth* (London: Continuum, 2000) 137. He goes on to assert that Barth’s “denial of mediatorial status to human action is not the assertion of some abstract principle of the unsuitability of creaturely media . . . or a deficient doctrine of creation or a weak theology of the humanity of Christ.” Webster is certainly correct to purport that Barth was ensuring that human activity is not “impelled by grace but enabled by grace”, *ibid.*, 139.

²¹⁹ *CD IV/3.2*, 737.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 793.

Conclusion: The Sacraments as Iconic Signs

After the completion of IV/3, Barth continued to lecture on various theological topics and theologians in the years, 1958-59. Tillich came under Barth's scrutiny once again, described as "a charming man, though his theology is quite impossible."²²¹ Barth felt that Tillich thought he had been "asleep since 1920" and in a seminar that focused on Tillich's method of correlation, was "not a good business" but he tried to interpret Tillich "for the best and defend him against the students, who want to snap around him like hunting dogs."²²² Later, in the winter of 1959-60, Barth began to lecture on the doctrine of Baptism. The last volume of the *Dogmatics* contains the content of these lectures as an incomplete project; the treatment of the Lord's Supper, "as its conclusion and crown"²²³, was never finished. However, Barth left a clue on how to proceed; "Thus intelligent readers may deduce from the fragment how I would finally have presented the doctrine of the Lord's Supper."²²⁴ This deduction will be important for this essay, for it is at this very communion table where Marion's ultimate iconic moment occurs.

Barth re-elucidates that the "foundation for the Christian life" is a "form of the grace of God", displayed in the "change effected by God" through the gift of

²²¹ Busch, *Barth*, 437.

²²² *Ibid.*, 438. Barth's lecture notes are kept in his Archive in Basel. Inquiries into their release have to be approved by the committee as to their use and publication.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 444.

²²⁴ *CD IV/4*, ix.

Jesus Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.²²⁵ This spiritual baptism is “more than a reference (*Hinweis*) and indication (*Anzeige*) through image and symbol” it is the “effective, causative, even creative action on man and in man.”²²⁶ As such, as divine gift it “demands” gratitude.²²⁷ New life is bestowed and new communal and ethical possibilities result. Following the example of Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan, and obeying the injunction to go forth and baptize the world (Matt. 28:19), the believer in correspondence with the mission of Christ, undergoes the rite in the presence of the church community. Barth clarifies further:

Baptism takes place in the active recognition of the grace of God which justifies, sanctifies and calls. It is not itself, however, the bearer (*Gnadenträger*), means (*Gnadenmittel*), or instrument of grace. Baptism responds to a mystery, the sacrament of the history of Jesus Christ, of his resurrection, of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is not itself, however, a mystery or sacrament.²²⁸

What does Barth mean when he says that Baptism is not a sacrament? In the first place, there is not enough New Testament teaching to allow Baptism the status of mystery or sacrament in his estimation.²²⁹ Secondly, Barth was fearful of both Roman Catholic and Lutheran insistence on the sacrament of baptism as that

²²⁵ Ibid., 33.

²²⁶ Ibid., 34. German text in *Das Christliche Leben (Fragment): Die Taufe Als Begründung Des Christlichen Lebens, Vierter Teil* (Zurich: EVZ-Verlag, 1967).

²²⁷ Ibid., 35.

²²⁸ Ibid., 102.

²²⁹ Ibid., 107. Barth’s exegesis of the baptismal accounts has received much trenchant criticism. *Vide* John Yocum, *Ecclesial Mediation*, *ibid.*, 162-64 for a summary. See most especially John Webster, *Ethics*, *ibid.*, chapters four and five for a more complete exposition of Barth’s baptismal thought.

which actually *purveys grace*. As an ecclesial mandate in these traditions, the implication was on the response of humanity, in the act of baptismal obedience or as in the case of infant baptism the parental response, as a work that did not adequately reflect that divine initiative of saving grace. Baptism, in the first order, is to point to Christ, not the ethical agency of the respondent. Barth asserted that Christian baptism:

as a human, creaturely action, is directed to seek its divine, creative fulfillment in that which it cannot be or achieve or bring about or mediate of itself, but which it can only seek and intend and hasten towards.²³⁰

Baptism stands as a “strangely competitive duplication (*konkurrierenden Duplikat*) of the history of Jesus Christ, of His resurrection, of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.”²³¹ Does this “competitive duplication” carry an implication of *distance*, the iconic emphasis of withdrawal and hiddenness that absorbs the gaze of the finite and, in some way returns the gaze of the *infinite*, the glimpse of eternal grace in Marion’s supposition? If Barth has abandoned a notion of the ‘sacramental’ in any affective sense, as Jesus Christ is the only valid sacrament, is there anything other than the internal witness of the Spirit and the external obedience of the elect that gives any sense of the iconic? Yocum contends that Barth, in his denigration of the sacraments:

breaks with elements of his theology of proclamation, of knowledge of God, and of the nature of the Church. This

²³⁰ *CD IV/4*, 71.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

break involves no little cost to the coherence and breadth of his account of the Christian life and the manner of God's presence in the Church.²³²

This may overstate the case; but the issue is clear. In Barth's effort to maintain the infinite and qualitative distinction between God and the initiative of grace, there seems to be a real dilemma as to the visible or experience of God in human history. Is it just a matter of emphasis, that which William Stacey Johnson discerns as the "symbolic continuity" or "continuity of attestation" or is the rupture greater than that?²³³ Is Barth's thinking really "a kind of Gnosticism" as in T. F. Torrance's estimation?²³⁴ John Webster also highlights the charge of "dualism" of Barth on this possibility of the iconic manifestation in the sacrament by "denying any capacity to creaturely action to participate in God, and disallowing that a sacrament can reflect *the* sacrament without replacing it."²³⁵ Can Marion's understanding of the Eucharist as the "saturated phenomenon" *par excellence* redress this imbalance in Barth's theology? This will be substance of the final topic in the conclusion.

²³² Yocum, *Ecclesial Mediation*, 145.

²³³ Johnson, *Mystery*, 169. See also Webster, *Ethics*, 128.

²³⁴ T. F. Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990) 134-35.

²³⁵ Webster, *Ethics*, 170. Webster feels that this accusation reflects an "inadequate appreciation of Barth's ethical intention", 171.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION: THREE ICONS OF GRACE

The iconic points in both Barth and Tillich's thought have been reached in markedly different ways. Barth's christological assertions and his subsequent doctrine of the Covenant of Election led him to locate the iconic, not in an ecclesial sacramentalism or even a proclamation of the Word, but in the obedient response and witness of the elect. Barth seemed to have not moved very far from Schleiermacher after all. The dynamic of the covenant itself, God's interaction with human beings and their response to the gift of grace, is the iconic moment that reflects the *given*. The elect articulate both in language and in ethical obedience this gift in the peculiarity of their existence. Barth had written in CD I/1, "It is given in its own peculiar way, as Jesus Christ is given, as God in His revelation gives Himself to faith."¹ However, the phenomenology of Marion suggests something quite different for it is not the faith of the elect community or even the proclamation of the Word that is the definite iconic point; it is the *Eucharist*, "a multiform, inevitable, and instructive naiveté . . . a decisive moment

¹ CD I/1, 12.

of theological thought.”² The “*Eucharistic site of theology*” gives that which preserves the *distance* of the *invisible* and yet, paradoxically manifests the “silent immediacy of abandoned flesh.”³ It exists as a current phenomenon which:

makes an appeal, in the name of a past event, to God, in order that he recall an engagement (a covenant) that determines the instant presently given to the believing community.⁴

Marion’s *L’idole et la distance* shows his merging of that which is both veiled and unveiled, near and far. The manifestation of the empty tomb may function as that which he describes as God’s self-giving “within the distance that he keeps, and where he keeps us.”⁵ Paradoxically, distance is what allows closeness, “poverty coincides with superabundance, abandonment translates into glory.”⁶ Robyn Horner summarizes, “What this means for the disciples is that manifestation only ever coincides with disappearance. Disclosure is only ever offered subject to a distance that forbids recuperation.”⁷ But, as Marion asks, “what language might be suitable to distance” and therefore to articulate such disclosure?⁸ Can God be identified as the “distance”; is this distance even *grace*?

² Marion, *GWB*, 161.

³ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁵ Jean-Luc Marion, *Idol and Distance*, 103.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 111, 113.

⁷ Robyn Horner, *Jean-Luc Marion: A Theo-logical Introduction* (Aldersot: Ashgate, 2005) 56.

⁸ Marion, *Idol and Distance*, 139.

Following Denys, Marion claims that “The distance of God is experienced first in the figure of the Christ: there, it finds its unsurpassable foundation and its definitive authority.”⁹ It is the cross of Jesus, by his agony and disfigurement, that gives the eternal donation and the qualitative distancing *first*. Therefore, it might be warranted to posit that the symbol of the open tomb is historically of a *second* order for faith, for at the cross the Centurion proclaimed “*Vere homo hic Filius Dei erat*” (Mark 15: 39). This warrant is the very point between Tillich and Barth and their respective theologies of the cross as has been demonstrated.

Marion’s eucharistic hermeneutic as the point of all theology leaves Barth in a precarious position in comparison. Barth’s ultimate denial of the sacrament of baptism is to be applied to his understanding of the Lord’s Supper as he had stated in *CD IV/4*. Barth’s fears about Roman Catholic transubstantiation and Lutheran consubstantiation lie at the heart of his denigrations of sacramental efficacy.¹⁰ Proclamation and sacrament can never be “identical with God” as they exist as signs and “instruments in the hand of God.”¹¹ Barth specifies further:

The given-ness of these signs does not mean that God has manifested Himself as it were to become a bit of the world. It does not mean that He has passed into the hands or been put at the disposal of men gathered together to form the Church.¹²

⁹ Ibid., 158.

¹⁰ Karl Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, ed. J. D. Godsey (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963) 86, “I would prefer to abrogate the word ‘sacrament’ or to use ‘sacrament’ for all ecclesiastical actions. All are ‘signs’”.

¹¹ *CD I/2*, 162, 227.

¹² Ibid, 227. Translation amended.

This leads Barth into a direct confrontation with Marion who sees the efficacy of the Eucharist as mediated by the *bishop*, the “theologian par excellence.”¹³ Barth understandably (from his Reformed perspective) is suspicious of such a move for it might create what he calls a “sacral human lordship”, an idolic postulation. Jesus Christ stands as the sacrament of the world without any human mediation. Yet an iconic referent in the Eucharist abides nonetheless, for “the sacrament has been instituted by Christ as a sign of the *res sacra*, namely, the divine grace in Christ.”¹⁴ What is shown in the words of institution is an indication of the event, “This is my body (which is given for you).”¹⁵ Barth reiterates that the “death of Jesus Christ on Golgotha” is the “one *mysterium*, the one sacrament, and the one existential fact before and beside and after which there is no room for any other of the same rank.”¹⁶ In effect, the sacraments are not the means of any mediatorial grace but stand as ethical responses to this grace in human action. Sacramental action is the:

answering, attesting, and proclaiming of the one act and revelation of salvation that has taken place in the one Mediator between God and man [1 Tim. 2:5], who himself directly actualizes and presents and activates and declares himself in the power of his Holy Spirit.¹⁷

¹³ Marion, *GWB*, 152.

¹⁴ *CD I/2*, 230.

¹⁵ *CD IV/1*, 249.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 296.

¹⁷ Karl Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV,4 Lecture Fragments*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T T Clark, 1981) 46.

It appears that, for Barth, there is only the *direct* mediation of Christ in the act of election infused into the subjective existence and response of the believer. The manifestation of the saturated phenomenon of grace can only be found in the ethical obedience of the community of faith--this is the ultimate icon for Barth. Grace is not therefore to be seen in the disfigurement of Jesus on the cross, for even that stands as incomplete sign and phenomenon. Inferentially there is the *dependency* of the elect in their response that is related to the primal event of the cross and most especially the resurrection. We cannot dismiss the efficacy of the Church completely, as some have accused Barth of doing, but the *aporia* remains that, in sum, he has not accepted that which is *given* in the icon of grace and allowed it to be freely manifested in his theology.¹⁸

Jürgen Moltmann has written that the “‘theologian of the cross’ is led by the visible nature of God in the cross.”¹⁹ The phenomenology of Marion is an attempt to flesh this statement out using a philosophical approach to explicate it. It seems probable that Barth would not have approved of such a procedure given his anti-philosophical proclivities. Paul Tillich, on the other hand, provides a more balanced theology of the cross, but is his concept adequate in its visible sacramentality and

¹⁸ On the “low ecclesiology” of Barth see Nicholas M. Healy, “The Logic Of Karl Barth’s Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment And Proposed Modifications” in *Modern Theology* (1984) 252-270. Healy calls for a “narrative theology” over against Barth’s monist christology to allow the Church to acknowledge its diversity and its existence as an “essentially contested concept”, 268. This proposal seems to over-emphasize the anthropological problem yet again. It is the narrative of the passion of Christ that, in my opinion, Marion (and Moltmann) are correct in calling for.

¹⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson & J. Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1974) 213.

disclosure of the eternal?

In Tillich's early writings, as we have seen, the "sacramental" exists in a dialectic with the "theocratic" symbolized by the demonic and the divine. The sacramental, in its extreme forms, becomes "no longer able to intuit the Holy undifferentiatedly in everything real, but instead considers particular realities and forms as bearers of the holy import." As Tillich points out, the sacramental is only significant insofar as the "presence of the unconditioned import of meaning is experienced."²⁰ The sacrament, as saturated phenomenon, must be reduced by the theocratic, the "bearer of antidemonic criticism." Autonomy, or even magisterial hegemony, must be replaced by a mediated theonomy, proceeding from a "sacred bearer, a mediator of revelation."²¹ Here Tillich differs from Barth's concept of the covenant as gift and obedient response, for the theonomic unconditional demand in tension with the conditioned "demonically dominated reality" manifests itself in the form of a dialectic. This tension "gives rise on the one hand to the phenomena of religious despair and on the other to the breakthrough to the religion of grace as a synthesis of theocratic and sacramental tendencies."²² The "theocratically exclusive symbol" is bound to the symbol of Christ.²³ In this symbolic phenomenology "the holy

²⁰ Tillich, "The Philosophy of Religion" in *What Is Religion?*, *ibid.*, 88-89.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

²² *Ibid.*, 91.

²³ *Ibid.*, 107.

is manifest in its power to overcome the demonic at special places, ultimately at one place, in Jesus as the Christ.”²⁴ Both the *visible* and the *invisible*, the proximity and the *distance* remain. Human existence “is determined not only by the omnipresence of the divine but also by our separation from it.”²⁵ Regarding the *Gestalt* of grace, Tillich contends that the divine “appears *through* the humanity of the Christ, *through* the historical weakness of the church, *through* the finite material of the sacrament.”²⁶ The *Bild* of Jesus as the Christ appears as gift, as saturated phenomenon, that can “grasp us before any conceptual interpretation.” Tillich underscored this by later writing, “An encountered reality can impress itself upon a subject through indirect means of giving signs of itself as a centered subjectivity.”²⁷ Yet, like Barth, Tillich never fully explicated a theological doctrine of the sacraments for he too was suspicious of any Catholic sacramentology (“bloody sacrifices”) creeping into Protestantism. But an overt connection with the event of the cross was still signified in the sacramental phenomenon:

The sacramental acts through which the Spirit of the New Being in Christ is mediated must refer to the historical and doctrinal symbols in which revelatory experiences leading to the central revelation have been expressed, for example, the crucifixion of the Christ or eternal life.²⁸

The paradox of grace symbolized by the cross and resurrection are the ultimate

²⁴ Tillich, “Nature And Sacrament” in *PE*, 111.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

²⁶ Tillich, “The Formative Power Of Protestantism” in *PE*, 212. Author’s italics.

²⁷ *ST III*, *ibid.*, 120.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

iconic references for Tillich, not the Eucharist. Existential estrangement has been overcome in the corroborating symbol of the cross by Christ's participation in the finite. The ambiguity of existence has been conquered in the symbol of the resurrection. That which is the iconic has defeated the idolic, or the demonic. The paradox of grace is manifested in the inseparability of these two symbols and the saturation of the phenomenon of the event of Jesus Christ disclosed in all its sublimity. The biblical is given its due, over the criticisms of Barth, perhaps not in Tillich's professional theology, but in that which he *proclaimed*:

In the face of the Crucified all the 'more' and all the 'less', all progress and all approximation, are meaningless. Therefore, we can say of Him alone: He is the new reality; He is the end; He is the Messiah. To the Crucified alone we can say: 'Thou art the Christ'.²⁹

Where Tillich ultimately attempts to lead us is to the confession of the centurion before the cross, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39). So also Marion, who notes that the centurion saw the same phenomenon, "the same sinister yet visible spectacle" as those who perceived Jesus as a false Messiah. Yet the centurion beheld there on the cross "the visible trace of the invisible God" in which:

the transition turns not on an illusion but on a hermeneutic of all vision . . . to the point of paradox; indeed the distance between the invisible sense and effectively visible spectacle is never so ruptured as it is here, where it is a matter of crossing from this exhausted corpse to the glory of the living God.³⁰

²⁹ Tillich, "He Who Is The Christ" in the *Shaking of the Foundations*, *ibid.*, 150.

³⁰ Marion, *The Crossing of the Visible*, *ibid.*, 72-73.

The “irremediable mark of the invisible in the visible thus takes the shape of the Cross”, as this is the τύπος of the icon of the invisible God privileged, for Marion, in the sacramental moment of the Eucharist. Here both Barth and Tillich differ, for in their respective backgrounds, Reformed and Lutheran, the sacrament takes on a lower order of saturation by its human mediation in the guise of the minister or bishop. However, for all three theologians, *Jesus Christ* is the sacrament of the world, it is only in the *mediation* of this truth that the differences abide.

In a real sense, each of them informs and corrects the other. Barth’s covenantal icon, displayed in its biblical referent and manifested in the obedience of the elect, keeps the issue of the real presence of Christ *in* the finite world and not merely *above* the world. Marion’s eucharistic hermeneutic allows an accentuation on the *distance* of the sacramental icon that cannot be manipulated by human distortion, only venerated. Tillich, in this essay, seems to provide a valuable combination of *both*; for in the event of the crucifixion of Jesus, confessed as the Christ, the visible and invisible, the veiled and the unveiled, the icon over the idol, are brought into the existential reality of humanity providing *the* source of all courage. Grace abounds in the theology of these three understood as unearned *gift*, given by the God of all love. Let us leave it to Karl Barth to proclaim the last words of gift:

*What are we, and what do we have
on this whole earth,
which has not been given to us,
Father, by you?*³¹

³¹ Busch, *Barth*, *ibid.*, 475.

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