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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Hitchcock', written in a cursive style.

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Title of Thesis: Karl Barth and the Resurrection of the Flesh

No. of words in the main text of Thesis: 93,877

However reluctant he may be about providing details, Karl Barth dares to affirm the coming resurrection, even in the strong corporeal sense of the Apostles Creed, "I believe in . . . the resurrection of the flesh." At the heart of Barth's creative approach is an equation between revelation and resurrection. Indeed, everything said about the human addressed now in revelation is to be said about the human at the coming resurrection, including the remarkable fact that resurrection raises the "flesh" (inasmuch as God has revealed Himself to those "in the flesh"). Barth's early training inculcated in him dialectical themes that would emerge throughout his career. His early work is dominated by a sense of encounter with the present but transcendent God, an encounter described in terms of the raising of the dead. Human existence is sublated – "dissolved and established" – unto a higher order in God. Yet even after Barth abandons the resurrection of the dead as his preferred theological axiom, he portrays eschatology proper in terms of the human sublated in the divine presence. Therefore, in *Church Dogmatics* he expresses the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh in three primary ways: eternalization, manifestation and incorporation. The human, delimited as he or she is by death, is made durable in God, obtaining the gift of eternalization. The human, ambiguous in the creaturely mode of earthly life, has one's true identity revealed with Christ at His return, and obtains the gift of manifestation with the divine. The human, isolated as he or she is in one's autonomy, is incorporated into the body of Christ by His Spirit, obtaining the gift of communion. In each of these expressions of resurrection Barth desires to preserve fleshliness. His account, however, entails a certain loss of temporality, creatureliness and particularity of the human when it comes to the final state. Instead of being resurrected from the dead in the strong corporeal sense, human bodies appear to be memorialized, deified, recapitulated. Though written with the language of the Antiochene and Reformed schools, Barth's position enjoys the same strengths and suffers the same weaknesses of a more Alexandrian or Lutheran theological trajectory. Like each of the traditional lines of Christian thought about the resurrection of the flesh, Barth gravitates toward an eschatology centered around the human's vision of God in the heavenly life. To this extent Barth's creative treatment of the resurrection of the dead can be understood as broadly Christian, even if he risks undermining the very flesh he hopes to save.

KARL BARTH AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH

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PHD SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, NEW COLLEGE

2010

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>1Rö</i>	<i>Der Römerbrief</i> (first edition)
<i>2Rö</i>	<i>Der Römerbrief</i> (second edition)
<i>AT</i>	<i>Die Auferstehung der Toten</i>
<i>CD</i>	<i>Church Dogmatics</i> ¹
<i>DO</i>	<i>Dogmatics in Outline</i>
<i>ER</i>	<i>Epistle to the Romans</i>
<i>GA</i>	<i>Gesamtausgabe</i>
<i>GD</i>	<i>Göttingen Dogmatics</i>
<i>PTNC</i>	<i>Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century</i>
<i>KD</i>	<i>Die kirchliche Dogmatik</i>
<i>UCR</i>	<i>Unterricht in der christlichen Religion</i>
<i>WGWM</i>	<i>The Word of God and the Word of Man</i>

¹ All freestanding Roman numeral references in parentheses refer to *Church Dogmatics*.

CHAPTER 1

Redeeming the Flesh

In the end there will be flesh.

The following venture into eschatology is based on the expectation that in the coming age there will be humans with bodies fully alive, far more alive than in their first existence, receiving a renewed mode of their former, earthly life. Nothing will be lost. The Victor, Jesus Christ, whose victory is total and complete in the flesh, will restore the dead. On the day of His return the saints will look at their hands and feet and will see that all things have been made new. Yet the new will be strangely familiar: muscle and bones, skin and scars, all beautiful, and all distinctly themselves. In the end, *flesh*: “If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead abides in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also vivify your mortal bodies through His Spirit who abides in you” (Rom 8:11).¹ Your mortal bodies raised by the Spirit: that scandalous promise launches this study.

Defying generations of western theological thinkers, Karl Barth (1886-1968) confessed the resurrection of the flesh. He even dared to express his belief in physical,

¹ Unless noted otherwise, all Bible translations are my own.

earthy tones. However, his claim did always come across convincingly, in large part because it seemed that he meant something far greater and different than bodily regeneration. Especially in his early years, Barth did not speak of the resurrection of the dead at all in terms of a bare doctrine, but as a complicated eschatological rubric in which revelation is the new, future, miraculous, “resurrective” act of the totally-other God. In this revelation He critiques and redeems our fleshly existence, “raising” us in the sense that every encounter with Him supernaturally marks us as the “dead” who are nevertheless graced and lifted up into a suprahistorical perception and divine life. Yet for all of his spiritual, dialectical and figurative language, Barth never relinquished the bodily resurrection of Jesus, or of humanity in general. In later years he would spill much ink defending Jesus’ corporeal resurrection against what he perceived to be a fresh outbreak of gnosticism. Consistently throughout his life Barth taught that the Easter event is that from which the Christian life flows and even the connective tissue for theology. Indeed, a recent study hails the centrality of the doctrine of the resurrection in his dogmatic work.²

Strange, then, to find that Barth is seemingly silent about eschatology proper, viz., about the exact nature of the final events, the return of Christ, the Last Judgment and the life of the world to come. As its own topic at least, he makes little mention of the resurrection of the dead. Like the nineteenth-century springs from which he drank, Barth does not express any overt interest in the doctrines of the end time(s), and volume V of his magisterial *Church Dogmatics*, intended to cover the doctrine of “redemption,” went unwritten. To date no major work has addressed eschatology proper in Barth’s voluminous work, in large part because it as such does not appear to be a locus of theological inquiry for Barth.

² R. Dale Dawson, *The Resurrection in Karl Barth* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

The appearance is misleading, I propose. Scattered throughout his work are insights into specific eschatological doctrines, including and especially the resurrection of the flesh. Far more importantly, it is possible to derive material doctrines from the form and function of Barth's other doctrines. Very early on he makes an equivocation between resurrection and revelation. This identification is determinative for Barth's thought. His theological statements about the end are primarily extensions of what he says about the event of revelation. Consequently, to speak about our mode of existence in the event of the Father's eternal breaking-in is to talk about what it means for the human to be raised from the dead. To discuss who we are now in Christ's manifest presence is to discuss who we will be then in the eschaton. To ascertain our new relations in the Spirit's grasp is to figure out what it is to be truly raised. Therefore, in this study I unpack what Barth says about humanity in the presence of God, a presence which, when stated as an absolute future state, yields the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh.

Of the flesh! A remarkable feature of Barth's account is his insistence upon actual, physical, concrete human existence in the eschaton, the selfsame earthly body raised and taken up into the life of God. Barth wants nothing to do with spiritualistic hopes derived from older dualistic metaphysics. Popular and philosophical conceptions of the immortality of the soul he dismisses outright. The flesh – the moving, decomposing, dying stuff beset by its sinful predicament in time – is precisely what God intends to crown with salvation.

Of the flesh! On its face, Barth's account aligns quite well with a scandalous tenet of the early Christian faith. *Credo in carnis resurrectionem*, says the Apostles Creed: "I believe in the resurrection of the flesh." The body which acts and grows and sickens and dies is identically that which God intends to raise on the last day. This doctrine,

passed down by the Church fathers of the second and third centuries in this manner, Barth seeks to honor in original and creative ways.

Of the flesh! Even the main streams of the Christian tradition have struggled to receive and articulate this teaching. In the present chapter I lay out four patterns of thought regarding the resurrection of the flesh, showing how each type, despite the finest of intentions, applies a gloss to this scandalous hope. It is worth saying up front that while the earliest affirmations of the flesh are (their ambiguity notwithstanding) quite faithful to the gospel, it seems to me that the ensuing theological developments are wanting in significant ways. However, they serve as a valuable historical backdrop as I set up some parameters of conversation for Barth's own view, which merits its own critical appreciation.

The Scandal of the Flesh

“When they heard about the resurrection of the dead some scoffed, but others said, ‘We will hear you again on this’” (Ac 17:32). Mockery and curiosity typified the reception of the gospel in Paul's gentile mission. The resurrection of the dead had been held as a tenet of varying significance and meaning among second and third temple Judaism,³ though the doctrine did not have nearly the prominence given it by early Christians, who built their religion around devotion to the One who had returned from the grave. Jews of the time were scandalized by the claim that the eschaton had come in this unlikely messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Gentiles were appalled with the idea of bodily

³ For the various views inherited by the first century AD and their political interpretations, see Claudia Setzer, “Resurrection of the Dead as Symbol and Strategy,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69:1 (2001): 65-101. For the doctrine's development and its multifaceted significance as a Jewish doctrine, see Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

resurrection more generally. Middle Platonists had immunized themselves against such an idea through their own doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Yet even for the more materialistic philosophers of the period (like those at the Areopagus in Acts 17) a resurrection-hope would have sounded curious at best, inane at worst.⁴ Identity with the body in this life hardly called for the assertion that *this* body is destined for immortality. To the philosophical mind the flesh epitomized change, which in turn suggested the restlessness inherent in imperfection. Flesh is that which morphs, ages, sickens, dies, decays, disintegrates. For the Greco-Roman world which prized immutability so highly, it seemed unthinkable to entertain a gospel that vouchsafed a temporal, concrete, dynamic and specific future to human bodies.

We have no record of anyone in the primitive Church longing for simple resuscitation, yet for them the resurrection always suggested something of a *re*-surrection, something of a coming back, a return of what was. To early Christians the resurrection from the dead entailed newness – yet a newness of the old. Had this not been the double model of their Master? Jesus “appeared” to the disciples (Lk 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5-8) – yet His tomb was emphatically empty (Mt 28:6; Mk 16:4-8; Lk 24:3,12; Jn 20:1-9).⁵ He could circumvent locked doors, arriving and vanishing instantaneously (Lk 24:31, 35; Jn 20:26) – yet He claimed to be flesh and bone (Lk 24:39), evidencing it by talking and eating with the disciples (Lk 24:13-31; 24:37-43; Jn 21:12-13) and being touched by them (Mt 28:9; Jn 20:17; 1 Jn 1:1?). The risen Jesus ascended into heaven to prepare a celestial house (Lk 24:51; Ac 1:9; Jn 14:1-4; 2 Cor 5:1-10; Rev 21:2) – yet that house has been destined for a terrestrial setting (Mt 5:4; Rev 21:2).

⁴ N. Clayton Croy, “Hellenistic Philosophies and the Preaching of the Resurrection,” *Novum Testamentum* 39:1 (Jan 1997): 21-39.

⁵ For a discussion of the language of the resurrection appearances see Murray J. Harris, *From Grave to Glory: Resurrection in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1990), 129-46.

This fundamental juxtaposition of discontinuity and continuity is nowhere more concentrated than in 1 Corinthians 15, the *locus classicus* of the resurrection doctrine. There Paul entertains the question of the glorified body in images of similitude and dissimilitude.⁶ The seed metaphor (vv.36-38, 42-44) depicts a body in radical alteration, passing beyond death to a new form of the person, wholly fructified, yet somehow identical with the original, pre-death seed. The differing fleshs of living organisms (vv.39) suggest the possibility of different bodies, as do the disparate glories of heavenly orbs (vv.40-41). But it is really the seed-to-plant metaphor which best describes the change Paul has in mind: the seed is sown a “natural” body (*sōma psuchikon*) and raised a “spiritual” body (*sōma pneumatikon*). Identity-in-difference itself is governed by Christology in the form of a dialectic between the earthly and heavenly Man (vv.45-50). The first Adam, a “natural” being (*psuchēn zōsan*), had to become the last Adam, Jesus Christ, a “lifegiving spirit” (*pneuma zōopooun*). The logic extends to the general resurrection: just as the first Adam became the last Adam, our old body-self will become its new body-self. We will overcome death in this consummate *transformation*, though it will be *we* ourselves who “put on” immortality, imperishability, glory and power (vv.51-57). It is not my purpose to untangle Paul’s semiotics, only to appreciate how themes of discontinuity and continuity converge dramatically in talk of the resurrection body. We will live again – to the life which is and is not the life we had before. Our flesh will be raised – which will and will not be the flesh of our former existence. Both sides of the paradox may and must be upheld.

It is striking, then, how in the earliest records after the apostles we find defense after defense of the *continuity* of the body. Greek and Latin writers alike prefer to speak

⁶ For the following, see the discussion of Paul’s rhetorico-logical flow in the second *refutatio* and *confirmatio* of 1 Cor 15 in Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1176-8, 1257-1306.

of the resurrection of the dead not in terms of the raising of the person (*prosōpon*; *persona*), or even of the body (*sōma*, *corpus*), but of the flesh (*sarx*; *caro*). While they utilize Pauline texts, the early apologists and ecclesiastical writers prefer to dialogue in the Johannine idiom. The Savior came “in the flesh” (Jn 1:14; 1 Jn 4:2; 2 Jn 7), suffered “in the flesh” (1 Jn 5:6-8) and rose again giving many corporeal proofs (Jn 20:20, 27, 30). The early fathers take up residence in this kind of discourse. Or maybe it is better to say that in their prose and poetry they choose to abide in the Hebraic mindset: flesh *is* what is means to be human, what it means to be the creature of God, even the covenant-partner of YHWH, showered with all His material blessings. God is pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh – but flesh is flesh.

Since others have compiled more exhaustive collections of writings about the Christian hope in the second and early third centuries,⁷ let me note just a few examples of the way in which the early fathers gravitated toward a robust, gritty sense of the resurrection of the flesh. The writings of the second century authors do not make it a goal to deny the spiritual nature of Jesus Christ or to challenge the immortality of the immaterial soul, but they intentionally direct the conversation towards the flesh and the resurrection thereof. In a document that may be contemporaneous with the later New Testament writers, Clement of Rome writes that the resurrection of the dead is a concrete and credible future occurrence, as evidenced by the example of the (supposedly real) phoenix, which rises out of the same material in which it died.⁸ Ignatius speaks more to the point when he says that Jesus after His resurrection “ate and drank as a

⁷ E.g., N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 480-552; Horacio E. Lona, *Über die Auferstehung des Fleisches: Studien zur frühchristlichen Eschatologie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993); Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body: in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 21-58.

⁸ 1 *Clement* 24:1-26:3.

fleshly one [*bōs sarkikos*], though He was spiritually united to the Father.”⁹ Regularly beseeching Christians to understand the Lord Jesus as well as themselves as united flesh and spirit, Ignatius’s concern is directed toward the continuity of the body.¹⁰ Others place the body at the core of human existence even more stridently, such as the writer of the second century *Epistula Apostolorum*, who insists that Jesus’ incarnation was accomplished so that we might rise in the flesh. When the disciples state that it is the flesh that falls in death, Jesus responds, “What is fallen will arise, and what is ill will be sound, that my Father may be praised therein.”¹¹ The site of death and decay will be the site of redemption. In this vein the writer of the pseudepigraphal *2 Clement* teaches, “If Christ the Lord who saved us, though he was first a Spirit, became flesh and thus called us, so also shall we receive the reward in the same flesh [*en tautē tē sarkē*].”¹² The early Church by and large embraced the resurrection in a straightforward sense, highlighting again and again the body-material that is raised.

Why did the fathers state their position in such an abrasive form? Two functionalist explanations have been suggested. The first draws attention to the clergy’s desire to establish a stronger hierarchy and rebuff the antinomianism of Gnostic groups. Second century Gnosticism’s claim that each person possesses (and is) a spiritual, divine spark came with an attendant disdain for the body, a belief system which culminated in the rejection of “apparent” earthly order and centralized ecclesiastical government. The

⁹ Ignatius, *Ad Smyrnaos* 3:3. That the docetic thinkers in the church want to escape the body is proof that *they* are real “only in semblance,” sharing the same destiny as the bodiless demons (2:1).

¹⁰ Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 486, 494.

¹¹ *Epistula Apostolorum* 25 (Coptic text), cited in Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha: Vol. 1: Gospels and Related Writings*, rev. ed., trans. R. McL. Wilson (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1991), 264. The epistle’s attention to corporeality affirms the resurrection of the whole person at the very least, and may be quarreling openly with a dualistic anthropology (Lona, *Über die Auferstehung des Fleisches*, 88).

¹² *2 Clement* 9:5.

eschatology of the apologists, by intentional contrast, reinforced the notion of the goodness of Christians' governed, terrestrial lives by speaking of their future governed, earthly lives.¹³ A second social explanation says that the resurrection of the flesh addressed the problem of martyrdom.¹⁴ Theologians used the doctrine to encourage the saints as they suffered brutal violence and degradation at the hands of their Roman oppressors. If Christians were tortured and slain in their bodies, God would raise up their conquered bodies. Even if Christians were mutilated, devoured by beasts, and given over to the defilement and decay, they would rise again utterly victorious in the exact flesh in which they were humiliated. God would triumph in that very place.

These reasons are certainly legitimate. But one should not necessarily agree with Caroline Walker Bynum's assessment that the early Church's theological reasoning (the model of Jesus' own resurrection, the impact of millenarianism, refutation of the Gnostic threat, etc.) was mostly tautological.¹⁵ The early Church may have intensified its witness to corporeality for sociological reasons, yes, but one must not obscure the degree to which early Christians understood the integrity of the apostolic message to hang in the balance. Why not Docetism? Because the message of Christ would be no more than a ruse. Why not Marcionitism? Because it would betray the faith's comprehensive claim on the world. Why not the Gnostic option? Because the gospel would evaporate. By abstracting the flesh, anti-corporealist thinkers aimed to undercut the mediatorial role of Jesus Christ. They despised creation and the Hebrew scriptures – and the God of Israel who breathed them both into being. They rejected the heart of

¹³ See the hypothesis of John G. Gager, "Body Symbols and Social Reality," *Religion* 12:4 (1982): 345-64.

¹⁴ Cf. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 21-58.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

the apostolic message of *Emmanuel*: that God lived and died and lives forevermore with us. He saves us by inhabiting the creation, redeeming it from the inside-out. Only an eschatology that affirmed a concrete place for the created order could hope to stand against such convenient Christianities.

Therefore the task of second century theologians was to keep creation and re-creation united. Athenagoras in his *De resurrectione* make pains to forge a bond between the two, doing it so strongly that a good portion of the treatise is necessarily devoted to dealing with the cannibalism objection (viz., If the created body and redeemed body are identical, what of the bits that are assimilated by other humans? To whom will they belong?). Tertullian too expresses that “the flesh will rise again: it wholly [*omnis*], it identically [*ipsa*], it entirely [*integra*],”¹⁶ even as he champions the value of the soul.

Patristic writers were every bit as concerned for orthopraxy as for right belief. For example, Justin Martyr makes a splendid argument against spiritualizers by making them out to be bad worshipers. Such people believe that their naturally-good souls go on to immortality while their wicked bodies perish, but if this is the case, Justin deduces, they are also averring that nothing of themselves needs to be saved by God, and so can only blasphemously assume that they owe Him no thanks and gratitude.¹⁷ To them nature feels more and more like a burden, so much so that, disregarding the value of the body, they abandon themselves to extreme asceticism on one hand or flagrant libertinism on the other. In contrast, God will heal His good creation when “the flesh shall rise perfect and entire.”¹⁸ This is the reason why Christians must live holy lives in

¹⁶ Tertullian, *De resurrectione carnis*, lxiii.

¹⁷ Justin Martyr, *De resurrectione*, viii.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, iv.

the present age, Justin teaches, for God will hold us responsible for all the acts done in the body and judge us accordingly.¹⁹

Faith statements developing in the early centuries of the Church reflect this sentiment. For instance, around 215 Hippolytus of Rome instructed that those being baptized must affirm, among other things, that they believe “in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Church and the resurrection of the flesh.”²⁰ Penned in 340, the creed of Marcellus to Pope Julius I espouses the “resurrection of the flesh,” a phrase reflecting content and structure dating to the latter half of the second century.²¹ Marcellus’s creed is especially important, as it is very close to the present form of the Apostles Creed, and identical in its profession of belief in *sarkos anastasin* (equivalent with the Latin *carnis resurrectionem*). The “apostolic” title of the latter creed may be misleading on its face, but J.N.D. Kelley concludes that the early version of the Old Roman Symbol represented “a compendium of popular theology,” an accurate portrayal of “the faith and hope of the primitive Church.”²² All of this goes to say that the resurrection of the flesh was not some idiosyncratic belief held by a few, or a mere residue from Christianity’s Hebraic inheritance. For all its obvious difficulties, the doctrine presented the chief hope of the Church.

To summarize, the early Church fathers were consistent in their teaching of a resurrection of the flesh, that the selfsame body (whatever that might mean) is reconstituted in the eschaton for judgment and salvation. Against those spiritualizers

¹⁹ Ibid., x; Justin Martyr, *Apologia* viii.18; cf. Tertullian, *De resurrectione carnis*, xiv.

²⁰ Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 21:17. For the absence of the phrase in one branch of its transmission, see Gregory Dix and Henry Chadwick, ed., *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome, Bishop and Martyr*, 3rd rev. ed. (New York: Routledge, 1992), lxix.

²¹ See Lynn Boliek, *The Resurrection of the Flesh: A Study of a Confessional Phrase* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Campen, 1962), 13-21.

²² J.N.D. Kelley, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (London: Continuum, 2006), 131.

and Gnostics who would abstract or reject the tangible body, the fathers emphasized continuity amidst transformation in the resurrection. They asserted this for reasons of praxis as well as theological integrity. In the second century context, the resurrection of the flesh was simply the best way, perhaps the only way, to commend personal holiness and uphold a Christian doctrine of creation. This attitude cropped up repeatedly in early rules of faith, which in turn registered a loud testimony in the Apostles Creed: *credo . . . in carnis resurrectionem*. For all their glaring logical, theological and scientific loose ends, the early fathers were able to hold onto the physical body as the locus of redemption. They sought it out as the place of human identity, growth and responsibility. But many questions remained, leading later theologians to propose quite disparate models of interpretation for this scandalous tenet.

Four Accounts of the Flesh

The architects of the Nicene Creed around 381 would opt for the more generic phrase, *anastasin nekrōn*. Use of “the resurrection of the dead” (with its uncontested biblical pedigree) seemed suitable enough considering that the Arian controversy of the fourth century called for a defense of the *deity* of Jesus Christ rather than His humanity. But the earlier creeds with their fleshy language were retained in many circles for the purpose of upholding the human dimension. They provided a stronger sense of concrete futurity to counterbalance the delay of the parousia and the immanence of imperial Christendom.²³

²³ Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 127. Developing this thought, the creed itself can be understood to preserve a tension between continuity through the *carnis resurrectionem* and discontinuity through the *vitam aeternam* (which was added to the creed by 250), but Kattenbusch is probably right to conclude the latter clause is

From the third century forward, however, the exact meaning of “the resurrection of the flesh” had become disputed, and controversies surrounding the eschatological body bubbled near the surface on numerous occasions over the next millennium. I have taken the liberty of making a typology of four basic views about the flesh. The four types below represent a family of thought regarding what happens to “the flesh” at the resurrection. The four, what I will call “substituting the flesh,” “collecting the flesh,” “endowing the flesh” and “deifying the flesh,” all have important historical representatives from antiquity and the middle ages. I have assigned one or two theologians to each view. My primary intent, however, is to present a typology of *systems of thought*. Each type explains the doctrine of *carnis resurrectionem* with a specific logic and certain values in mind. While I am forced to paint in broad strokes, I believe the following four categories help to set the stage for how Karl Barth, truly an ecumenical theologian, grapples with the corporeal Christian hope.

Substituting the Flesh

If Gnosticism was successfully repelled in the second century, dualism never lost its foothold in the Christian communities. Those who embraced Greek philosophy and rigorous programs of self-discipline remained quite eager to see the higher, nobler soul overpower the lower, more sinful flesh. So it was with Clement of Alexandria, whose alignment with Stoic and middle Platonic philosophies allowed him room to affirm the body only insofar as the corporeal facilitated the development of the life of the soul in

meant to explicate the resurrection itself (D. Ferdinand Kattenbusch, *Das apostolische Symbol*, Band II (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1894), 952.

its journey toward heaven.²⁴ But if the body is the vehicle of the soul, what happens to the former in the state of perfection? Visions of the future sometimes fantasized about discontinuity through deliverance from materiality, as in Arnobius, who describes the body as “a disgusting vessel of urine” and “a bag of shit.”²⁵ The resurrection had to be something quite different than a resuscitation, for only by transmuting the flesh into a spiritual substance could the evolution of the soul be complete. At the very least, the soul needed its corporeal companion to be composed of a higher grade of material than mortal dust.

The development of this interpretation took place at the hands of the great third century monastic, Origen of Alexandria (c. 185-254). In his writings Origen clearly intends to honor the scriptures and tradition even as he sets them in a fresh philosophical matrix. His project revolves around connectivity with the Logos, Jesus Christ, the One who descended to humanity so that others might be participants in His divine rationality. Because of the superiority of the spiritual realm, Origen’s cosmology looks like a parabola, wherein pre-existent (though created) souls are cast from heaven into bodies, then reconciled by the Logos so that a return to heaven is possible.²⁶ While the return of the soul to God is a constant feature of his theology, Origen admits that there will be a resurrection body too.

When Origen speaks of the resurrection, he means the resurrection of *a* body, something with a continuity of *form* though not a continuity of material. This form lies behind the matter and is non-identical with it. In an important fragment, he teaches

²⁴ See Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Shape of Death: Life, Death and Immortality in the Early Fathers* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961), 32-52.

²⁵ Arnobius, *Adversus nationes*, 2.37, cited in Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 61.

²⁶ For a summary of the controversial nature of *Peri Archon*, see Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 29-32. Origen’s parabola is explained in Pelikan, *The Shape of Death*, 77-97.

that “although the form [*eidōs*] is saved, we are going to put away nearly [every] earthly quality in the resurrection,” meaning that “for the saint there will indeed be [a body] preserved by him who once endured the flesh with form, but [there will] no longer [be] flesh; yet the very thing which was once being characterized in the flesh will be characterized in the spiritual body.”²⁷ Origen will not permit the redemption of the flesh as such, and therefore separates out a mediating body-form with some of the properties of the soul.²⁸ This *eidōs* is immortal and sacred, yet what it draws to the soul at the resurrection is very different stuff than its previous earthly attachments. In the place of flesh God puts spiritual matter. Why not the flesh? Because it is a river of change, Origen says, a flux of desire and imperfection. The fleshly material of the body must be exchanged for a new attending substance; the *eidōs*-body must be raised (i.e., filled out) with something spiritual and tranquil. Elaborating Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 15, Origen sees the resurrection as the germination of a mediating principle, the spiritual realization of what was once fleshly but is now heavenly.

This substitution of the flesh, his critics over the centuries have pointed out, seems to be an attempt to shirk bodiliness altogether. One swaps out the old for the new; but who is to say that this new, upgraded commodity could not also be further upgraded, or disposed with altogether? Though Origen asserts that every being (God alone excepted) possesses bodily substance, his pronounced emphasis on a return of the soul to primordial unity, lightness and spirituality indicates that corporeality is a

²⁷ Origen, *Commentary on Psalm 1*, cited in Jon F. Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 375, bracketed words in original; cf. Methodius’s longer quotation in *De resurrectione*, i.22.

²⁸ See the work of Henri Crouzel (“La doctrine origénienne du corps réssuscité,” *Gregorianum* 53 [1972]: 679-716), who describes the *eidōs* as a substratum conceived along Platonic and Stoic lines. Origen can elsewhere refer to this form as a “seminal principle” or “underlying matter” (see Boliek, *The Resurrection of the Flesh*, 47-51, though one has no reason to follow Boliek’s assessment that the three terms can be distinguished as “elements” of continuity).

cumbersome addition to the metaphysical hierarchy. He makes strides towards a philosophically consistent position by developing a conception of participation, though, tellingly, participation applies only to the soul. It seems that the soul has already positioned the glorified body under or within itself.²⁹ Lynn Boliek observes how Origen's train of thought seems to lead in the direction of the elimination of the body altogether, something akin to the Neoplatonic astral body. The outer self is (en)lightened until all traces of corporeality become spiritual and luminous and weightless. Ultimately all remaining corporeality is either shed or converted into one's soul, which in turn is subsumed into God.³⁰

To be fair, Origen never spelled out this otherworldly vision so far as to deny the bodily resurrection. On one level his solution accords with the biblical language: since "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven" (1 Cor 15:50) a different fabric must be granted to human existence, something better and more redeemable than flesh as such, some kind of "spiritual body." Origen's creative rethinking of the problem was not enough to protect him from ecclesiastic censure, however. His ordination was revoked in 231 and his views posthumously condemned by a council in 400, by imperial decree in 543, and a decade thereafter by the fifth ecumenical council. In more recent years it has been suggested that Origen was constructing a far more sophisticated system than is reflected in the glossed manuscripts passed down to us. It is probably the case that his lost treatise on the resurrection was more in line with orthodox than the teachings of his disciples, who were not nearly so careful in

²⁹ Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 147-8. The lower parts of the human must be subsumed by the higher, soul, in order to make progress into deification, to become spiritual through the Holy Spirit, at which point one's spiritual soul may acquire the attributes of Logos by itself becoming logical (p.154).

³⁰ Boliek, *The Resurrection of the Flesh*, 59-67. In our present (and likely corrupted) manuscripts, Origen is at odds with himself, foreseeing an end to bodily diversity (*De principiis*, III.vi.4) and making provision for some kind of diversification of bodies into eternity (*De principiis*, II.iii.2-3).

safeguarding continuity in the resurrection.³¹ Yet critics both ancient and recent are right to note Origen's spiritualizing tendencies.

In the substitution type, flesh is swapped out for a spiritual substance. The resurrection discontinues the present composition of the body in order to build a better specimen, though the body continues with its underlying foundation. Ultimately, the substitution view falls back not so much on its quasi-material identity as its formal identity, the "shape" lent to the body as it is built again with spiritual building blocks. The flesh as such, this present body, is at best an opaque shadow of what is to come, and has no ultimate connection to the life to come. The "real" body lies beneath the body, as a germ, carried along with the soul in the upward arc of evolution and return to God, waiting to be stripped of flesh and re clothed in spiritual garments. Perhaps because it was too closely related to middle Platonism and Gnostic mystagogy, our first type was sidelined as a real option for the Church, though not entirely expunged.³² Indeed, the fourth type in some ways picks up where Origen leaves off – but let us first consider a counterposition arising in the third century.

Collecting the Flesh

The basic Greek dualism of body and soul was adopted almost universally by early Christians. Delineation of visible and invisible human components helped to make sense of scripture's command to disdain the flesh's desires, and supplied some inroads

³¹ E.g. F.X. Murphy, "Evagrius Ponticus and Origenism," in *Origeniana Tertia: The Third International Colloquium for Origen Studies*, ed. Richard Patrick Crosland Hanson and Henri Crouzel (Rome: Edizioni dell' Ateneo, 1985), 253-69.

³² Origenists of late antiquity aside, John Scotus Eriugena resumed Origen's program in the ninth century (see John W. Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers: From Plato to the Present* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006], 47-50; Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 142ff.).

for conversation with many of the contemporary philosophies of the age. Yet many of the Christians who regarded the soul highly also expounded a high future for the flesh. The Savior had come in human flesh; He and many others were martyred in the flesh; good works and personal holiness had everything to do with the life in the flesh. Therefore, Christian theologians (especially in the west) lodged answers about human identity in *this* body. The result of such thinking was often expressed in terms of perdurance and collection, with all the bits of one's flesh reassembled at the resurrection.

Embracing a literalistic approach, certain Church fathers found in the scriptures a human eschaton expressed in stark material terms, as in the protection against decay of Psalm 16 or the collected bones of Ezekiel 37. After all, did not Christ promise that “not one hair of your heads will perish” (Lk 21:18)? Even without a wooden reading, many Christians in antiquity and the middle ages discerned that the scriptures identified humans as essentially physical, not just psychical, and that God intended to restore, judge and honor the earthly body. This sentiment – in combination with a growing need to justify the use of relics³³ – led Christians to posit that continuity resided in the bodily material itself. The resurrection of the flesh, understood as a collection of a person's selfsame matter, was the dominant view in the west from the third century into the thirteenth. For expediency in explaining the type, we will touch only on Jerome and Augustine.³⁴

Jerome of Stridon (c. 345-420) is concerned to preserve both the exact material and the exact form of that material in this earthly life. Following in the footsteps of

³³ Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 92-4, 104-14.

³⁴ Bynum's magnificent study recounts dozens of advocates of this view, a view which manifested increasingly material descriptions and images of regurgitation and reassembly of the dead (ibid., 59-225).

Theophilus, Athenagoras and Methodius, he describes the resurrection body in terms of reconstruction: it is a mended ship or a recast clay pot, constructed in such a way that every member of the body comes together into the whole with the same material. Unlike his forebears, Jerome vociferates an amillennial position, one that moves earth toward heaven even as it lowers heaven toward earth; the Church is raised to God even as God is lowered to the Church. Heaven is a mirror of earth.³⁵ God concretizes all differentiation eternally in the hereafter. Elizabeth Clark describes Jerome's formulation as an attempt to preserve the social structure between male and female, leader and follower, virgins and whoremongers, even ascetic and non-ascetic – a full-scale “hierarchy of bodies.”³⁶ To this end Jerome talks about the resurrection in terms of material continuity *and* formal continuity, with the supernatural addition being only the “clothing” of immortality.³⁷ Jerome detests change in the body every bit as much as an Origenist, though he rejects any attempt to obtain immutability by the switching out of one's bodily matter. Only a permanent collection of bones and breasts, teeth and testicles, all sorted out and permanently assembled as the right individuals, will solve the problem of corruptibility and change. Bodies must be gathered and made invincible, much like the hardened flesh of the monastic saints.

For all his inconsistency, Augustine is the most important instance of the collection view, seeing that his teachings were imitated through the middle ages and

³⁵ Ibid., 94.

³⁶ Elizabeth A. Clark, “New Perspectives on the Origenist Controversy: Human Embodiment and Ascetic Strategies,” *Church History* 59:2 (June 1990): 162. Even before Jerome, Methodius of Olympus celebrated the fact that the chaste flesh could serve as the mediator of heaven and earth, so much so that “the bridge across the chasm between God and man passed through the bodies of his virgin girls” (Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1988], 384).

³⁷ “Thus Jerome's stress was not so much on material continuity as on *integrity*,” says Bynum, “on the reconstitution and hardening of the bodily vessel so that every organ is intact and eternally protected from amputation (*The Resurrection of the Body*, 89).

Reformation and reverberate even today. On one level his view is deeply spiritualistic. Since for Augustine mental properties (memory, intellect and will) are the image of God, he describes the hereafter in terms of contemplation of God, the *visio Dei*. When the soul is perfected and stands before the Almighty, it will see Him face to face. In a Platonic vein, paradise will be a place where the enlightened saints perceive the invisible realities and by it experience spiritual rest and bliss. They have ascended beyond any bodily need. Being “suited for the assembly of the angels,” the risen saint has surpassed all physical limitations; when one closes his or her eyelids, the glorious vision stays before the person.³⁸

Paradoxically, Augustine adds the body to this serene reality, and does so in stark, earthy tones. He draws off Jerome and others to describe the collection of the resurrection body. Like a recast statue, Augustine says, all the fragments of the former body come together into a new one.³⁹ Each atom is there, but it is now made perfectly beautiful, perfectly symmetrical, without defect.⁴⁰ Miscarried children and dead infants will be raised according to their “seminal principle,” with God adding (but never subtracting) material from bodies to make them flawless. Does the risen flesh add anything to the glorified soul? Augustine appears to want to say something of this sort, but his argument founders as he speculates about the physical body allowing greater perception of God’s presence in visible bodies.⁴¹ Despite the fact that the collection of the body is only an addendum to the soul’s vision of God, Augustine takes up the

³⁸ For this and the following, see Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 84-95; Augustine, *Civitas Dei*, xxii.

³⁹ Augustine follows Methodius of Olympus with this image.

⁴⁰ Beauty (not ability) is Augustine’s primary concern for eschatological corporeality: bodies molded to ideal proportions, though still marked by religiously significant scars (Kristi Upson-Saia, “Scars, Marks, and Deformities in Augustine’s Resurrected Bodies,” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, 2 November 2008).

⁴¹ Augustine, *Civitas Dei*, xxii.29.

refrain that the only true faith is that which preaches *carnis in aeternum resurrectio*,⁴² by which he means material continuity of both body and soul. Everything must be gathered; nothing can be lost.

On its face, this type takes the flesh most seriously. But Jerome and Augustine demonstrate how continuity of the person through the flesh can, oddly enough, terminate all of the predicates associated with flesh. The new bodies are reconnected to their respective souls, but the former are quarantined. They have become something sterile and aesthetic rather than an actual mode of life. The body, far from being vivified, is simply sculpted and hardened. Being more than just call back to the world, the collecting-the-flesh view baptizes the present order without much resistance, for the kingdom is found too much in this present world of ascetics and relics, ecclesiastical principalities and powers. Equally concerning is its tendency (through Augustine) to speak of a collection of particles as a side-item of the true glorification, the beatific vision. Paradoxically, the material nature of this type is subordinate to, if not subsumed within, the spiritual hope of psychic bliss in heaven. Historically, however, the collection view became the dominant perspective in the west through the high middle ages. The resurrection would also be spoken of this way by most of the Reformers, who confessed the raising of the “selfsame flesh” even as they longed for a disembodied existence in heaven.⁴³ When conceived as a material gathering to the spiritual life of the soul, our second type begins to slide quite effortlessly into the third.

⁴² Ibid., xxii.9.

⁴³ See the collation of Reformation documents in John T. Darragh, *The Resurrection of the Flesh* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1921), 213ff.

Endowing the Flesh

Our next type emerged in the west around the turn of the thirteenth century. While it suggested a gathering together of the exact particles of the former body, its central idea had to do with the transmission of the powers of the soul to the body. It spoke in terms of overflow, gift, and infusion, an endowment from the soul to its body. As flesh is recalled by God and married to the beatified soul, the flesh comes to bear psychic, celestial qualities.

Hitherto, Augustine's meditations on the resurrected flesh had supplied the basic framework for early medieval and scholastic meditations, including Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. But the Aristotelian renaissance of the high middle ages led to new conceptions of relations between the soul and body. Rather than seeing things as participants in the form, Aristotelian theologians attempted to understand the form within and upon things. In the anthropological realm, the flesh becomes that which is impressed and shaped and ordered by the soul (i.e., hylomorphism). The soul, as the higher aspect of the person, becomes glorious in its communion with God, so much so that it can bestow its beauty upon the flesh in the resurrection.

Thomas Aquinas (in the company of Albertus Magnus, Robert Grossteste and Bonaventure) articulated this view most comprehensively. The soul, says Thomas, is like a painter who expresses his workmanship through his work; the soul produces a body representative of its own virtue.⁴⁴ God can recall the old particles from the earth or the stomachs of cannibals, but what really matters is that our glorified souls will form for themselves holy bodies by endowing the flesh with spiritual qualities. Thomas,

⁴⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplementum, q.80, a.1 (response).

speaking after William of Auxerre, describes the resurrection body as possessing impassibility (*impassibilitas*), subtlety (*subtilitas*), agility (*agilitas*) and clarity (*claritas*).⁴⁵ How Thomas defines each of these terms is not as important as the fact that with each he distributes psychic attributes to the flesh. The soul, beholding God, still desires to have a body with it.⁴⁶ When the soul is united with its body, the former communicates to the latter its airy qualities. One might say that Thomas's conception operates along medieval patriarchal lines: as a man disseminates wealth to his own, the soul manages its resources and bestows them upon its body.⁴⁷ In this life the (imperfect) soul blesses and shines through the body in part; in the coming life the (glorious) soul blesses and shines through the body in full.

The immense superiority of the soul permits it independence from the body in the case of one's death. In itself the soul possesses the power of intellect. It can impress itself upon matter as matter's form, but the soul itself does not rely upon matter for expression. It has "somatomorphic" qualities, to use Carol Zaleski's term.⁴⁸ It is capable of full sensation even apart from the flesh, a kind of proto-bodily mobility. After death souls may long for their bodies, but they are not in any significant way disabled or unhappy without them. Therefore, no hard distinction need be made between an individual's death and the final return of Christ to complete all things. One

⁴⁵ Ibid., qq.82-85.

⁴⁶ For the theology of desire as developed in Bonaventure and Thomas, see Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 247ff.

⁴⁷ Martha C. Howell, *Women, Production and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986), 15.

⁴⁸ Carol Zaleski, *Otherworldly Journeys: Accounts of Near-Death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 51. For expression of this in the *Divine Comedy*, see Carolyn Walker Bynum, "Faith Imagining the Self: Somatomorphic Soul and Resurrection Body in Dante's *Divine Comedy*," in *Faithful Imagining: Essays in Honor of Richard R. Niebuhr*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee et al. (Atlanta, GA: Scholar's Press, 1995): 83-106.

might even permit the confusion of the individual eschaton and the consummation of the world (a feature of the thirteenth-century *Stabat Mater*).

Still, Thomas and others affirmed the resurrection of the flesh for reasons of natural identity, reward and punishment, and, most importantly, completion. The soul, for all its self-sufficiency, desires the completion of being a soul with its body. At the resurrection, the soul, beatified in the presence of God and united to Him, will take and arrange the flesh according to a nobler order. One's body will be comprised of the same material as before, though it will have another form (*aliam dispositionem habebunt*).⁴⁹ The saints' bodies "are invested with an immortality coming from a divine strength which enables the soul so to dominate the body that corruption cannot enter."⁵⁰ More specifically,

Entirely possessed by soul, the body will then be fine and spirited. Then also will it be endowed with the noble lightsomeness of beauty; it will be invulnerable, and no outside forces can damage it; it will be lissom and agile, entirely responsive to the soul, like an instrument in the hands of a skilled player. These are the four conditions of the glorified body: fineness, radiance, impassibility, and agility.⁵¹

The flesh, formerly unexpressive and unsubmitive and retarding to the soul,⁵² in the eschaton becomes responsive to the kingly psyche, thereby acquiring soul-like properties. The resurrection body, like a fine instrument, vibrates with the soul's power.

The endowing view therefore builds a strong position upon a modified Aristotelian platform, guarding the identity of the person through the soul (that is, its immortal, psychic, formal identity) while honoring the body as a real component of

⁴⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, IV.lxxxv.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Thomas Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Texts* (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1982), 408-9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 409.

⁵² Cf. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 266.

human personhood. It guarantees a place for the resurrection of the body in Christian dogmatics. Its weakness, however, lies in its reliance upon a rather specific body-soul dualism which relegates flesh to a secondary, deeply subordinated place. In such a view of the resurrection, the flesh is superadded to, sanitized through, and made an accessory by its nobler counterpart. (In this respect, the history of the Church in the west reveals a slippery slope: the vast superiority of the Thomistic soul tempted future theologians to marginalize the general resurrection as an ancillary doctrine, a tendency colorfully illustrated by Benedict XII's 1336 decree insisting that the soul's bliss is perfect at death, so that the resurrection of the body adds nothing in terms of beatification.⁵³) Making the redemption of the flesh into a side concern of glorification, the third type can uphold little distinction between the intermediate state and the final condition of the believer.

Deifying the Flesh

Our fourth type takes a rather different approach to the resurrection of the flesh. It softens the constitutional dualism of body and soul, preferring to think of the whole person taken up into the life of God. Participating in God through Christ by the Holy Spirit, an individual is transfigured into the likeness of God, enjoying some of His attributes. This supernatural transfiguration of the person is "deification" (*theōsis*). More fashionable among eastern Christians (but not without its adherents in the west), this view understands the general resurrection as the completion of something already

⁵³ When Pope John XXII pushed for the modest view that the righteous dead cannot be said to have received perfect bliss because of their disembodied state, he was effectively forced to recant. His successor, Benedict XII, decreed by papal bull that the only permissible belief was that the *visio Dei* was perfect and complete before the resurrection. See especially Decima L. Douie, "John XXII and the Beatific Vision," *Dominican Studies* 3:2 (1950): 154-74, and Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 279-85.

begun in this life, the “raising” or ascending of the whole psychosomatic person into the life of God.

Recent studies have shown that the doctrine of deification evolved slowly.⁵⁴ Some of the early fathers might be claimed as forerunners, including Ignatius and Irenaeus. In truth, however, the doctrine only came into its place as an Alexandrian theologoumenon.⁵⁵ Origen may have been marginalized, but his ideas were not; a battery of important thinkers of Alexandria over the next centuries continued to dialogue with his work.⁵⁶ The Cappadocian fathers sought to give a rich meaning to the idea of being drawn up into God, as did Cyril. They sifted through Origenistic and Neoplatonic ideas in order to testify to the salvation offered through the incarnate existence of Jesus Christ. Most of the greatest thinkers, whether orthodox or heretical, came out of Alexandria. Their challenge was to construct sound and creative Christian doctrine without relying too directly or too much on philosophical glue.⁵⁷

Athanasius of Alexandria (c.295-373) did much to expand the concept of deification,⁵⁸ and therewith to reinterpret the resurrection of the flesh. The central purpose of his writings as a bishop and theologian is to unite the Church against those who saw Jesus Christ of inferior substance to the Father, a mere creature. Indeed, Athanasius develops the doctrine of deification in this battle against Arianism. He

⁵⁴ See, for instance, Vladimir Kharmalov, “Deification in the Apologists of the Second Century,” in *Theōsis: Deification in Christian Theology*, ed. Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharmalov. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2006), 67-85.

⁵⁵ Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 115.

⁵⁶ Cf. Alexander Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1977), 158ff.; Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 68.

⁵⁷ The philosophical baggage carried by some of the Alexandrians sometime required them to be reinterpreted and “inorthodoxed,” as in the case of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (Vladimir L. Kharlamov, ““The Beauty of the Unity and the Harmony of the Whole””: Concept of *Theōsis* in the Theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite,” [Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 2006], 394).

⁵⁸ He speaks more about deification than any previous writer and coins new terminology (Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 167-8).

argues at length that only if Jesus Christ is of one being with the Father do we actually know God and receive His salvation. The Savior must be full deity. Yet Athanasius's fight for a high Christology is not without a contention for full humanity. The Word became *flesh*. That is the only way His deity could benefit our humanity. He in His highest being condescended to the lowest human place in order to sanctify us from the bottom up. What is naturally His must be united to what is naturally ours if His life is to be communicated to us. Put more forcefully: "He became human in order that we might become divine."⁵⁹

Athanasius employs the scandalous word "flesh" to make sure that the whole human being is redeemed. His is a *sarx*-Christology from beginning to end, and his soteriology operates in and through the flesh. Flesh is the "deepest" and most representative medium for Athanasius. Khaled Anatolios explains that one finds in Athanasius's anthropology allusions to *nous* (mind), *psuchē* (soul), and *sōma* (body), but these are not so much "parts" as "existential and relational" dimensions.⁶⁰ The body is certainly lower than the soul or the mind, and has less similarity to God, but that is precisely why it of all things must be redeemed. In fact, while the soul pilots the body, the body is the place of action and transmission, "the crucial existential locus for the exercise of human freedom."⁶¹ Rebecca Lyman describes how Athanasius, with a kind of ascetic logic, believes that only the fleshly body can bring salvation to the soul; the soul, hungry for God, requires a "steady" or "stabilized" body.⁶² Following the pattern of Jesus, *sarx* is a kind of conductive medium for internal and external relations.

⁵⁹ *Autos gar enēnthrōpēsen, hina hēmeis theopoiēthōmen* (Athanasius, *De incarnatione*, liv).

⁶⁰ Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 61.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁶² J. Rebecca Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in Origen, Eusebius and Athanasius* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 146-7.

If the Logos, the Son of God, has abased Himself and made Himself present to us in the flesh, then certainly the flesh will be the recipient of salvation. Athanasius involves the body in the *communicatio idiomatum*, i.e., the communication of predicates. Christ “deified” (*etheopoieito*) the body and “rendered it immortal.”⁶³ He made it so that we might rise without a trace of corruption, just as His body showed none.⁶⁴ The flesh too enjoys a glorious future in God.

Yet Athanasius’s writings downplay corporeality even as they placed front and center. The flesh is drawn into the divine life – but is this the same as saying that the flesh is *raised*? Rather, one gets the feeling that Athanasius has turned the doctrine into the *ascension* of the flesh:

When the flesh was born from Mary the Theotokos, [the Logos] is said to have been born, who furnishes to others an origin of being, in order that he may transfer our nature into himself, and *we may no longer, as mere earth, return to earth, but as being joined to the Logos from heaven, may be carried to heaven by him*. In a similar manner he has therefore not unreasonably transferred to himself the other affections of the body also, that we, no longer as being men, but as proper to the Logos, may have a share in eternal life.⁶⁵

The ascension of the whole person via the Logos is Athanasius’s concern, a movement starting from earth but very definitely leaving it.⁶⁶ Resurrection has become a spiritual process initiated by the incarnation, played out in the spiritual life, and ultimately a drawing of the whole self to a final destination in heaven. The coming resurrection in its concrete, physical form becomes a rather insignificant event, having been

⁶³ Athanasius, *De decretis*, xiv; cf. *De incarnatione verbi dei*, ix.

⁶⁴ Athanasius, Festal Letter xi.14.

⁶⁵ Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* xxxiii.3, cited in Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 183, emphasis added.

⁶⁶ Tempering a more dualistic Platonic view, Athanasius has the flesh addressed so that the person may start “living away from a historical, material setting and moving toward the noetic, eternal world” (Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology*, 145).

overshadowed by the greater mystery of deification. Yes, Athanasius confesses the resurrection of the dead, but the deeper reality seems to be the overarching spiritual evolution in which, “from the beginning without ceasing, [Christ] raises up every human and speaks to every human in their heart.”⁶⁷

If we permit ourselves to skip ahead to Maximus the Confessor (c.580-662), it is because he arrives at a monumentally creative synthesis of the thought of the Cappadocian fathers, Evagrius Ponticus, Cyril of Alexandria, Pseudo-Dionysius, and many others who precede him. What the Alexandrians had done with Christology, Maximus applies to theological anthropology, giving the doctrine of deification “its greatest elaboration and most profound articulation.”⁶⁸ Though in many ways taking up the mantle of Origen (and therefore the first view), he pursues a holistic, mystical view of body and soul, thereby “sifting out the more questionable metaphysics.”⁶⁹

Following Gregory of Nazianzus, Maximus teaches that the human being goes through three births: the natural in childbirth, the spiritual in baptism, and the final in the resurrection of the dead; one receives being (*einai*), well-being (*eu einai*), and, ultimately, eternal well-being (*aei eu einai*). Deification is the result of this relationship with God. While humans already possess being and even immortal being (of the soul) in their essential nature, goodness and wisdom can only be imparted to them by grace.

The communication of the divine nature happens through God’s presence. Jesus Christ once condescended and came to earth to be with us, of course, but Maximus often attends to the abiding presence of Christ. The Lord promised His presence before His ascension (Mt 28:20), and that presence is what initiates the

⁶⁷ Athanasius, Festal Letter xxvii.

⁶⁸ Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 262.

⁶⁹ Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996), 24.

deification of us even here on earth, and what secures our presence with Him in the age to come. When the Lord is “fully revealed” the saints will participate in Him; this is what it means for them to have the immortality of the resurrection. Like many before and after him, Maximus makes creative use of Neoplatonic hierarchies: the telos of all things is to return to a state of “simplicity,” with the effects of various syzygies restored to their causes, and triads united into a whole.⁷⁰ But unlike some of his predecessors, he rejects the preexistence of souls and withholds speculation about the *apokatastasis*.

There is no parabola of Origen here; Maximus has a single escalating line moving from the humble, natural state to a lofty participation in the divine life. By contemplation and acts of love the believer makes an ascent into God’s own kind of life, an ascent which culminates in the final resurrection-birth. In such a manner, resurrection and ascension come together in Maximus.

Despite occasional ascetic comments against flesh(liness), Maximus promotes a holistic view of the body with the soul. Soul does not antecede or succeed the body, for parts only exist with their respective counterparts. In fact, the flesh – everything about the human – is saved, for Christ’s incarnation took place “in order to save the image and immortalize the flesh,” says Maximus, albeit “to present nature pure again as from a *new* beginning, with an *additional* advantage through deification over the first creation.”⁷¹ In another place he adds that God fills Christians

with his own glory and beatitude, giving them and granting them that life which is eternal and unutterable and in every way free from every mark constitutive of the present life, which is made up of decay, for it does not breathe air nor is it made up of blood vessels running from the liver. No, *the whole of God is participated by the whole of them*, and he becomes to their souls like a soul related to a body, and through the soul he affects the body, in a way that he himself

⁷⁰ See Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 270ff.

⁷¹ Maximus, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, liv, cited in Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 289, emphasis mine.

knows, that the former might receive immutability and the latter immortality, and that *the whole man might be deified*, raised to the divine life (*theourgoumenos*) by the grace of the incarnate God, *the whole remaining man* in soul and body by nature, and *the whole becoming god* in soul and body by grace and by the divine brightness of that blessed glory altogether appropriate to him, than which nothing brighter or more exalted can be conceived.⁷²

The soul obtains immutability in its deification, and the body, glorified with and through the soul, obtains immortality. This is its transformation out of decay. But the whole, which is and remains human by nature, “becomes god” by grace. Adam Cooper concludes his study of Maximus’ view of the body recognizing that little is said about the resurrection body itself, though the Confessor has lots to say about how “the passible and corporeal become entirely transparent to divine glory.” In this purview, “the very integrity of the material order lies in it being transcended.”⁷³

The strengths of the deifying-the-flesh type are many, not least that it depicts the whole person as the object of salvation. I might raise three concerns, however. First, the Alexandrian emphasis on the unity of the divine and human natures tends to generate views that eliminate or absorb the flesh altogether. While Alexandrian theologians clamped down on more egregious Christological heresies (Apollinarianism and Eutychianism, with other variations of monophysitism and monotheletism), the slope of the theological field tended toward a mystical slip of the human into the divine. For theological anthropology, it would eventually require Gregory Palamas’s fourteenth-century distinction between “essence” and “energies” to guard the line between Creator and creature; deification involved participation in the latter only.⁷⁴ Second, in a related

⁷² Maximus, *Ambiguum* vii, in Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 276, emphasis added.

⁷³ Adam G. Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 253.

⁷⁴ For an explanation of the Palamite distinction and its legacy, see Roger E. Olson, “Deification in Contemporary Theology,” *Theology Today* 64 (2007): 186-200.

way, the view does not escape the Platonic priority of soul over body. Both are supposedly subject to deification, but the body is still treated as something to be contained and immobilized. Bodily living does not carry on into the eschaton. Rather, the perceived worth of impassibility, immortality and invisibility in the eyes the fourth type leads to a privileging of the soul in the age to come, making it the model for the new bodily properties.⁷⁵ Some similarities to the endowing-the-flesh view are apparent at times, as with the quote from Maximus above.⁷⁶ Third, and most dire, the doctrine of deification effectively replaces the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh. In fact, *any* kind of doctrine of the general resurrection becomes a footnote in this type. Jesus Christ's resurrection may retain a central motif (as is does in Orthodox liturgies), being the revelation of His divine power and the bestowal of that victory to His people. Nevertheless, what matters to adherents of the fourth view is that *theōsis* has been initiated and is in process now. The movement will come to completion, yes, and that is resurrection. But *ascension* has become the master-concept in the fourth type, and participation its beating heart.

Analysis of the Types

Without belaboring the topic let me make a couple of general comments about the above typology. My first observation is that the four types disagree about the ordering of the themes of continuity and discontinuity in the resurrection. The collecting-view

⁷⁵ Even Maximus says that in the coming age “it is no longer a matter of humanity bearing or being born along existentially, since in this respect the economy of visible things comes to an end with the great and general resurrection wherein humanity is born into immortality in an unchanging state of being” (*Ambiguum* xlii, cited in Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken, ed., *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: St. Maximus the Confessor*, [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003], 95).

⁷⁶ On this score, it should come as no surprise that Thomas Aquinas, if not with Maximus directly, was familiar with Pseudo-Dionysius and the Neo-Platonic tradition.

insists upon sameness before and after the resurrection, securing human identity by bringing together the exact bits of human flesh on the last Day. It secures a near-wholesale continuity of matter and form – and only then adds the “clothing” of bodily immortality and immutability. Likewise, the endowing-the-flesh type obtains human continuity through formal means, through the constancy of the soul with its bodily template, and suggests that even the same earthly particles of flesh can be reconstituted and married to the soul. Only then does the view consider discontinuous elements, in this case, the dowering of the flesh with psychic properties. The body is aerated, relieved of its turgid density. Conversely, the substituting-view and the deifying-view begin with the theme of discontinuity. According to each of them new life in Christ is an ascension beyond what we know as flesh. The trajectory toward heavenly existence takes one from an earthly existence to a higher existence through participation in the divine. The substituting-view looks for a wholesale replacement of material in the bodily transformation. Flesh is that from which, and out of which, the human evolves. In the great reversion into God, the continuity of the person rests upon the cryptic concept of the (as such, fleshless) body-form which takes to itself new, spiritual matter. The deifying-the-flesh type also starts with and majors in discontinuity, and secures the continuity of identity as an afterthought. The approach does a better job compensating for the continuity of the flesh, however, by claiming (in a circumspect way) that the flesh ascends with the soul into the life of God. Transformation has within itself a sense of preservation.

It also needs to be stated that all of these traditional views, at least with their classical articulations, are addicted to immutability. Without exception they hope for an escape from flux, from the processes of corporeal existence. Each desires changelessness, and suspects in the other views a perverse love of mutation. Time,

space and movement are treated as penultimate dimensions honorable only insofar as they come to termination and calcification. This may be the saddest inheritance of the Church with regard to the doctrine of the general resurrection. From the third century until fairly recently,⁷⁷ theologians approached the doctrine of the resurrection looking for ways to terminate or transcend the corporeal mode of existence rather than see it fulfilled in a temporal, tangible and concrete existence.

Barth's Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Flesh

In chapter six I intend to return to the typology, but here suffice it to say that Karl Barth's doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh is surprisingly ecumenical. Champions of any of the above views could hypothetically claim Barth as an ally or a valuable dialogue partner. Perhaps surprisingly, I will argue that his doctrine has a special resonance with the deifying-the-flesh type. But at face value, Barth does not fit into any of the four. As with so many other doctrines, he attempts a creative and novel approach to the resurrection.

Our ensuing exploration of Barth's eschatology will be made dramatically easier if one understands the theological move at the root of his reformulation: *the equation of resurrection with revelation*. What it means for the sinful creature to be in the presence of the free, loving Lord: that is resurrection. Everything characteristic about the event of encounter between a human and God is characteristic of the ultimate state of risenness.

⁷⁷ My omission of development of the doctrine in the Renaissance, Reformation-era, post-Reformation scholasticism, and Enlightenment is intentional. With few exceptions, theologians either affirmed older solutions to the resurrection or reinterpreted the doctrine as a de-fleshed immortality of the soul. Romantic, Idealistic, and existential interpretations of the doctrine will come into the foreground in the following chapters.

And because revelation happens to us who are in the flesh, the resurrection is the raising of who we are in the flesh.

In particular, Barth describes the resurrection of the flesh in three central ways. First, the event of resurrection is the Father's "raising up" of a person's temporal history into the eternal contemporaneity of God, i.e., a person obtains *eternalization*. Second, the resurrection is a "raising to the surface" of a person's true identity in Jesus Christ, i.e., a person obtains *manifestation*. Third, the resurrection is a "raising into God" through participation in the living Christ through His Holy Spirit, i.e., a person obtains *incorporation*. These ontological assertions are wholly dependent on God's own Self-giving, patterned after the resurrection of the incarnate Jesus Christ, and construed in deeply relational terms. With each assertion it must be understood that Barth always tries to make room for corporeal affirmations. Eternalization, manifestation and incorporation are each intended to reflect an inherent sense of bodily redemption awaiting humans at the conclusive return of Christ.

My presentation aims to be a critical study, however. Committed to the gritty sense of the early Church's profession, *credo in carnis resurrectionem*, I take up the mantle of agitator and interlocutor, insisting upon fleshly continuity, a significant and concrete (not nominal or spiritualized) identity of the raised human. Barth speaks of eternalization – but what happens to temporal process in the simultaneous Now? Barth speaks of manifestation of divine proximity – but what of creaturely identity when it appears in God? Barth speaks of incorporation – but what becomes of fleshly individuals as they are knit into God? For all the profound affirmations of physicality in the resurrection, Barth's construction of the doctrine frequently comes up wanting. In his presentation of the resurrection body there is a certain changelessness, a certain lightness, and a certain indistinguishability, each of which suggests a fleshless existence.

The study unfolds as follows. In chapter two I explain the formation of Barth's theology leading up to the start of the *Church Dogmatics* in the early 1930s. His influence from Pietism, Romantic Idealism and religious socialism gave his eschatology a distinctive shape, one that was articulated under the rubric of "the resurrection of the dead." During these decades he identified and radicalized a dialectic, a way of speaking about God's transcendent immanence. Barth describes the "moment" of encounter between God and the human in terms of a resurrection (viz., that in the moment of revelation we, "the dead," become what we are not, "resurrected"). In fact, Barth equates resurrection with revelation. God's Self-disclosure effects an *Aufhebung* – a sublation, a "raising" of dead humanity into God's life, the "dissolution and establishment" of the human in the presence of God. Barth sees the resurrection of the dead as a kind of basic methodology for talk about God, though he makes the doctrines of the Trinity and Christ take on some of the axiomatic burden in the mid-1920s. Nevertheless, Barth continues to construct his eschatology in terms of the "lifting of human existence" into God's own "presence."

In chapter three I engage Barth's idea of the resurrection of the flesh as eternalization. He spells out a conception of God's eternity that is free to lift time into itself. Jesus Christ's own resurrection is the Father's verdict, the declaration which imparts a pan-temporal quality to Jesus' one life. Barth's "actualistic" ontology expresses the finite arc of human existence as something complete only through the gift of eternalization from God. Human lives are necessarily demarcated by conception and death, but these limitations become good in that they define the terminated life that is "raised" into the simultaneity of times that God enjoys. I question whether Barth has quarantined temporal process too much here, and whether he is paying honor to God's enemy, death.

In chapter four I look to the idea of the resurrection of the flesh as manifestation. Barth describes Jesus Christ's incarnate being as having perfect integrity, characterized by the total proximity of the divine to the human. Along Alexandrian and Lutheran lines, Barth says the exaltation of the human essence stems from communication with His divine essence even before the resurrection. Easter does not add to Christ's perfect work and being (which was finished in His incarnate ministry), it simply discloses it and makes it effective for others. Humans do not have Christ's integrity by nature, muddled as they are by creational ambiguity, the sin of self-reliance, and a dialectical identity in the penultimate age. But Barth emphasizes the finished work of Christ for us, and explains that our own resurrection will be the manifestation of our hidden glory in Christ. Our life is unveiled with the Son in His "effective presence," that is, in His three-fold parousia: our identity was definitively revealed at Easter, is being revealed (however ambiguously) in the age of Pentecost, and will be manifested fully at Christ's return. Nevertheless, I question whether Barth's highly noetic conception of the resurrection has not given way to a somewhat spiritualistic concept of the *visio Dei* in heaven, and whether he has not perhaps even violated some creaturely parameters through the logic of deification.

In chapter five I grapple with Barth's relational protocol through a conception of the resurrection of the flesh as incorporation. God the Holy Spirit orchestrates the movement of communion, incorporating the expansion of the divine power and the retrieval of others into God. Similarly, in the resurrection Jesus Christ appears as the prophet of incorporation who calls, upbuilds and sends out the community so that all might gravitate to Him. The human as such suffers from isolation, from the alienation possible in creation and caused by sin. The resurrection of the flesh, however, overcomes this isolation through the incorporation of all history into the capacious

body of the living Christ. For all of Barth's care, I suggest that a series of absorptions are at work: the resurrection is conflated into the work of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit is conflated into the ministry of the risen Christ, and, it seems, all human beings (once the outward movement of the resurrection ceases, at least) are absorbed into Christ at His return. That is, human particularity is threatened by the resurrection, for, in Barth's view, it is difficult to see how the coming Day will renew concrete identities.

It may be helpful to the reader to keep in mind that chapters three, four and five correspond roughly to the persons of the Trinity. These chapters also interact chiefly with IV/1, IV/2 and IV/3, respectively. Or, dealing with the philosophical question of perdurance of human selfhood, they reflect Barth's provision for material, formal and numerical identity. One should note that within each chapter I have followed the same progression of thought: 1) the divine reality, 2) Christ's expression of the divine reality in the resurrection, 3) our fleshly need, and 4) our own (fleshly?) expression in the resurrection. Chapter six rehearses my findings, situates Barth within the above typology, and makes a suggestion of how his theological advances might be applied elsewhere than the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

For the sake of directedness I have skimmed over a number of important conversations between Barth and his contemporaries (Gogarten, Przywara, Bultmann, Brunner, etc.) as well as the creative developments of his gifted disciples (Torrance, Moltmann, Pannenberg, Jüngel, Jenson, etc.), but I will trust that discerning readers begin to see just how much these thinkers, for all their disagreements with Barth, build up many of the same strongholds and are beset by many of the same problems. On a final note, I beg the reader to grant me the same patience I have had to afford Barth: the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh only surfaces only after a circuitous journey through dogmatics. Barth leaves riches all along the meandering path to eschatology

proper, and indeed, something like human flesh is there at the end of that road. But if one is ultimately disappointed to discover how static, vaporous and indistinct that body seems in the end, my roundabout approach will have made its rather unsettling point.

CHAPTER 2

Young Barth's Resurrection Dialectic

The resurrection of the dead suffuses Karl Barth's early work. The idea is like an underground ocean that surfaces as pools and geysers, or perhaps the better simile is that of a meteor shower, lighting the sky with flashes of light, smashing the surface with explosions. Everything Barth writes in these years evokes a feeling of harmony and tribulation, tribulation and harmony; a movement of conflict and resolution. This dialectical style reflects the actual encounter between God and humans in the moment of God's revelation. And it is entirely significant that Barth structures his early theology around the idea of the resurrection of the dead. More an eschatological axiom or method than a proper doctrine, the idea of the resurrection of the dead is at the heart of Barth's work in the years of his so-called "dialectical theology."

The fact that his intellectual biographers concur that the resurrection is the connective tissue of Barth's work makes it all the more befuddling why they rarely examine it in any detail.¹ Such thematic neglect may be understandable with regard to his mature dogmatics (after all, Barth is operating with a battery of concepts by that

¹ See Dawson, *The Resurrection in Karl Barth*, 11f. for a summary of these paths untaken.

time), but not for his early work. In fact, I would argue that the resurrection of the dead is the *only* developed biblico-theological concept Barth has in hand before 1924.

The purpose of this chapter is to bring to the foreground the developing dialectic at the heart of these nascent years. I intend to show how Barth discovers, radicalizes, and ultimately repackages the resurrection of the dead as an “axiomatic” dialectic of Christian thought, that is, as the central methodology by which God’s self-revelation operates and is explained. Again, divine revelation has a resurrection quality. A human caught up in the event of revelation is a human being raised. Put another way, when Barth speaks of revelation he structures it according to the grammar of the resurrection of the dead, that is, of God’s immanent Otherness taking up (“resurrecting”) our mortal, fleshly existence (the dead) into His life. God’s self-communication is an *Aufhebung*, a sublation, a dialectic that dissolves and establishes us. The revelation-event is the miraculous basis of our knowledge and speech about God. And this encounter makes and is for us our *eternal* future, which, though a total translation, is a *bodily* future. These dense concepts from young Barth will require some unpacking.

Primed by a combination of Pietism, Romantic Idealism and religious socialism, Barth cultivated an appreciation of the human crisis triggered by the coming of the kingdom of God. A special kind of dialectical thought is evident in Barth’s thought from around 1915, when Barth took increasing interest in the resurrection of Jesus Christ as a fundamental, critical-eschatological patterning. Spurred by Christoph Blumhardt, this orientation evolved in his sermons, lectures and his first Romans commentary. With further study of Romans and 1 Corinthians (and a retooled Platonism and Lutheranism), he came to embrace a more radical dialectic. Starting in 1919 Barth would find in the resurrection of the dead an iconoclastic pattern which

consistently unsettles knowledge of God even as it bestows it. The event of revelation is, however, a unity with the totally-other God, the miraculous raising of the creature into fellowship with its transcendent Origin. This stage of Barth's thinking culminated in two pieces constructed at the same time, the second *Römerbrief* and *Die Auferstehung der Toten*. While the resurrection of the dead is first and foremost a structural, epistemological concept for Barth in these years, his approach yields enough ontological content for us to cobble together a material doctrine. This content becomes even more explicit around 1924 when, for various reasons, Barth rethinks his prelogomena in trinitarian terms. Still, in Barth's first dogmatic, the doctrine of the general resurrection derives its material directly from the dialectical *form*. At that time a programmatic insight appears that is filled out in his mature years: the resurrection is the lifting of humanity into the eternal God's presence so as to be revealed in unification with Him. Or, put another way, the coming resurrection is sublation (inherent in the moment of revelation) writ large. Interestingly, throughout the 1920s Barth persistently emphasizes the bodily nature of the resurrected person, though it is unclear how he intends to secure that corporeality.

Two warnings are in order as we begin. First, I make no attempt at a thorough biography of the young Karl Barth, which has been done (and done well) by others.² This chapter seeks instead to understand how the resurrection of the dead as a formal concept captures the operative dialectic of the event of God's Self-revelation, the prototypical shape of all other theological ideas. Chapters three through five analyze

² See especially Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); Hans Wilhelm Frei, "The Doctrine of Revelation in the Thought of Karl Barth, 1909-1922: The Nature of Barth's Break with Liberalism" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1956); Thomas F. Torrance *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology, 1910-1931* (London: SCM Press, 1962); Paul S. Chung, *Karl Barth: God's Word in Action* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2008).

Barth's mature work thematically, but here it is possible and helpful to trace his development chronologically. Secondly, this chapter in some ways will seem eccentric. The ultimate aim of this study is to isolate his doctrine of the resurrection *of the flesh*, to grasp this doctrine in its *material* significance. But – and this is the genius of Barth – the material content of eschatology has its genesis in its formal significance. The structural function he gives to the resurrection of the dead actually produces the very themes he will develop in his later years: eternal life by sublation into the eternal, manifestation of one's divine predicates in Christ, and inclusion into the Primal Origin.

Early Formation (1886-1914)

Karl Barth was hardly the first theologian in his family. A pastoral vocation went back several generations in both paternal and maternal lines, and many others in the family were known for their warm Christian devotion. Karl's father, Johann Friedrich ("Fritz") Barth, was of Pietist stock. He emphasized personal regeneration, love for Jesus, and the life of the soul with God; he sought lively holiness over dusty orthodoxy; he practiced biblical study, personal discipline and Christian fellowship with all seriousness. What set him apart from his peers, however, was Fritz Barth's receptivity to philosophical training and his eagerness to walk the *via media* between modernity and the more doctrinally orthodox, "positive" religion.³ A man of many talents, he taught New

³ Eberhard Busch (*Karl Barth & the Pietists: The Young Karl Barth's Critique of Pietism and Its Response*, trans. Daniel W. Bloesch [Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004], 11f.) summarizes Fritz Barth's concern over Pietism's sectarian, anti-intellectualistic, legalistic and enthusiastic tendencies, even while able to praise pietism's priority of life over doctrine, view of spiritual rebirth, the close connection of justification and sanctification, and the idea of the coming kingdom of God. For a review of the Pietist movement in its English, Reformed and Lutheran expressions, see F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965). Karl Barth's own, chiefly antagonistic history of Pietism written in the late 1920s can be found in *PTNC*, especially pp.77-86, in which he describes it as the internal side of the absolutism of the age, but see Mary Fulbrook's *Piety and Politics: Religion and the Rise of*

Testament, Church history and dogmatics for much of his career at the College of Preachers in Bern, all the while facing criticism from the left and the right. Naturally, he bestowed upon his children an amalgam of the rational and experiential, the philosophical and the doctrinal; and everything immersed in the Pietistic insight that true religion lives from, by, and in the presence of God. That his eldest son, Karl, mounted in his office a framed picture of his father for most of his career “hints that the father’s theological pilgrimage was in a real way a model for the son.”⁴

Not that Karl was a model child. He was a rabble-rouser at school and in the neighborhood, getting into street fights with other boys and exercising his precocious personality at every turn. His interest in religion came to the surface under the thoughtful catechizing of Rev. Robert Aeschbacher in Bern, who was able to channel such ardent energy in a new direction. Within a short time Karl declared that he would study theology. Fritz Barth’s joy over the vocational decision turned to frustration, however, as his son requested to attend university in Marburg, a bastion of progressive, liberal theology. Professor Barth succeeded in sending his son to more moderate

Absolutism in England, Württemberg and Prussia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) for a more nuanced analysis of this alleged connection.

⁴ Clifford Green, “Karl Barth’s Life and Theology,” in Clifford Green, ed., *Karl Barth: Theologian of Freedom* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 13. In a dramatic reappraisal of Pietism late in life, Karl Barth reminisced about the juvenile hymnbook he sang from as a child, one compiled by Abel Burckhardt, whose presentation of the biblical narratives in their immanence was enough “to carry us through all the serried ranks of historicism and anti-historicism, mysticism and rationalism, orthodoxy, liberalism and existentialism – and to bring one back some day to the matter itself” (IV/2, 113). At his most generous, Barth would ask if the Pietists and Moravians – along with the enthusiasts, spiritualists and mystics – “might be vindicated to the extent that they actually intended the reality, the coming, and the work of the Holy Spirit, and that on that basis they might emerge in a positive-critical light” (Karl Barth, “Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher,” trans. George Hunsinger, *Studies in Religion* 7:2 [Spring 1978], 135). Cf. Busch, *Karl Barth*, 394. Barth would come to a posture of major agreement with Pietism by 1960, at least with its figurehead, Count von Zinzendorf (Eberhard Busch, “‘Hochverehrter Herr Graf nicht so stürmisch!’: Karl Barths Stellung zu Nikolaus von Zinzendorf,” in *Neue Aspekte der Zinzendorf-Forschung*, ed. Martin Brecht and Paul Peucker [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006]: 252).

schools in Bern and Berlin, but after several years Karl's pleas to study in Marburg were granted.

It is difficult to pinpoint his Christian conversion, though in his first days as a student Karl experienced something significant while reading Immanuel Kant on good will: "I made a rule for myself: the simpler the better. . . . [W]hat I now looked for in books and from my professors was the true knowledge of simplicity."⁵ Marburg was characterized by liberal Christianity's anthropocentric basis at the expense of "unreasonable" orthodox doctrines – but this was not what impressed Barth, who elsewhere had already studied under liberal professors like Adolf Harnack. What was special about Marburg was its professors' understanding of religion as a simple, original, ethical consciousness. Barth sat under Neo-Kantian philosophers Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp, who in different ways sought to radicalize Kant's understanding of intuition, explaining all knowledge as a primal production of the "I" rather than a responsiveness to objective, external phenomena.⁶ At the same time Barth caught the wave of a revived interest in the thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). Schleiermacher, especially in his early work, had categorized religion as a primal feeling (*Gefühl*) prior to all other knowledge and action, a basic encounter with God in consciousness. Barth was attracted to this Romantic simplicity, and came to view Pietism itself as retrograde kind of religious individualism.⁷

⁵ Sermon, 13 Oct 1912, cited in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 35.

⁶ Much like Kant, Cohen relegated religion to a practical function. God was understood to be the "glue" holding together logic, ethics and aesthetics, a category of relation. John Lyden ("The Influence of Hermann Cohen on Karl Barth's Dialectical Theology," *Modern Judaism* 12:2 [May 1992]: 167-83) argues that a straight line can be traced from Cohen to Barth with regard to the concept of the inscrutable "origin." Natorp's answer was more complex, modifying Schleiermacher's idea of religious feeling to cast religion as an inwardness which animates thinking, willing and the perception of the beautiful (McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 46-8).

⁷ Busch, *Karl Barth & the Pietists*, 23.

For Barth these ideas fused effortlessly in the teaching of Marburg professor Wilhelm Herrmann. Like Schleiermacher, who a century earlier had declared himself a Moravian of a higher order, Herrmann taught piety philosophically and philosophy piously. Though educated in the historicist school of Albrecht Ritschl with its reclamation of Luther and Kant for ethics, Herrmann himself seized and intensified a divisive principle in their works. From Luther's two-kingdoms doctrine Herrmann championed a total separation between historical-knowledge and faith-knowledge. Working with Kant's distinction between phenomena (a thing's appearance) and noumena (the thing-as-such), Herrmann maintained a split between historical expression and the primal basis underlying it. That is, in matters of religion, one is ultimately concerned with the inner experience of God before and independently of its expression and appropriation in the world. Herrmann espoused the anthropocentrism of the liberal tradition but took up an amplified *sola fide* in order to de-historicize such theology.

By his own admission, Barth swallowed Herrmann's teachings whole.⁸ Romantic Idealism (by which I mean the sustained absoluteness of primal idea over particulars, even as the idea unfolds into all the particulars⁹) met Barth's hunger for simplicity. It was his conviction that Herrmann, in tandem with Schleiermacher, provided the *terra firma* of experience sought by Pietists and liberals alike. Even more impressive to Barth, Herrmann and Schleiermacher channeled religious feeling in an explicitly Christocentric way, explaining that, for all the interiority of the primal

⁸ Busch, *Karl Barth*, 45.

⁹ Cyril O'Regan (*The Heterodox Hegel* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994]) claims that the difference between Schleiermacher and Hegel can be described as the difference between the "archaeological" and the "teleological" when addressing the intersection of faith and reason. Each is Anselmian in his own way, but Schleiermacher's thinking seeks to be "primitive" where Hegel's is "representative" (p.37). I venture to say that these are the very poles around which Barth gravitates for the rest of his career, and is what I mean henceforth by "Romantic Idealism."

experience of faith, the vehicle of this experience is Christ – not His external appearances presented in scripture but “the inner life of Jesus” as it impresses itself upon the individual’s consciousness. A Christian is edified by inner contact with God through Christ; that is, through the Christ-*idea* one finds moving in oneself and in the authentic, ethical lives of those who are also touched by His inner life. The letter – even if it be so sophisticated as the purified Ritschlianism of Ernst Troelsch – kills, but the Spirit gives life.

With regard to Easter kerygma, Herrmann taught that traditions concerning the revivification of Jesus’ body are “a thick mist of legends.” Instead one must see that “*the glory of his inner life* breaks through all these veils,” for “*the essential contents* of that record . . . have the power to convince the conscience that that life is an undeniable fact.”¹⁰ If there is any proof, any “help of the appearances” for us today, Herrmann argued, it is the fact of the Church’s birth and its ongoing communion. By such experience we affirm Jesus as risen in His trans-historical personality.¹¹ For Herrmann resurrection is not a theory about the afterlife (either Jesus’ or our own) so much as it is a way of talking about the living power of God available through the individual’s perception of the Christ.

Barth, initially appointed in 1909 to a post as assistant pastor in a German-speaking Reformed church in Geneva,¹² followed the Herrmannian line by teaching that

¹⁰ Willibald [Wilhelm] Herrmann, *The Communion of the Christian with God: A Discussion in Agreement with the View of Luther*, 2nd edition, trans. J. Sandys Stanyon (London: Williams & Norgate, 1895), 183, emphasis added.

¹¹ Wilhelm Herrmann, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Nathaniel Micklem and Kenneth A. Saunders (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), 126. Cf. David William Forrest, *The Christ of History and of Experience* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897), 159-61.

¹² Barth had not read Calvin seriously until working in Geneva. He says about his picking up of *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, “I did not experience any sudden conversion, and at first thought that I could very well combine idealist and romantic theology with the theology of the Reformation” (cited in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 57).

Jesus' death and resurrection are the perennial fount for the religious consciousness.¹³ Barth impressed upon his first confirmands that Jesus' resurrection is the eruption of faith in Christian disciples, an attitudinal shift, an inspiration discovered and a belief that Jesus had completed His work at the cross. The resurrection is *a spiritual event in believers* certifying Jesus' significance for us and leading us to follow in His path.¹⁴ Consequently, Christians should not claim anything about Jesus' bodily renewal. That, if anything, would be to historicize his resurrection. It would deny the infinite power available through Jesus' inner life. Barth's 1910 parish magazine article at Easter claimed that any evidence for Jesus' revivification is inadequate for faith, which by definition is quite independent of proofs and counterproofs. Liberated from external facts, Easter belief is the living power of Jesus, the power to be free from the influence of the visible and "provable," freedom bestowed by the influence of that which is not verifiable by normal science, namely, *das persönliche innere Leben Jesu*.¹⁵ Parroting Herrmann, Pastor Barth taught that "[t]he historical Jesus becomes the resurrected living Christ in the congregation of Christ."¹⁶

Barth's marked lack of interest in the doctrine of the general resurrection is entirely explainable. According to his philosophical commitments, any kind of hope for personal immortality or new life has to be grounded in religious consciousness, not historical world-order. If there is a "beyond," an afterlife, it is only possible by an

¹³ Karl Barth, "Mit Christus Gestorben," church newsletter, 18 Mar 1910, in *GA* III.22, 33-6.

¹⁴ Karl Barth, "Konfirmandenunterricht, 1909/10," in *GA* I.18, 48-50.

¹⁵ "Ob Jesus gelebt hat? Eine nachträgliche Osterbetrachtung," letter from Karl Barth to Wilhelm Loew, 30 Apr/1 May 1910, in *GA* III.22, 37-45. Barth therefore appreciated the criticisms leveled at the Easter traditions by Reimarus, Strauss and Harnack, though he was wholly uninterested in their attempts to explain the missing body.

¹⁶ Cited in McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 76. Likewise, Barth in 1913 equates the resurrection with the "irresistible impression" of the Savior's life upon Peter – even before Easter morning: "Jesus had been resurrected before He died – long before" (Karl Barth, sermon, 29 June 1913, in *GA* I.8, 323-4).

extension of the transcendence one experiences in the here and now. Codifying this into doctrine is sheer speculation, at best riddled with all sorts of antinomies, just as Schleiermacher argued.¹⁷ If anything, Barth harkened back to Kant, who in place of the resurrection postulated the unprovable but “necessary” tenet of the immortality of the soul as a buttress to his ethics in *Critique of Practical Reason*. At one point Barth regurgitates Kant’s thought with a mystical hue, teaching that the individual’s living from “good will” completes itself in a “measureless future” through the passage of death, since by that good will one has lived in God’s goodness.¹⁸

Lest we think of Barth only as a Pietist turned Romantic Idealist, let us consider a third, complicating factor: religious socialism. Sensitive to the plight of the common workers from a young age, Barth was introduced to a Christian version of socialism by his catechizing pastor. During his university years he was exposed to the thought of activist Leonhard Ragaz, and he himself became an outspoken opponent of capitalism. Barth’s early lectures, articles and sermons – synthesized in Marquardt’s volatile thesis¹⁹ – have brought to light just how formative religious socialism was to him. Barth found in it a response to the privatization of the Pietists (whose interiority often spawned legalism, which in turn permitted a kind of cultural stratification, which in turn baptized the inequalities of bourgeois capitalism). Socialism also emphasized the whole person,

¹⁷ E.g. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, second German edition in two volumes, trans. H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), 709-14. Such “prophetic doctrine” as the resurrection of the flesh “is meant only to give stimulating expression to [religious] principles already known” (p.722). Herrmann contends for something similar, that the primal experience in faith suggests a coming transition to a final perception of divine, inexhaustible life, even if one cannot flatly embrace either the Platonic immortality of the soul or the biblical resurrection of the dead (Herrmann, *Systematic Theology*, 93-6, 129).

¹⁸ “Konfirmanden-Unterricht 1910-1911,” *GA* I.18, 73-4. No wonder Barth was criticized by the Safenwil church leadership committee for his short, meager funeral sermons (Busch, *Karl Barth*, 62).

¹⁹ Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus: Das Beispiel Karl Barths* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1972); see also Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, “Socialism in the Theology of Karl Barth,” in *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*, ed. and trans. George Hunsinger (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 47-76.

body and soul together,²⁰ and thereby rejected the crass my-soul-is-going-to-heaven-when-I-die theology of otherworldly Christians. In a similar way, socialism helped temper Romantic impulses from becoming too introverted. The singular feeling of the religious encounter with God *must* result in (and become one with) the ethical deed. One hears this action-oriented disposition in Barth in 1911: “That is generally the difference between Jesus and the rest of us, that among us the greatest part is program, whereas for Jesus program and performance were one. Therefore, Jesus says to you quite simply that you should carry out your program, that you should *enact* what you *want*.”²¹ Of themselves, Pietism and Romantic Idealism tend to make pacts with the principalities and powers. Religious socialism, however, equipped Barth with a revolutionary, anti-bourgeois spirit, making him wary of anything that smacked of quietism or absolutism.

In 1911 Barth took his second pastoral post, this time in Safenwil, an industrializing village in the Aargau canton. A large portion of his parishioners suffered the loss of their lands while transitioning to textile jobs with miserable wages. Almost immediately the “Red Pastor” took up socialist causes in that area, organizing protests, lecturing on workers’ rights and helping to establish unions. I am not convinced that Barth can be called “a liberation theologian” in either his early or later years, but there is here an anticipation of liberation theology’s critique of the worldly powers, even the

²⁰ “With its ‘materialism’ it [socialism] preaches to us a word which stems not from Jesus himself, yet certainly from his Spirit. The word goes like this: *‘The end of the way of God is the affirmation of the body’*” (cited in Hunsinger, *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*, 29). While the socialist edge fades into the background, Friedrich Oetinger’s phrase crops up again in 1919, when Barth preaches that “the end of the way of God is embodiment” (Karl Barth, sermon, 20 Apr 1919, in *GA* I.39, 162), and again in 1924 (*RD*, 194) and 1926 (*UCR* III, 416).

²¹ Cited in Hunsinger, ed. and trans., *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*, 37.

absolutism of theological liberalism.²² In its defense of the needy, religious socialism warns one to expect God's judgment on human arrogance in its manifold forms. It questions the present order and longs for another. More than any other factor, socialism primed him for the impending crisis of 1914.

Barth later described the horrific event which occurred in October of that year:

One day . . . stands out in my personal memory as a black day. Ninety-three German intellectuals impressed public opinion by their proclamation in support of the war policy of Wilhelm II and his counselors. Among these intellectuals I discovered to my horror almost all of my theological teachers [including Harnack and Herrmann] whom I had greatly venerated. In despair over what this indicated about the signs of the time I suddenly realized that I could not any longer follow either their ethics and dogmatics or their understanding of the Bible and of history. For me at least, 19th-century theology no longer held any future.²³

Liberal theology, in its speculative and historicist forms alike, Barth renounced. He recanted self-grounded ethics. He turned from their totalizing, so-called scientific approach to the scriptures. Yet observe what Barth does *not* say here, viz., that he rejected their subjective epistemology, their starting with the personal encounter of God as the foundation of "religious individualism." Still – and this was his true revolution – Barth realized at that time that *the anthropocentric foundation* had to be dug up and replaced with a new cornerstone. Romantic Idealism (built atop the Enlightenment and Pietism) had been too uncritical, slipping into the deleterious absolutism of the nineteenth century and the Great War. But did the whole edifice have to be discarded? What if the philosophical apparatuses of Kant, Schleiermacher and Herrmann were to find traction upon a different, still more basic, axiom?

²² McCormack (*Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 92-104) presents an attuned survey of Barth's preaching in 1913, demonstrating just how ripe he was for defection from self-serving theological liberalism.

²³ Karl Barth, "Evangelical Theology in the 19th Century," in Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trans. Thomas Wieser and John Newton Thomas (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1960), 14. Cf. Karl Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen, Winter Semester, 1923/24*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 264, which also mentions his rejection of German exegesis and preaching.

Anticipating a bit, let me say this. Barth's break from liberalism in 1914 should be understood as a *reorientation* or *critical reconstruction* of his previous thought-forms rather than a wiping clean of the whole slate. From this time forward he sought to reground his theology. But how? How does one speak confidently about God in His immanence – and critically about the human consciousness to which He is immanent?

Eschatologizing the Dialectic (1915-1919)

The months after the announcement of war were a period of inner agitation for Barth, reflected in the themes of judgment and spiritual warfare peppering his sermons. Through all this he professed confidence in the providence of God, but it was painfully clear to him that his theological paradigm had been fragmented quite seriously. What could one say against Herrmann and so many other theologians who insisted that religious experience dictated the German holy war? Barth had cultivated an ability to think outside the box by affiliating with the socialist cause, even going so far as to join the Social Democratic Party in January 1915. But socialism itself was insufficient: its inability to prevent Prussian imperialism aside, it was doing little to articulate a new theological paradigm for Barth. By the end of 1914 the European socialists were already split between Ragaz's confident, vocal, activist ideology, and Kutter's tempered, patient, contemplative approach. Barth found himself sympathetic to, and frustrated with, each side. Socialism itself was caught between activism and quietism, between an "over-realized Christianity" in ethical action (Ragaz) and an over-encumbered negativity (Kutter), between the Yes and No of God. Was this not the very problem of the religious consciousness itself, God's immanence in His transcendence? However much

these two dimensions seemed at odds, the positions had to be reconcilable, if only in God.

In this dark hour a friendship blossomed between Barth and another young pastor by the name of Eduard Thurneysen. He, like Barth, was grappling with religious socialism and its response to the war. He too was going through the birth pangs of a paradigm shift. The two ministers regularly traversed the miles between their churches in order to smoke and converse. At one such rendezvous it was Thurneysen who murmured under his breath what they were both thinking: that they needed a new foundation, something “totally other.”²⁴

It was Thurneysen who arranged a personal meeting with the man who would catalyze Barth’s thinking: Christoph Blumhardt. Blumhardt, a spiritual director in the German town of Bad Boll, was a Schwäbian Pietist in the Lutheran church. Even more than his father, Johann, he was a prophetic voice for his generation. In eschatological fashion he claimed that the kingdom of God had drawn near, and that it depended upon faithful hearts to receive this movement of the Holy Spirit. A staunch opponent of those who would spiritualize the kingdom, Blumhardt had become a member (indeed, an officer) of the Social Democrat Party, resulting in the loss of his ordination and pension. He never fully subscribed to the socialists’ secular theorizing or their violent methods, and he ultimately left the party after 1906 to pursue the kingdom of God in an overtly theo-political mode. He continued to support the socialist cause as a “parable” of the coming kingdom, though in his later years he came to see the world as a problem more than a site of promise.²⁵ What remained unshaken was his tremendous confidence

²⁴ Cited in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 97.

²⁵ Christian T. Collins Winn, *“Jesus Is Victor!”: The Significance of the Blumhardts for the Theology of Karl Barth* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 147.

in the power of the Victor, Jesus Christ. Optimist and cynic rolled into one, the prophetic Blumhardt seemed to bridge the gap between Pietism and socialism, between biblical Christianity and revolutionary politics, between waiting and hastening.²⁶ But what really captured Barth was how Blumhardt moved between the two poles in the spirit of *eschatological immediacy*. “Blumhardt always begins right away with God’s presence, might, and purpose,” Barth wrote in September 1916; “he starts out from God; he does not begin by climbing upwards to Him by means of contemplation and deliberation. God is the end, and because we already know Him as the beginning, we may await his consummating acts.”²⁷

Barth and Thurneysen made the trek to Bad Boll, visiting with Blumhardt for the better part of a week in April 1915. While the precise content of those days remains a mystery, it is not difficult to imagine what kind of things they might have heard from the cheerful, apocalyptic pastor. Consider a message from Blumhardt a year earlier:

All those who believe, all those who truly penetrate into the reality of Jesus’ life, will no longer see death but pass into eternity like shining lights. Thus a light will also shine on the earth. This light must come from beyond the earth, from heaven. It must come from the place where Jesus Christ now rules and triumphs and judges. A day must break in upon the earth. Yet this day cannot come from the earth; it cannot be brought about by new human thoughts, new inventions or great deeds of men. This new day must come from eternity.

²⁶ Cf. Karl Barth, “Past and Future: Friedrich Naumann and Christoph Blumhardt,” trans. Keith R. Crim, in *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, volume I, ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1968), 40-5.

²⁷ Karl Barth, afterword to *Action in Waiting* by Christoph Blumhardt (Farmington, PA: The Plough Publishing House, 1998), 219. “Very naively, but with axiomatic certainty, they [the Blumhardts] were thinking of the reality of the risen and living Jesus himself, acting and speaking as a distinctive factor no less actual today than yesterday . . . the Jesus who has already come and will come again, and who is thus present to his people and – unknown to it – the world” (Karl Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV,4 Lecture Fragments*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981], 259). To Barth’s mind, Jesus’ broad and futural presence opened up the future: “In the midst of this hopeless confusion,” Barth later relayed, “it was the message of . . . Christian *hope* which above all began to make sense to me” (quoted in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 84).

We all live in eternity, Blumhardt concludes, “Yet the eternity in which Jesus Christ lives is a higher eternity, a brighter one, one which penetrates more deeply into our lives. For Jesus Christ is the one who rose from the dead.”²⁸

A few observations are in order. From the above quote we see that Blumhardt supposes a *disjuncture between time and eternity*, and that light shines only by God’s breaking-in, for “it cannot come from the earth.” Second, salvation is a *participation in eternity*, where those who “penetrate into the reality of Jesus’ life” enter into this eternity. Still, thirdly, this victory has *social ramifications*, for it is society that is illuminated; this light will shine “*on the earth.*” Eternity is not a heaven-going or a spiritual reality apart from earthly action; on the contrary, it is intensely social and bodily.²⁹ Fourth, all of these things are *futural*, summed up under and mediated by the profound truth that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. In His resurrection He comes to bring eternity to time. Indeed, one finds in Blumhardt a relentless appeal to the resurrection of Jesus as the basis for all God’s work in the present time, so much so that the Easter miracle is almost indistinguishable from the work of the Spirit in the Church age, and the Second Person in His glorified state indecipherable from the Third Person.³⁰ What results from this move, in any case, is that the present time must be understood as dominated and governed by a final truth, the truth from the future, the truth that *Jesus ist Sieger*. The

²⁸ Christoph Blumhardt, “The New Reality,” sermon, 29 Mar 1914, in R. Lejeune, *Christoph Blumhardt and His Message*, trans. Hela Ehrlich and Nicoline Maas (Rifton, NY: The Plough Publishing House, 1963).

²⁹ “Believing does not mean thinking; belief is being, and being means that things happen” (cited in Collins Winn, *Jesus Is Victor!*), 116). This world-connected dynamism extends to the doctrine of God for both Blumhardts, as drawn out in W.G. Bodamer, “The Life and Work of Johann Christoph Blumhardt,” Th.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1966, 59ff.

³⁰ Cf. Collins Winn, *Jesus Is Victor!*, 121f.

“already but not yet,” the perfect amongst the imperfect, is controlled by the presence of the risen Word.

For Barth these thoughts condensed into an eschatological dialectic. Christoph Blumhardt (along with the writings of his father³¹) had given him a kind of resurrection framework centered around the Word of God, a Christ-facilitated eternity which is revealed immediately. The newness of Jesus Christ in His resurrection-movement comes with a *contrast* between heaven and earth, but its coming also heals everything and leads it toward divine *unity*. The otherworldliness of the resurrection of Jesus punctures the normal world and creates a conflict with it in order to triumph over it from the inside out. Sinful human hearts receive this grace and see from an eternal perspective, human hands act from the eternal initiative. All of this is contained in the eternity already won by Christ.³²

In the months and years ahead Barth would exploit many of Blumhardt’s themes and watchwords, encouraging his congregation to rejoice in the Victor, to hasten and wait for the perfect kingdom of God, to look for the future rather than hold onto the religious past, to pray “Thy kingdom come,” to know that “world is world, but God is God.” Through all of this the resurrection of Jesus became for Barth a touchstone of the critical otherness of the divine intervention in the world. Consider his Easter sermon in 1917, in which he describes the world-order as the rebellious enemy of God,

³¹ Barth read Zündel’s biography of J.C. Blumhardt in June 1915 and found it deeply compelling. The elder Blumhardt became more influential to Barth’s work in *KD*, though in the short run the mantle of influence fell on the junior Blumhardt, whose eschatological theology concerned itself with the healing not so much of the body as the body politic (*ibid.*, xv).

³² Barth’s already-hopeful preaching brimmed with optimism upon his return from Bad Boll to Safenwil. The prophetic Word given to us today, he said to his congregation, contains the future. “For in God today and tomorrow are one. He who has recognized [*erkannt*] what he is today knows also what he will be tomorrow. . . . The truth of the world is verily the world of eternity. And since we have heard its Word, we have total clarity about all that is before us” (Karl Barth, sermon, 25 April 1915, in *GA* I.27, 168).

where greedy nations war with one another and “King Mammon stands before us and pounds his claws at us, making us into joyless, hounded slaves,” where, devoid of eternity, our wistfulness is “a religion in which we truly have an intoxication, a chloroform, but no real consolation, no serious help.”³³ Against this world the resurrection of Jesus comes, subjecting these enemies of God, taking them captive. What Jesus perceived, and what He fully embodied on the cross, was the newness of God able to conquer this world. Easter, then, is the proclamation of this victory: “Hear the Easter message: This world is no more! A new world has erupted, as on the first Creation-day!”³⁴ The future of God has drawn nigh with grace and judgment, for this King is for the world even in His being over-against it.

Blumhardt’s eschatological mindset led Barth to take more seriously his Pietist heritage. Barth had inherited his family’s library, and he read attentively the works of F.C. Oetinger, J.A. Bengel and, perhaps most seminally, the millennial theology of J.T. Beck. Yet a fresh disdain for Pietism crept in, partly from Blumhardt’s own critique, partly from his personal encounter in 1916 with a revivalist by the name of Vetter. Disgusted at such mechanical, psychologized faith, Barth would go on to lambaste such expressions of religiosity over the next few years. *That* kind of Christianity had nothing to do with the glorious disruption of the resurrection, though perhaps the older Pietists had perceived what Blumhardt was perceiving.

Barth and Thurneysen agreed that they must seek out a new basis, to begin again at the beginning, not through a rereading of Kant or Hegel, but by returning to the

³³ Karl Barth, sermon, 8 Apr 1917, *GA* I.32, 138-9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

Bible itself.³⁵ Barth had occasion to develop his thoughts on the resurrection through his first major writing project, a commentary on Paul's epistle to the Romans. In 1916 Barth took to writing a commentary of sorts, not for publication but (much like Schleiermacher with his *Speeches*) in order to explain himself to his circle of friends. After some early fits and starts, it was completed in a rush and put into print at the very end of 1918.³⁶

One finds in the first *Römerbrief* a flurry of attacks on Romanticism, Idealism, socialism and Pietism – though the last of these, interpreted as religious individualism, receives the brunt of Barth's polemic. The sin of Pietism is its insistence that the *lone soul* should become an end in itself, that salvation is the salvation of the *individual*, that redemption is only a heaven-going for the *self*, that religion is a divorcing oneself from the world in order to be set *apart*. "Better to be in hell with the world church," Barth rails, "than in heaven with Pietists of a lower or higher order, of an older or more modern observance," for Christ Himself did not seek inner peace but descended to the place of torment.³⁷ The selfishness of religious individualism breeds the legalistic pride characteristic of the carnal nature. Offered grace, the religious person settles for law; sensing liberation, he ensnares himself; being addressed from without, she turns inward; finding God, such a person devours oneself. The religious consciousness is, to use Barth's preferred epithet, a "contradiction" (*Widerspruch*). But God is not religion.

³⁵ It is outside our scope to examine this rich biblical reeducation to which Barth submitted himself, but see Richard E. Burnett, *Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis: The Hermeneutical Principles of the Römerbrief Period* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001) and Donald Wood, "Ich sah mit Staunen: Reflections on the Theological Substance of Barth's Early Hermeneutics," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58:2 (2005): 184–98. Likewise, this study can only appreciate in passing the formative role of the task of preaching upon the early Barth (see *GD* §2 and Daniel L. Migliore, "Karl Barth's First Lectures in Dogmatics: *Instruction in the Christian Religion*," in *GD* I, xx-xxv).

³⁶ Not 1919, its listed date of printing (Busch, *Karl Barth*, 106).

³⁷ *1Rö*, 363, in *GA* II.16.

Indeed, God contradicts the world's contradiction through the death of Jesus. He dies our death, then comes with resurrection power, which alone "makes the *contradiction* of our present situation understandable, tolerable and fruitful."³⁸

Barth describes this critical intersection wrought by God's Self-revelation in temporal terms. There can be no confusion of eternity and history, but there really is a conjunction of God and the world in Jesus Christ. The resurrection is the Day of the Lord, the overcoming of sinful present-time with a "new world-time," "an end of all time," an eschatological reality in which one must conclude that "time has been halted by eternity."³⁹ Indeed, Barth says that in humans' awareness of Christ's special immediacy to God "it becomes clear that each of their epochs (even theirs specifically) has immediacy to God."⁴⁰

By faith humans perceive the divine intersection. Moreover, they usher in the revolution of the kingdom of God by participating in its mysterious growth. Through the resurrection God's presence is implanted into history, growing there in supernatural contemporaneousness with history, weaving a critical but rejuvenating force into the fabric of all occurrence. It is an immanent start to world transformation, for, despite its miraculous origin, the heavenly kingdom sprouts up *within* the world as an alternative to the world's possibilities. Quite concretely, Jesus Christ *is* the embodiment of eternity, and His resurrected life, extended to believers, provides eruptions of intervening power in which time's self-destructive patterns are overridden. Thus the kingdom of God can be said to have entered the stream of time, contradicting "mechanical" religion with

³⁸ Ibid., 322. See below for my discussion of Barth's *theologia crucis*.

³⁹ Ibid., 86.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 106-7.

something “organic.”⁴¹ The young Barth holds that the law of the Spirit has now overtaken the law of sin and death “as the developing energy [*die wachstümliche Energie*] of the coming world of God”⁴²; God has planted a “life seed [*Lebenskeim*]” in us.⁴³ Those who abide in Christ sustain genuine spiritual growth even as their true life is hidden by mortality. What is more, the life seed must and will sprout forth its shoots to the world. Religious introversion, then, can have nothing to do with the moment of faith, which, though conceived inwardly, is resurrection power with outgoing movement.

All of this, of course, Barth accomplishes by playing off of the Pauline ethical antithesis between flesh and Spirit, except now flesh is the way of religious individualism, and Spirit the way of divine possibility. The latter must subsume and conquer the former. Such victory of the Spirit over the flesh is apparent first in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who

participates in two worlds, two histories, and the one is the other enclosed [*abgeschlossen*] and overcome [*überwunden*] through Him. . . . What He *was* is left behind. As He completed his course as a part of that old world, His actual, inner being broke out forcefully in His resurrection from the dead . . . proclaiming Him as God’s Son, in whom the history of an alternate humanity has been inaugurated.⁴⁴

Negatively, the death of Jesus signals the negation of the old world, the termination of the vanity of human striving, achievement and possibilities. Positively, the resurrection of Jesus proposes a new world in the midst of the old, a victorious force for a new humanity. The resurrection, then, is a kind of counter-principle to the inbred religious world. Being the power of the Origin (*Ursprung*) of all things, the resurrection

⁴¹ Ibid., 21, 90.

⁴² Ibid., 298.

⁴³ Ibid., 310. Cf. *WGW*, 25.

⁴⁴ *1Rö*, 13, in *GA* II.16.

invigorates the creation for external action even as it leads all things back into oneness with God.⁴⁵

A similar sentiment appears in Barth's Easter Sunday sermon of 1919. Still in an organic view of the kingdom of God, he preaches about the fact that earthly existence has its limits,

But that which has borders also has a Beyond. A Beyond, that which we are not able to observe, but which nonetheless is necessarily part of the whole, not as the warp, but as the weft [*Einschlag*] in the fabric. There is no this-world without a Beyond, as there is no fabric made only of warp. This-world without the Beyond, time without eternity is supreme dubiousness, questionableness; it is the mortal, the corruptible, the perishable. Therefore eternity is a new thing, a totally other, which must come into time. The final weft in time is the content of the Bible. A different, new, upper world with new, other orders and relations, a world in which death is no more, takes a step into our world to interlock [*verschlingen*] it in itself, so that it becomes the whole.⁴⁶

Even here Barth can speak of eternity as "totally other," though the antagonism between heaven and earth is mollified by a sense of constructive relationship. Eternity is weft to time's warp. There is therefore a nascent dialectic in Barth's early understanding of Easter. Easter is more than just a happening long ago; in fact, Barth has little interest in exactly what happens to Jesus and His body. Instead, Easter is the transcendent "event" of God's breaking through to us in Christ. The encounter the believer in any age has with the risen Lord is governed by relationship in which the divine Beyond (*Jenseits*) challenges and claims this world (*Diesseits*). The divine presence sabotages the present world-process with a countervailing force so that the world will not disintegrate. In this way Barth speaks of an alternative power in the place of historicized and psychologized religious individualism.

⁴⁵ Cf. Paul Brazier, "Barth's First Commentary on Romans (1919): An Exercise in Apophatic Theology?" *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6:4 (Oct 2004): 391-2.

⁴⁶ Karl Barth, sermon, 20 April 1919, in *GA I, Predigten* 1919, 155.

But this “alternative” is the very weakness in Barth’s presentation, and doubly so. On one front *1Rö* was too radical, opposing the divine and the earthly so thoroughly that the world of the Spirit seemed to sneer at history as such. The Pauline dialectic is construed too antithetically, orphaning the appearances of history in favor of the spiritual realities. Unsurprisingly, biblical historians the likes of Adolf Jülicher and Karl Ludwig Schmidt labeled Barth a Marcionite. On the other front, Barth’s eschatological language was not radical *enough*, giving the impression that the resurrection enters in as the divine side of a necessary world-process. How are we to understand God’s world as *totally* other if it grows “organically” in the contaminated soil of world history? For good reason Graham Ward says that “Barth’s approach to dialectics in the first edition of *Romans* – whilst emphasizing *Krisis* and *Diakrisis* – is much more Hegelian” than the second edition.⁴⁷ That is, *1Rö* leaves the door open for the possibility of the dualism *and* monism so familiar to Romantic Idealism.

Another difficulty: the dialectic of *1Rö* permits little to be said about the final state of humanity. God’s future comes to this earth, sprouts and overrides the earth, but it does not offer hope beyond death. The commentary prefers the phrase “the power of the resurrection” to “the resurrection of the dead,” in part, I think, to draw attention back to the transformation of the present world. Around this time Barth says, “One is taken with the vision of an immortality or even of a future life here on earth in which the righteous will of God breaks forth, prevails, and is done as it is done in

⁴⁷ Graham Ward, “Barth, Hegel and the Possibility for Christian Apologetics,” in *Conversing with Barth*, ed. John C. McDowell and Mike Higton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 56. I might offer here a cautionary note about finding too much Hegel in the early Barth, if only because of the fact that he did not read him carefully until his professorship at Munich. Chung’s observation about Barth’s ineradicable romantic sensibility is also important: “Unlike the Hegelian dialectical method, where a mutual mediation of all positions and negations appears as the synthesis in a historical immanent process, Barth conceives that synthesis as Origin is not identical with the dialectical movement in thesis and negation. Rather, Origin is the condition of the possibility as well as the realizing, creative reality of Yes and No” (*Karl Barth*, 185-6).

heaven” (*WGW*, 26). But by this he hardly means to describe the immortality of the soul or the resurrection of the flesh in the temporal, actual “afterwards”; he means the possibility of the power of the future coming in to change the present. In this theology of hope little room is left for a doctrine of final glorification. There is only the Easter “echo” of Jesus’ disciples “who listen, watch, and wait” (*WGW*, 31). Resurrection is faith-based transformation and praxis for this life. No more is mentioned.

If Barth accomplished something of importance in this stage, it was his efforts to drive an initial wedge between the eternal wellspring and its religious apprehension, between the divine *Ursprung* and the human *Gefühl*. By attributing to Him a wholly different ground outside the bounds of history, *1Rö* sang “a very hymn in praise of the Godness of God.”⁴⁸ Grounded in the Pietist’s sense of the seminal presence of God and the Romantic Idealist’s sense of the encompassing subjectivity of God, but tempered by the socialist impulse and the apocalyptic optimism of Blumhardt, Barth was walking on, if not holy ground, fertile ground. Still, perhaps the enemy had not been sighted as clearly as Barth had hoped, and perhaps the idol had not wobbled so much after all. For that battle another draft of *Romans* would be required, one with a dialectic as severe and impossible as the raising of the dead.

Radicalizing the Dialectic (1919-1924)

The next five years for Barth were the most productive and complicated of his life. This study will be content to show how Barth’s dialectical theology was radicalized and further catalyzed around the concept of the resurrection of the dead. It has been

⁴⁸ Herbert Hartwell, *The Theology of Karl Barth: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), 9.

successfully demonstrated by others that this time period was not by any means the only “dialectical” stage Barth had.⁴⁹ But in these years two special features emerge. First, at this time Barth radicalizes the axiomatic sense of the resurrection of the dead in order to intensify a way of speaking of the *total* otherness of God precisely in His *totally*-encompassing immanence. His rigorous dialectic is one between time and eternity, dichotomy and monism, critical division and naïve unity. Second, during this period “the resurrection of the dead” is the all-important formulation. It best captures the dynamic of the movement of the living God upon dead humanity.

Almost immediately after the publication of his first commentary, Barth sensed the inadequacy of its formulations. Had he expressed the distinction between time and eternity strongly enough – or did it sound like eternity collaborated with time in the kingdom’s organic process? My opinion is that readers of *1Rö* and *2Rö* usually do well to err on the side of similarity between the two. What we can say, however, is that Barth sensed the urgent need to establish a stronger qualitative *diastasis* between God and humanity. He underscored this *separation* – this is my firm conviction – not to destroy the idolatries of the age for destruction’s sake, but to salvage the possibility of speaking of God’s sweeping *immanence*. The question of immanence stems from the nature of revelation itself, which seems to invite confusion between God and humanity: divine disclosure is the gift of the heavenly Father *to* us; it is Christ *with* us; it is the Spirit *in* us. In these early years Barth is especially seized with the subjective moment of salvation through the Spirit. The Spirit touches our lives, and thus we know God. But knowledge of God comes with the paradoxical claim that perfection resides *in* imperfection, that righteousness moves *in* our unrighteous consciousness, and “in” cannot mean “of.” Revelation is in us, but it is *of God*. Immanence must not soften

⁴⁹ E.g. McCormack, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 208-9.

utter transcendence. Put another way, God's *within* must first mean His *beyond*. This is Barth's agonizing presupposition.

It is with this concern in mind that Barth formulated the Tambach lecture of September 1919. Titled "The Christian's Place in Society," the turgid presentation was much more about *God's* place in *creation*. Impressively, it contains most of the core ideas of *2Rö*. The lecture begins with the premise of "Christ in us," which, sounding very much like the organic eschatology of *1Rö*, is "a formative life-energy within all our weak, tottering movements of thought, a unity in a time which is out of joint" (*WGW*M, 273). But it becomes clear that Barth is heightening the sense of the total transcendence of God in His intercourse with creation. God's kingdom is not the would-be victory march of the evolving dominant culture, neither is it equivalent to one single contravening movement pitted against the establishment. He is *the* movement, *the* Mover, and therefore the One who sets Himself apart from all movements in time. Not even for a moment can the Origin be confused with historical phenomena (even if those phenomena be so sacrosanct as Christian socialism or the family or heartfelt religion), for "[t]he so called 'religious experience' is a wholly derived, secondary, fragmentary form of the divine" (*WGW*M, 285). Only God is the original. To pursue the world for a second without this transcendent consciousness, to consider things as such, is to pursue "dead" facts uncontained in the eternity which holds them together and gives them meaning.

Barth's preferred language here is, much more than *1Rö*, that of resurrection. It is the movement *par excellence*: "I mean a movement from above, a movement from a third dimension, so to speak, which transcends and yet penetrates all these movements and gives them their inner meaning and motive," says Barth. "I mean the movement of God in history or, otherwise expressed, the movement of God in consciousness, the

movement whose power and import are revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (*WGW*M, 283). God enters history by entering “consciousness,” and this appearance of God (or deity of Christ) in our primal imaginations is what resurrection is. As the Lord comes from His self-contained holiness into consciousness (and from there to society), humans participate in the meaning and power which is nothing less than “the bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead” (*WGW*M, 287). For Barth, resurrection is the God-instantiated invasion of deity *into the world of flesh* – and the “bodily” resurrection for that reason alone. Unfortunately, this insight is not spelled out, and he fails to make clear why “resurrection” is the best way to describe the human’s encounter with God in this “movement.”

What Barth makes clear at any rate is that there is a severe dialectic inherent in God’s activity in the world. God is the fount and the end of all movements, “the revolution which is before all revolutions,” an original preceding and guaranteeing the synthesis of all historical theses and antitheses in time, a basis out of which “both thesis and antithesis arise” (*WGW*M, 299). In revelation one is called to see from this original position, and from it to love the world and have peace about its motions even while rejecting all such motions as inherent expressions of the kingdom of God. God really does perceive the world as a whole, and really does hold the fragments together. In this monistic sense, Barth chimes, “We can permit ourselves to be more romantic than the romanticists and more humanistic than the humanists” (*WGW*M, 303). But everything about us must be undone in order to rise to this level of understanding. In the power of the resurrection believers accept “the annulment of the[ir] creaturehood,” that is, “the subversion and conversion of this present and of every conceivable world, into the judgment and the grace which the presence of God entails” (*WGW*M, 288, 318). Only

in the presence of the transcendent God may one, annulled and reconstituted by faith, see and enjoy the summation of history.

During this time Barth's Platonism is perspicuous. Under one umbrella he places Kohelet and Socrates, the Pietists and Schleiermacher, Bach and Michelangelo, Paul and Socrates. They all perceive the unperceivable, Barth says. They all met God and were able to say something theological because they understood the crisis at hand.⁵⁰ Somehow they all perceived God's Idea, Jesus Christ, in whom is the awareness of immediacy to God. They comprehended the transcendent form which lies beyond the appearances even as it surrounds and is in them. Without a doubt, Barth's older brother Heinrich, a professor of philosophy, was chiefly responsible for impressing Platonism upon him in the form of a critical *Ursprungsphilosophie*.⁵¹

At this time Barth conducted a number of significant biblical studies, especially on Romans, Ephesians and 1 Corinthians. While his studies of Ephesians and Romans helped fill out his thoughts on the unification of the world in its transcendent Origin, I believe it was 1 Corinthians that did the most to help him articulate his dialectical method. In November 1919, just two months after the Tambach lecture, a startled Barth wrote to Eduard Thurneysen about his study on 1 Corinthians 15, saying, "The chapter is the key to the whole letter . . . and out of its last wisdom comes disclosures about this and that, striking several of us lately like pulses from an electric ray."⁵² Was

⁵⁰ That he accords revelation to all these crises, pagan or Israelite or Christian alike, indicates that Barth's *is* a "theology of crisis," counter to claims that Barth intended to present only the crisis of theology (e.g. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 209-16).

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, 218-26, for the influence of Heinrich Barth.

⁵² Karl Barth to Eduard Thurneysen, 11 Nov 1919, in *GA* V.3, 350. By no accident, the imagery comes from Plato's *Meno*, in which Socrates' teaching holds the listener in thrall like an electric ray (cf. *ER*, 271).

the resurrection of the dead a skeleton key to scripture – if not to all theological method?

Undoubtedly, Barth had been primed for a shift in his dialectic, goaded by his philosophical readings, reviews of *1Rö*, and his disappointment with the absolutist turn of socialism into Bolshevism.⁵³ Still, why does *this* scripture now arrest him and precipitate a new theological approach? Its significance, I think, is that 1 Corinthians 15 brings out a critical component needed to offset Barth's romantic tendency: God in the world means the unity of the *separated*, the resurrection of the *dead*. "The dead" is the very identity of those who receive revelation. "The dead" is the indigenious condition of the creature hearing the Word of God. Around this time Barth began reading the a-theologian Franz Overbeck, who had entertained the idea of the decay of historical movements as they depart from their origin, and Søren Kierkegaard, whose existential theology had exposed and negated all the comfortable practices of the Danish churches of his day. Much like Paul's Spirit-flesh opposition, these writers described an acidic No accompanying God's Yes in revelation. Time and eternity may be One in God's hands, but their unity *in time* means, paradoxically, that they are rent apart even as they are brought together.

The first strong expression of this radicalized dialectic appears in "Biblical Questions, Insights, and Vistas," Barth's speech at the Aarau Student Conference in April 1920. He begins by reminding his listeners that scripture is not concerned with the historical so much as the divine basis behind history. Therefore historical and religiously emotional inquiries are incapacitated in their approaches to the Bible. Instead one must approach the Bible as "the document of the axiomatic" (*WGW*M, 52) and the

⁵³ For the first two factors, cf. *ER*, 3-4; for the last, cf. Chung, *Karl Barth*, 165ff.

“key to the mind” which conceives the inconceivable origin (*WGW*M, 62). Barth’s interest in scripture is based on interest in its theme.

To apprehend God, Barth argues, one must go beyond human limit. And that limit is mortality, death. By definition one cannot go beyond that limit – but the believer hopes for transcendence. With Overbeck’s *Todesweisheit* in mind, Barth muses on mortality as the marker of the divine source of life.

To understand the New Testament Yes as anything but the Yes contained in the No, is not to understand it at all. Life comes from *death!* Death is the source of all. *Thence* comes the New Testament’s knowledge of God as the Father, the Original, the Creator of heaven and earth (*WGW*M, 80-1).

Kierkegaard’s existentialism is melded into this. The miraculous leap of faith happens at the very precipice of being. Faith means “death” for all our possibilities and powers – but there we find God. The resurrection of the dead gives us confidence that “life” indeed comes from “death.”

Remarkably, Barth finishes the lecture with something resembling an Easter sermon. He lists off five meanings of the resurrection: the sovereignty of God, eternity, the new world, a new corporeality, and humanity’s “one experience.” Barth’s thoughts are rather jumbled at this point. Still, the most important critical feature of his work in *2Rö* and *AT* is here evident, viz., that while eternity “comprehends” time, time is not eternity. *Finitum non capax infinit!* Only under the government of God, only *in Him*, is He understood and His life shared.

Barth’s language at this time about the resurrection of the body is impenetrable. He speaks of a new and bodily future, but “future” in this case means *the divine perception of the present*, a perception mysteriously shared in revelation. Bodily resurrection, then, is a statement about a higher order of life lived even as one goes through the vicissitudes of life in the flesh:

As [the body] participates in the incomprehensibility, the vexatiousness, and the darkness of our existence, it must *also* participate in the new possibility beyond the boundary of our existence. . . . A change of predicates takes place between the sowing in corruption and the raising in incorruption (or, otherwise expressed, the raising into a consciousness of God). The subject remains the same. But since the subject is born anew . . . and is conscious of itself in God, *ultimately* there can remain in it no 'below' what[so]ever (*WGW*, 93, emphasis added).

Almost in Athanasian language, Barth describes a double participation: a human participates in the human nature, but is also "born anew," becoming a participant in the divine nature. The ego in revelation is a double-subject; it must affirm itself in flesh *and* "itself in God." It needs the purification and unity which are characteristic only of ultimacy. Unfortunately, Barth does not describe this final state. The "resurrection of the body" is the expression of the penultimate double-existence: the physical human being in time caught up and transcendently perceived from the divine vista of revelation.

What came to fruition as early as 1919 was Barth's sense of a radicalized dialectic, a movement of God in the world in which the world is subverted in order to conform to its glorious Origin. Having mined this Idealistic structure from Platonic sources, one might state Barth's dialectic philosophically: eternity judges and enfolds time, or the Idea relativizes and includes the appearances. But to dwell upon these formulations is to misrepresent Barth. He came to prefer a biblical-eschatological formulation derived from the Pauline texts: revelation is *the resurrection of the dead*. The thesis ("dead" humanity) is confronted by its totally-other antithesis (the Spirit), the latter raising the former to a higher reality (God's resurrection of the dead). In this radical schism and ultimate unity, no qualitative parity between God and humanity remains. Barth has effaced any organic quality about this meeting of the two worlds; God's Self-disclosure has a miraculous character, the "raising" of those who are

metaphysically and epistemologically “dead.” Barth’s radicalized dialectic comes to articulation through his fusing together of resurrection with revelation.

We should pause and attempt a definition of “revelation,” since the term becomes so obviously important and yet can be thrown about so erratically, especially in Barth’s early work. By it Barth intends to speak of something beyond mere scientific knowledge (be it derived from normal investigation of history or the sacred texts) or mere religious experience (that is, psychological or social epiphenomena). Rather, by “revelation” Barth means the personal Self-disclosure of God, the “moment” of connection when God gives Himself to the human consciousness, the “event” of God’s manifest presence, the encounter of God with that which is not God. If revelation is knowledge, it is the miraculous human knowledge of the transcendent One, the impossible perception of God Himself. The Enlightenment tradition desired to make revelation refer to the “natural” ways we humans gather information about God. In contrast, Barth speaks of it as the action of God in which He shows Himself to the human through a personal, mystical and miraculous point of connection. So, while Joseph Mangina explains the Barthian idea of revelation as “the event of God’s self-disclosure to creatures,” revelation is ultimately concerned with “the covenant relationship that binds God with human beings.”⁵⁴ It is knowledge, says Trevor Hart, but “above all it is a self-involving and self-transforming communion with God as personal Other.”⁵⁵ Barth unpacks this concept of revelation in his later constructive dogmatic projects, yet his basic sense of revelation as a divine, miraculous and richly communicative encounter is in effect from about 1919.

⁵⁴ Joseph L. Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 29.

⁵⁵ Trevor Hart, “Revelation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 42.

The premier text supporting Barth's dialectic is 1 Corinthians 15, and so we turn to *Die Auferstehung der Toten* (*The Resurrection of the Dead*). This jump calls for an explanation, though. Why treat these lectures, delivered in 1923 and published in 1924, before *2Rö*, published in 1922? My answer is this. First, we have observed how Barth's meditations on 1 Corinthians in 1919 preceded his rewriting of the Romans commentary, and that his radicalization of a dialectical method/epistemology/ethics/ontology formed around 1 Corinthians 15 in particular. Secondly, as Barth indicated, were it not for some incompleteness in his notes he would have lectured on the resurrection of the dead – “the presupposition [*Voraussetzung*] of Christian theology” – in the first year of his professorship at Göttingen.⁵⁶ I think it reasonable to conclude that the core idea of *AT* had coalesced before or at the same time as Barth's writing of *2Rö*, which was prepared from 1919 to 1921.⁵⁷ Thirdly, there is the practical consideration of treating the clearer example of *AT*'s dialectic before the more abstruse *2Rö*.

As others have observed, *AT* is a peculiar book in a peculiar genre.⁵⁸ Both less and more than a biblical commentary, its real value is its novel assertion that chapter fifteen is the epistle's “very peak and crown” (*RD*, 101).⁵⁹ The content of the chapter is

⁵⁶ Karl Barth to Eduard Thurneysen, 16 Feb 1921, *B-Th* I, in *GA* V.3, 469.

⁵⁷ Textually this can be seen in the overflow of the two works. At times one wonders if Barth is saying that 1 Corinthians 15:50 – “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” – is the thesis verse of Romans too! Reciprocally, at the crux of Barth's argument in *AT* is a thorough correlation with the sub-themes of the book of Romans (*RD*, 118-9). *2Rö* and *AT* were, for all intents and purposes, conceived simultaneously. The disjuncture between intellectual development and actual publication tends to throw off researchers. For instance, A. Katherine Grieb's otherwise helpful essay (“Last Things First: Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis of 1 Corinthians in *The Resurrection of the Dead*,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56:1 [2003]: 50ff.) contextualizes *AT* in too restricted a period, 1923-24.

⁵⁸ See Webster, *Barth's Earlier Theology*, 76ff. For a summary of *AT*, see Dawson, *The Resurrection in Karl Barth*, 33-63 or the more superficial presentation in David L. Mueller, *Foundation of Karl Barth's Doctrine of Reconciliation: Jesus Christ Crucified and Risen* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990), 74-111.

not arcane speculation on revivification. Rather, “[t]he ideas developed in I Cor. xv. could be better described as the *methodology of the apostle’s preaching*, rather than eschatology, because it is really concerned not with this and that special thing, but with the meaning and nerve of its whole, with the whence? and the whither? of the human way as such and in itself” (RD, 109). The entire epistle is an outworking of ethical and doctrinal matters in light of the radical reconstruction effected by God’s world crossing into ours.

Barth understands Paul to be presenting *the* ultimate paradox when he says “the resurrection of the dead.” The immanence of God in revelation, which identifies us as mortal by marking the untransgressable boundary, is also that which ushers us into eternal life. Barth puts it memorably when he says,

The dead: that is what we are. The risen: that is what we are not. But precisely for this reason the resurrection of the dead involves that that which *we are not* is equivalent with that which *we are*: the dead living, time eternity, the being truth, things real. All this is not given except in hope, and therefore this identity is not to be put into effect. The life that we dead are living here and now is not, therefore, to be confounded with *this* life . . . time is not to be confused with eternity; the corporeality of phenomena is not to be confused with *this* reality (RD, 108).

A hard teaching! The intimacy *with* God in revelation does not assure us that we *have* Him. God’s gift of grace is “given in hope,” and therefore must not be mistaken as personal property “here and now.” Men and women – even if they be the most religious of Corinth – are the dead saved by grace, penultimate creatures set in death *and* eternal life.

The resurrection of *the dead*: Let us first look at the negation of the thesis in the dialectic. By Barth’s evaluation, the epistle is thoroughly pejorative. The No of God comes against every religious expression of the Corinthian church, whether in their

⁵⁹ Likewise, the resurrection of the dead is “the gospel,” “the source and truth of all that exists,” “the nerve of Christianity,” “the meaning of the Christian faith,” even “a paraphrase for the word ‘God’” (RD, 87, 108, 123, 165, 192).

special knowledge or petty alliances or impressive charismata or their musings on immortality. They mistakenly assume that their experiential, religious culture is the eschaton itself. Against them comes the iconoclastic force of the resurrection. Paul begins his fifteenth chapter by reminding them that the glorious resurrection of Jesus was and is the center of the gospel, and that this truth did not come by historical verification but *kata tas graphas* (vv.3-7). Barth proffers the (rather remarkable) interpretation that Paul is not offering any kind of historical apologetic in these verses, but invoking scriptural justification to point out that the resurrection is the frontier of history. Barth goes on to conclude that the empty tomb of Jesus is “a matter of indifference,” since belief and skepticism are each possible before the historical data (RD, 135). But the Corinthians have misunderstood the nature of faith. They have failed to honor the fact that God is God, for their denial of the resurrection of the dead is tantamount to a denial of God’s distinct glory. They are oblivious to the truth that the resurrection of Jesus *precludes* their own independent life. They have insanely claimed for themselves a life of spiritual ultimacy (in more conventional terminology, an over-realized eschatology). Because they confuse *Christ’s* resurrection with their present religious life, they do not hope for their *own* coming resurrection. They even think that their deaths will be a mere continuation of this life. It is quite the contrary, says Barth of Paul’s message: “Dying is pitilessly nothing but dying, only the expression of the corruptibility of all finite things, if there be no *end* of the finite, no *perishing* of the corruptible, no *death* of death” (RD, 159). How much better would it be if they had placed their religion under God’s judgment! Then “the general victory of Christ announced in the resurrection” would be theirs even in “the crisis of every human temporal thing” (RD, 167-8). To accept this crisis is to hope for the approaching resurrection, to long for the *coming* change of predicates.

From the other side, *the resurrection* of the dead: the synthesis which preserves the thesis. Chapter 15 proclaims the positive production achieved through the negating force of revelation. If God points out the dichotomy between His world and the Corinthians', He also makes it clear that they are claimed by it and placed under its *promise*. Christ is raised, and so shall we be raised – each in one's own order. What is salvation, then? Here Barth's monistic vision hinted at earlier becomes more explicit. To be raised from the dead means to have life *in* God, to *enter* His kind of existence, to *share* in the eternity proper to His life. The truth of God is "the change in the predication, which signifies return from creaturehood [*Kreatürlichkeit*] into primordially [*Ursprünglichkeit*]," albeit "effected [*vollziehen*] nowhere else than by and in the palpably visible bodily life of man" (*RD*, 199 = *AT*, 116). The resurrection cannot be the mode of existence proper to the creature, since flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, the dead creature can be made alive again, granted total newness, given an outside life, clothed with eternity. Resurrection from God overcomes "the unabolished [*unaufgehobene*] mere humanity of our existence" (*RD*, 210 = *AT*, 124), not in full now, not as a given ultimate, but really and truly. The eternal Yes of God will be revealed as God's final word to those currently in time.⁶⁰ "Christian monism is not a knowledge that is presently possible, but a *coming* knowledge," Barth concludes. "To set right what is in disorder, to abolish what is provisional, to overcome dualism, to bring about the 'God who is all in all,' *such* is the mission and significance of Christ" (*RD*, 170). Salvation is recapitulation.

⁶⁰ John Webster reminds those who believe Barth's early theology afflicted with an abstract, anti-creaturally pre-temporality that, in *RD*, "the centre of gravity is not God's primal decision but the parousia as the full manifestation of the redeemer and his redeemed creation" (*Barth's Earlier Theology* [London: T&T Clark, 2005], 88-9).

At face value such claims sound like an impending absorption of the human into God, something like the first or fourth types of our initial typology. But Barth has done much to protect against any *achieved* or *undifferentiated* monism from this side of time through the inter-worldly dynamic of the resurrection.⁶¹ More specifically, and to his great credit, he interposes a line of continuity within this radical discontinuity: the body. Again and again he insists that the *fleshy* human being is the object of the resurrection, the human in all his or her own tangibility, fragility, limitation and death.

The corruptibility, dishonour, and weakness of man is, in fact, that of his *corporeality*. Death is the death of his body. If death be not only the end – but the turning point, then the new life must consist in the repredication of his corporeality. To be sown and to rise again must then apply to the *body*. The body is man, body in relation to a non-bodily, determined, indeed, by this non-bodily, but body. The change in the relationship of the body to this non-bodily is just the resurrection (RD, 191).

Not to leave it at that, Barth goes on to reject the notion of “pure spirituality” (RD, 194). The *sōma pneumatikon* of 1 Cor 15:44 is, paradoxically, the triumph of God in the body because it is His triumph over the body. For all its repredication, the body is still body in its resurrected form. It is not a new body, but a renovated and re-powered body. Though Barth only flirts with the idea, he says that if there is a replacement – and what follows stands in bold contradistinction to a hulking philosophico-theological tradition – the resurrection is the *replacement* of the soul. Consider a fascinating passage:

Instead of the human soul, the Spirit of God appears in the resurrection. That which persists is not the soul (the latter is the predicate, which must give place to something else), but the body, and even that, not as an immortal body, but in the transition from life in death to life. It is not that [discontinuity], however, which Paul wants to indicate here, but the positive aspect. Exactly in the place of that which makes me a man, the human soul, is set . . . the Spirit of God But exactly in *this* place! To wish to be God's *without* the body is rebellion against God's will, is secret denial of God; it is indeed, the body which suffers, sins, dies. We are waiting for our *Body's* [*sic*] redemption; if the body is not

⁶¹ Interestingly, Barth understands the doctrine of the immortality of the soul also to be monism, a truly hideous monism, insofar as it holds that creaturely continuity operates like God's, that human identity is static vis-à-vis eternity and indiscernible from it (RD, 116f., 168f.).

redeemed to obedience, to health, to life, then there is no God; then what may be called God does not deserve this name. The truth of God requires and establishes the Resurrection of the Dead, the Resurrection of the Body (*RD*, 196-7).

No longer the engine of the human, the soul must give way to the Spirit of God.⁶² The *body*, though good as dead on this side of eternity, is marked as the point of continuity. The *body*, the person as the recipient of revelation, is the true point of revelatory contact and thus the true point of identity. Barth, then, permits this one small dimension of continuity in the midst of discontinuity, an ember kept lit by God in its sublation, so utterly insignificant as to be wholly significant. *The flesh is the subject* caught up in revelation and slated for redemption, *this* human life in its physical-social existence. Bodily life as such (“flesh and blood”) cannot inherit the kingdom of God – but it is nevertheless the *place* of redemption. The palpable, active, social thing the body is in all its fleshly infirmity is the very self God chooses to raise to Himself.

Let us be mindful that Barth is not advocating a reductive materialistic account of human identity. Identity for him is more a product of relational categories, lopsided heavily towards the divine, since true subjectivity comes from God in Christ. But I want to highlight Barth’s claim that *this human body* on this side of the resurrection is the recipient of the grace of the resurrection, even as grace dismantles and reconstitutes it in God. The bodily point of contact between this world and the next is vital, since otherwise the Christian *apokatastasis* slips into a mystical *henosis*. But has Barth posited the frangible flesh strongly enough in *AT* to ward off absorption?

In his account of the book, David Fergusson puzzles at Barth’s “excessive restraint” about the human life in the eschaton. He concludes that Barth, for all his

⁶² The latter must die away penultimately in this age and fully in the next, for the soul “is really only the place holder for the divine Spirit of Christ” (*RD*, 198). Had Barth continued along this line, a fruitful dialogue would have been possible with the work of N.T Wright on the *sōma pneumatikon* (e.g., *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 347ff.).

deference to God as the proper subject of theology, “telescopes” the eschaton into an instant of revelation in such a way as to make the final things resistant to narration.⁶³ Barth would probably respond by saying that serialized narration would involve speculation, and that specification about human life in the eschaton would too easily become historicized, even mythological, thus undoing the sense of newness with the resurrection.⁶⁴ He would also defend his agnostic posture by saying that theologians have no way of speaking about the final state *in* God, since that would mean *speaking conclusively about God*—an impossibility.⁶⁵ These defenses notwithstanding, I think Fergusson’s concern about a “muted” corporeality points us in the right direction.⁶⁶ If Barth insists on detemporalizing the final state and compacting all fleshly history into God’s eternal Moment, then *it is incumbent upon him to account for the distinctive creatureliness of the creature caught up in this Moment*, even if he has ruled out narratable specificity. I have extracted Barth’s claim that the body is the place of revelation and therefore redemption, but his unwillingness to go beyond this is troubling. Does the second Romans commentary clarify?

2Rö can be viewed as the consummate work of Barth’s early period. But unlike *AT*, the Romans commentary suffers from a diffusion or overload of dialectical concepts. Which concept (and corresponding text) is the center? Barth and his collaborator Thurneysen suggested a number of keys to the epistle over the years, never

⁶³ David Fergusson, “Barth’s *Resurrection of the Dead*: Further Reflections,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56:1 (2003): 70-2.

⁶⁴ Cf. John Bolt, “Exploring Karl Barth’s Eschatology: A Salutary Exercise for Evangelicals,” in *Karl Barth and Evangelical Theology: Convergences and Divergences*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 225.

⁶⁵ “*That God may be all in all . . . is the beginning and the end. We have, of course, no words to express this; for if we had, it would not be what it is*” (*ER*, 327). Because pure in-Godness is a totally otherworldly arrangement, the individual’s future “eludes expression” (*ER*, 223).

⁶⁶ Fergusson, “Barth’s *Resurrection of the Dead*,” 71.

coming to a firm conclusion.⁶⁷ Part of the problem with their suggestions, I think, is that they sought a single word or idea to summarize the gospel: “grace,” “faith,” “*theou*,” “election,” etc., each of which failed to denote the full sense of *dialectical movement*. A two-sided term was needed. The “resurrection of the dead” is only one of many dialectical devices used in the commentary, but let me make the suggestion that it has a subtle and special place in *2Rö*. Barth’s treatment of the programmatic passage in Romans 1:3-4 suggests that the resurrection of the dead serves as a compass of sorts for the rest of the commentary.

Of course, the resurrection appears as an important idea in the epistle to the Romans at several junctures (4:16-25; 5:9-11; 6:1-11; 8:9-11; 8:18-25). But in *2Rö* Barth calls attention to the resurrection of the dead right away, in Romans 1:3-4, insinuating that it structures Paul’s thought from the very fore. Easter is the miraculous frontier of all contact between heaven and earth: “The Resurrection from the dead is . . . the transformation: the establishing or declaration of that point from above, and the corresponding discerning of it from below” (*ER*, 30). “Resurrection from the dead” posits a *distinction* of “above” and “below” even as it sets in place a real *communication* between God and humanity.

How Barth arrives at this differentiation and unity is derived from the text itself. He capitalizes on the loose parallelism of the verses, which I have amplified and diagrammed below in the Greek and a fairly literal English translation.

⁶⁷ With the first edition Barth toyed with the idea that the *pistis theou* of 3:3 was “the key to the whole” (in Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen, *Revolutionary Theology in the Making*, trans. James D. Smart [Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1964], 38). In 1921 Barth opines that the mystical baptism into Christ in the first half of Romans 6 is the “axis on which the whole letter turns” (p.59), a thought to which Thurneysen apparently did not subscribe entirely, since years later he says that “grace,” and therefore Rom 1:16-17, is the “great theme” for Barth (p.19).

A *tou huiou autou*
 B *tou genomenou*
 C *ek spermatos David*
 D *kata sarka,*
 B' *tou horisthentos boiou theou en dunamei*
 D' *kata pneuma hagiosunes*
 C' *ex anastaseos nekron*
 A' *Iēsou Christou tou kuriou hēmōn*

A His Son,
 B who came
 C from the seed of David
 D according to the flesh,
 B' who was appointed the Son of God in power
 D' according to the Spirit of holiness
 C' from the resurrection of the dead,
 A' Jesus Christ our Lord

Barth's fresh translation of the Greek into German (2Rö, 3) shows, I think, greater attentiveness to this structure than what is conveyed in most translations, including the one substituted by Hoskyns in the English version.⁶⁸

A *seinem Sohn,*
 B *geboren*
 C *aus Davids Geschlecht*
 D *nach dem Fleisch,*
 B' *kräftig eingesetzt als Sohn Gottes*
 D' *nach dem Heiligen Geist*
 C' *durch seine Auferstehung von den Toten,*
 A' *von Jesus Christus unserm Herrn*

Which can be translated back into English as:

A His Son,
 B born
 C out of David's line
 D according to the flesh,
 B' powerfully installed as the Son of God
 D' according to the Holy Spirit
 C' through His resurrection of the dead,
 A' Jesus Christ our Lord

⁶⁸ ER, 27. Hoskyns generally chooses to use preexisting English translations in the place of a re-translation from Barth's German (ER, xiv-xv), an error in this instance.

The first noteworthy thing in these verses is the *singularity* expressed. For all the iconoclastic negativity with which readers are battered in 2Rö, Barth's key assertion is positive and unitary. Everything said here is held together by a single person, the man who is the content of the gospel, Jesus Christ: "In this name two worlds meet and go apart" (ER, 29). This singularity is called for by the text, since A and A' form an inclusio: God's Son is Jesus Christ our Lord. And who is this resurrected Lord but the selfsame man from the fleshly line of David? This *One* brings together heaven and earth in Himself. He is the risen-dead. By extension this suggests another singularity, that we who are caught up in the one revelation of God remain ourselves (indeed, can only be our true selves) in the grace of God.

Nevertheless, Barth's translation makes sure to point out the *contrast* between the two worlds, the differentiation precipitated by the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Spirit powerfully installs (*kräftig eingesetzt*) Jesus as the Son of God, in bold relief against Jesus' identity to Jesus' being born (*geboren*) of the earthly seed of David, which, for all its religiosity, is earthly, inglorious, limited, sinful, characterized by death. Human life is *kata sarka* (D), the visible world known to us, whereas the invisible world, *kata pneuma* (D'), is that Primal Origin which is unknown even in its being made known. The resurrection creates and facilitates this *diastasis*. It does not weave together the worlds; it exposes the difference between them.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ With the rewriting of *Der Römerbrief* Barth's textile language converts to something far more violent and polemical: the *Einschlag* of his 1919 Easter sermon becomes the *Einschlagstrichter*. Implantation becomes impact. Weft becomes bomb-crater. The resurrection is the "effulgence, or, rather, the crater made at the percussion point of an exploding shell [*die erstaunlichen Einschlagstrichter und Hohlräume*], the void by which the point on the line of intersection makes itself known in the concrete world of history Through His presence in the world and in our life we have been dissolved as men and established in God (ER, 29-30 = 2Rö, 5-6). "A specter that devours [*verschlingendes Gespenst*] every living thing," Barth shouts, "that is what the resurrection seems like as it is thrust into history, the presupposition in Jesus as it is thrust into the cohesion of circumstances, the paradox of faith as it is thrust into humans' spiritual lives" (2Rö, 90).

Third and most importantly, Barth finds here a radical *transformation* in the event of revelation. Observe how much Barth reads out of *horistbentos* (B'). His translation and use of the verb suggest an elevation, a re-positioning of Jesus through the resurrection. He is “appointed,” “installed,” “ordained,” “raised up to prominence.” This is surprising at first, since Barth goes on to speak of the resurrection mostly in the noetic, revelational, seemingly non-ontological sense (“declared”). Something more is afoot. Jesus’ crossing from Good Friday to Easter is an active *transposition* of that which is flesh as it meets the frontier of death, which by grace is also the frontier of the Spirit. For us the revelation of God means that our religious, historical-psychological human lives must be “dissolved” (*aufhebt*) and “established” (*begründet*) in God.⁷⁰ It seems to me that Barth sees the *einsetzen* of 1:4 as a kind of composite synonym for the *aufheben/begründen* pair. We in all our worldliness are dismantled and taken up, “appointed,” by the grace of God.

A pause here. The limitations of the English language are painfully apparent with the verb *aufheben* (noun: *Aufhebung*), the semantic range of which leads to renderings like “to dissolve” or “to abolish.” A better, precise reproduction is the technical “to sublimate.”⁷¹ The crisis Barth has in mind here, just as in *AT*, is a dialectical movement. Sublation in the most generic sense involves the confrontation of one force (thesis) with a second (antithesis) in which one dominates and raises the other into a higher reality (synthesis). Sublation is not an obliteration or extinction, but a “taking up” of the

⁷⁰ E.g. *ER*, 30, 35, 36, 79, 139, 141, 158, 162, 165, 218, 289, 298, 344, 417. Cf. Lowe considers this pair “a fundamental trope” which “provides a way of speaking of *krisis* without becoming entangled in opposition” (Walter Lowe, “Barth as the Critic of Dualism: Re-Reading the *Römerbrief*,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 41:3 [1988]: 385).

⁷¹ Or “sublimate.” The older, misleading terminology is Garrett Green’s chief reason for retranslating *CD* §17 (Karl Barth, *On Religion: The Revelation of God as the Sublimation of Religion*, trans. Garrett Green [London: T&T Clark, 2006], viii-ix). With Hoskyns (*ER*, xiv), I wonder if the English “dissolve” at least holds the potential of being helpful when understood in its chemical sense, as when a solute is dissolved in a solution, the former preserved in some sense as it is restructured in the latter.

negated object into a new order in which the negated thing is somehow sustained. For Barth a very certain kind of sublation takes place, of God's world radically dissolving and establishing ours. This is why Barth keeps the positional sense of *horisthentos*: because resurrection is God's election to take historical existence, to conquer it and reconstitute it divinely. The world *kata pneuma* lights upon the world *kata sarka*. Knowledge of the unknown God is given. Justification is granted to sinners. The dead are resurrected.

A final observation is that humanity's connection to God is entirely *resurrection-facilitated*. Barth identifies the resurrection of the dead as nothing less than the linchpin of all human knowing and being. The human world and God's world touch only at the eschatological frontier. Barth's translation calls attention to this. Notice how he treats the *ex* of C' as being an instrumental preposition, something closer to the Greek *dia*, translating it "through" (*durch*).⁷² The resurrection is the pivotal instrumental power by which the human Jesus is appointed and presented to us as the Son of God. And it is the event by which we as human recipients are negated and re-positated on a new foundation. Breaking the parallelism of C and C' actually underscores the resurrection, setting it apart, making it the arbitrator of the first and second *kata* and the whole sublational process. But this emphasis comes at the cost of adding confusion as to whether the resurrection is a predicate of the Son or the Spirit. Just whose resurrection is "His" (*seine*) resurrection, the Son's or the Spirit's? And if both, then how? The risk involved with Barth's axiom is that it becomes overly axiomatic, thereby too generic a concept for Trinitarian dogmatics. But for the Romans commentary it has real utility. The resurrection of the dead offers the possibility of hanging the Yes and No of God upon a single hinge.

⁷² Barth may be superimposing Rom 8:11 to acquire this meaning (see *ER*, 287).

The No and the Yes, hiddenness and revealedness, judgment and grace: the paradox comes together in the resurrection. In fact, all of Barth's talk about the resurrection can sometimes distract from the point that his dialectic is a thorough re-articulation of Martin Luther's theology of the *cross*. Regin Prenter describes Luther's *theologia crucis* as "theology in its totality, that is, theology in so far as it is at all capable of understanding the unity underlying the antitheses in the divine works: God's righteousness under his judgment, his grace under his anger, the life which he bestows even in the midst of death, his power to turn the present evil into a thing of good."⁷³ From this line of thought Barth reads Romans as a document of the violent intersection of two kingdoms, as divine presence in the midst of seeming absence, as a furious relation between veiling and unveiling, as Good Friday with Easter behind it.⁷⁴ Recall that during this time Barth is reading and rediscovering Luther along with Kierkegaard (a radical Lutheran), Nietzsche and Overbeck (lapsed Lutherans). It is not be an oversimplification to say that Barth in *2Rö* (and *AT*) has taken the *theologia crucis* tradition and repackaged it in the language of resurrection.

Mixed with Paul, Plato and Kant, this more Lutheran approach to revelation operates like nuclear fission.⁷⁵ Fission, I say, because the insertion of God's world into ours splits apart what is Spiritual and what is fleshly. Apotheosis – the undifferentiated

⁷³ Regin Prenter, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 2. For the degree to which Barth became staurocentric through it, see Rosalene Clare Bradbury, "Identifying the Classical *Theologia Crucis*, and in 'This Light, Karl Barth's Modern Theology of the Cross'" (Ph.D. diss., University of Auckland, 2008), 123ff.

⁷⁴ This seminal thought stays with Barth, who mounted a print of Matthias Grünewald's triptych above his desk for many years. Among other things, the triptych portrays an agonizing, dying Christ on the front, which opens up to a resurrection scene behind it. For a brief interpretation of the triptych, see I/2, 125.

⁷⁵ Cf. Busch, *The Great Passion*, 22; Dirk-Martin Grube, "Reconstructing the Dialectics in Karl Barth's *Epistle to the Romans*: The Role of Transcendental Arguments in Theological Theorizing," *Bijdragen* 69:2 (2008): 127-46; Peter S. Oh, "Complementary Dialectics of Kierkegaard and Barth: Barth's Use of Kierkegaardian Diastasis Reassessed," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 48:4 (Apr 2007): 497-512; McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 216ff.

unity of God and creature – is impossible in the midst of this explosion.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, if fission, then we are supposing on some level an *original unity*. In fact, Barth feels driven to posit the split with such force *precisely because he starts from the assumption that God is immanent*. The two worlds are blasted apart *precisely because they are already conjoined in revelation*. In that seminal moment time has been comprehended by eternity; they touch; they are one. Consider how Barth says, “The unity of the divine will is divided only that it may be revealed in overcoming the division. But it is only too easy to confuse this invisible occurrence in God with that observable series of psychophysical experiences in which it is manifested” (ER, 189). The proximity of Spirit and flesh in revelation tempts humans to identify them, but such an identification elicits a fission from God that is not mercy, but wrath. That idol will be destroyed. But mark well: Barth delivers his devastating critique from *within* that unity so prized by the Romantics – and yes, he argues (however violently) *toward* that same unity.⁷⁷

Barth’s fission of the Romantic nucleus is exactly the thing at work when he invokes the resurrection of the dead. Epistemologically, the resurrection means revelation in concealment, the unveiling of deity in the veiling of the cross. Ethically, resurrection means the carving out of a hollow canal of religious activity with the living water of God. Forensically, resurrection means *ustificatio impiū*, the justification of the

⁷⁶ This insight is reflected in Barth’s remark in December 1920 that he had moved from Osiander to Luther by rewriting the commentary (Barth and Thurneysen, *Revolutionary Theology in the Making*, 55).

⁷⁷ Therefore Torrance’s claim that Barth’s early dialectic was an “attack upon . . . immanentist thinking” (*Karl Barth*, 63, emphasis mine) is misleading. His attack happened from within, for at this stage (and to the end?) Barth himself was a sort of immanentist. Bultmann is much more attentive when he pens that 2R*ö* had “touches of romanticism in places” and “traces of the transcendental philosophy of Cohen,” suggesting to Barth that he should be more gracious with Schleiermacher (Bultmann to Barth, 31 Dec 1922, in Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, *Letters 1922/1966*, ed. Bernd Jaspert, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981], 4-6).

sinner.⁷⁸ And ontologically, when Barth says resurrection he means the stark differentiation of mortal creature from immortal Creator even as humanity participates in deity.

With that said, let us return to the question of the possibility of eschatology proper. Has the early Barth left room for any statement about one's personal future, particularly the resurrection of the body at the end of time? Part of the problem here is that Barth has practically invented a new tense, "the eternal future" (*futurum aeternam* or *futurum resurrectionis*), to take the place of the temporal future. Even so, at various times he is willing to speak of an *absolute* future in which all penultimacy is made ultimate and all dialectical movement finished. In good Hellenistic fashion he has been unwilling to suppose a new history to be initiated in the chronological future, but he is willing to induce from the moment of revelation that God can and will *resolve* all historical movement in His own eternity.

A handful of examples will demonstrate this. Barth holds that through revelation "we are aware of a final consummation and comfort and pride" (ER, 153), "a final one-ness, a final clarity and peace" (ER, 178). For this "final advent" we wait with ardent longing (ER, 223). Resolution cannot occur on this side of eternity, but there is a reality in God waiting to be revealed in a conclusive way. Barth is unopposed to the thought of *this* monism. The resurrection of the flesh is blasphemy if construed as an achieved earthly reality, but in the Beyond "time is swallowed up in eternity, and the flesh in the infinite victory of the Spirit" (ER, 285). Accordingly, with every duality of this existence removed, men and women will experience "direct, genuine, and eternal life" (ER, 308). They will be revealed in their eternal egos, their identity *in God*. They

⁷⁸ Barth of the second Romans commentary can be seen as transposing the song of the *sola fidei* of the Reformers into an eschatological key. The resurrection of the dead has the same character as the forgiveness of sins. It is an alien deification, a salvation which comes only from without and has no native provenance in us. Resurrection is imputed to us.

are, not to anticipate the rest of my study too much, eternalized, manifested or incorporated.

Again, as in *AT*, this kind of recapitulation raises the question as to how human preservation is possible. Does the obliterating critique of the *Aufhebung* genuinely preserve the corporeal thing in its Yes? Why are we not to conclude that the fleshly phenomena are simply reintegrated and absorbed into their Primal Origin, as planets into a black hole? Distinctive creatureliness seems questionable if creaturely “positions . . . have been dissolved,” with every earthly agent “at peace, reconciled, redeemed, and resolved” in God’s unity (*ER*, 329). Barth does not make the situation any better by calling Jesus Christ the new ego.⁷⁹ How does the creaturely “I” keep any of its parameters once human identity in its present dialectic is translated fully into Christ?

And yet again, in *2Rö* just as in *AT*, Barth claims a glimmer of continuity at the place of the flesh. The fiery bolt of God’s resurrection aims for and hits *the fleshly realities*, and

maybe the lightning leaves these things untouched; or refines and purifies them; carbonizes them; or transmutes them into other substances; or perhaps it consumes and destroys them altogether – and yet, not altogether: *Non omnis moriar!* In every case, they are subjected to a radical testing. What we were is proved by its relation to what we are, whether it stands on this side or on that side of the gulf which becomes visible through the revelation and observation of God, whether its quality be life or death (*ER*, 227).

Barth will not evade the solemn and mysterious fact that God’s revelation strikes here at the corporeal self. God’s lightning hits flesh, not an unalloyed, conductive, immaterial soul. At God’s initiative a *connection* is made between Spirit and flesh – tangential, on the frontier, wholly distinguished – but a connection nonetheless. How can revelation not carry *this life* to the eschaton when *this life* is the very thing touched? How can “I” be

⁷⁹ E.g. *ER*, 181, 269, 297, 312f., 438. Taking from Romans 5 and his study on Ephesians, Barth casts Jesus as the true Adam in the strongest sense, as an *Anthropos*, as the idea of the individual, as the eternal “I” in God. For more on Barth’s over-determination of the unity between Jesus Christ and the rest of humanity, see chapter five.

annihilated by God's love in eternity when "I," this individual, this clod of atoms, am the place where the Spirit dwells? Barth insists that nothing can withstand the sublation of God, the relating of a subject to its origin. Nevertheless, the subject slated for redemption is flesh, and so: "The more coldly we speak of the resurrection of the body the better" (*ER*, 289).

I can only conclude that Barth's eschatology suffers from debilitating murkiness in the early 1920s. Along philosophical and theological lines, he describes the resurrection power as a bringing all things into the eternal Deity. To compensate for it, however, he imports a qualitative distinction between the divine and human so great as to have all things temporal "dissolved" in the acids of eternity if they are to cross over the chasm and abide in God. Barth's hints about a final rest of humanity in God after the resolution of the temporal dialectic, which would suggest a looming absorption into a divine monad. However, we have noted a stubborn counterpoint, that Barth maintains the resurrection of the flesh, the flesh as the subject, the flesh as the stuff claimed by God, the stuff preserved by Him, even in eternity. The bodily dimension is the (shall we say) "subjected subject," the point of intersection with eternity, the bearer of the promise of eternal life. For all its radical re-identification, *flesh* is the continuity of human identity between this temporal world and the eternal.

Repackaging the Dialectic (1924-1932)

The resurrection of the dead as a dialectic all but disappeared in 1924. At first blush this seems shocking, as this year marked the high-water point of that structure with the publication of *AT*, and by such thinking Barth had become known as a leading exponent of the so-called *dialektische Theologie* movement. There were good reasons for

him to repackage his approach, however. Barth found himself overwhelmed by the task of teaching, having arrived at the university at Göttingen at the end of 1921 woefully unprepared to instruct his students in an orderly, systematic way. That challenge was multiplied many fold due to the fact that he was supposed to teach *Reformed* theology, about which (apart from a modest knowledge of Calvin) Barth was ignorant.⁸⁰ While other theologians were cleaning up the shrapnel from their own bombarded playgrounds, he was attempting to process the Protestant theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Of course, Barth managed to complete *2Rö* in a short time, and a biblical studies course most semesters permitted him to teach on Ephesians, James, and, significantly, to write his *Erklärung* of 1 Corinthians. But he was expected to teach doctrine, and by orders of the university, Reformed doctrine. So at the end of 1924, with trepidation (and not a little resistance against the administration's sectarianism), Barth took up the challenge of building a systematic theology over the course of three semesters. The series he called, with a nod to Calvin, *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*.⁸¹

Before turning to these lectures, it will be helpful to note some of the failures of Barth's "eschatological" approach. First, the resurrection dialectic was *overly critical*, more suitable for deconstruction than the building of a framework of thought. The early work cleared the field of its confusion of revelation and religion, but it did not lend itself to dogmatics. Secondly, the eschatological approach was *too exclusively Pauline*. The apocalyptic thread he detected in his exegetical work on Paul's epistles did not shine through as forcefully in other apostolic writings, let alone ancient and modern

⁸⁰ The irony increases when one considers that Barth had just confessed earlier that year to Martin Rade that he was quickly moving toward Lutheranism (Karl Barth to Martin Rade, 31 Jan 1921 in *Karl Barth – Martin Rade: Ein Briefwechsel*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1981], 154).

⁸¹ The first half of this Institutes has been published in English as *GD I*.

dogmatics. Third, I note that such a dialectic was *unmißlich*. People did not subscribe (or could not understand) such a formulation, and his novel interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15 received weak applause.⁸² Fourth, there remained something strangely *anthropocentric* to the old dialectic. Are we really intent on speaking of God if we, at every point, need to mention “the dead,” humanity’s limit? Contrary to the purpose of *2Rö* and *AT*, all of Barth’s talk about the human frontier and faith gave the impression that humanity is the *Sache* after all!⁸³ In a roundabout way these early commentaries were overly concentrated on the subjective aspect of revelation. His early Christology was anemic and seemingly subordinate to the work of the Spirit – and the Father was hardly mentioned at all. The objective reality of revelation and the objective possibility of revelation Barth went addressed. Perhaps he had not escaped the nineteenth century so much after all!

Seemingly overnight Barth repositioned his axis away from eschatology: “I regard the doctrine of the Trinity as the true center of the concept of revelation” (*GD* I, 131). It, not the resurrection of the dead, is “the presupposition of all the doctrinal presuppositions of Christian preaching” (*GD* I, 95). The shift from the resurrection of the dead to the doctrine of the Trinity seems unlikely until one considers that Barth’s primary aim in *AT* and *2Rö* was to show how God remains the subject of revelation even in His immanence. According to Barth’s explanation, this is exactly what the

⁸² The fact that Barth’s intellectual biographers to this day overlook the significance of the conception of the resurrection of the dead indicates that the idea was a muddled one. But, aside from the charge that it did not make clear the inner relation of faith and history, it got warm reception from Rudolf Bultmann, “Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*,” in Rudolf Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding* I, trans. Louise Pettibone Smith (London: SCM Press, 1969), 66-94.

⁸³ This is evinced in Barth’s willingness to find the resurrection in every philosophy and religion that subscribes to some form of Platonism, a *Religionsgeschichte* which, if not natural theology, is sibling to it. I find his early existential presentation to be an ongoing flirtation with a kind of apophatic natural theology, which (understandably, I think) misled Brunner into thinking they were in agreement. The Barth of *2Rö*, however, is not the Barth of “Nein!”

doctrine teaches, that God is God three times over in revelation, as a) the transcendent Revealer b) who reveals Himself historically in Jesus Christ and c) who turns to us personally in the Holy Spirit. The seminal thought of Christian revelation addresses the threefold “inexhaustible vitality or the indestructible subjectivity of God in his revelation” (*GD I*, 98). The core unity in revelation is that between God and God and God – *not* between God and the religious consciousness. A trinitarian perspective also proved a better launch point for balanced, constructive dogmatics,⁸⁴ for from the start God’s immanence and transcendence are available in all three Persons, not lopsided toward the Spirit as in Barth’s early axiom in the resurrection of the dead. By making this shift Barth leaves behind Schleiermacher (who relegated the doctrine of the Trinity to a postscript in his *Glaubenslehre*) and joins a more pedigreed theological tradition.

Not that Barth has resolved the crisis! As Daniel Migliore contends, dialectical thinking marks the treatment of every doctrine in *UCR*.⁸⁵ The project at Göttingen is one directed first and foremost to ministers undertaking the task of preaching, and preaching operates out of a sense that a mere human is daring to speak about the living God. In fact, a full third of the dogmatic program is devoted to prolegomena, which tries to capture the sense of comprehensibility in incomprehensibility, the paradox inherent in the event of the sovereign Word of God as it is spoken and heard among humans. For instance, Barth in §3 invokes a potent Latin phrase, *Deus dixit* (“God hath spoken”) to explain revelation as the unconditioned supremacy of God which comes to others as “a special, once-for-all, contingent event” (*GD I*, 59), but “as qualified history, [with] no such links with the rest of history” (*GD I*, 61). The negation of human experience implicit in God’s affirming Word comes through even clearer in “Man and

⁸⁴ Cf. McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern*, 84.

⁸⁵ Migliore, “Karl Barth’s First Lectures in Dogmatics,” xxx.

His Question” (§4). God’s address to a person unveils the contradiction at the heart of a person’s earthly existence: “In his subjectivity he cannot be glad for a moment, because not for a moment is he secure, because notoriously he is constantly what he is not and is not what he is” (*GD I*, 75). Barth’s eschatological tone has vanished, but the dialectical language remains.

Just as important is Barth’s developing Christology (§§6, 27-29). The convergence of time and eternity (epistemologically: God’s veiledness and unveiledness) are given a basis and fulfilled by the incarnation. Incarnation, Barth claims, is the prototype of revelation, the objective encounter of God with humanity, the presupposition of revelation. The hypostatic union of Jesus Christ is the *unity* the Romantics desire but cannot attain, Barth says, for “the restoration of the original relation between God and man with no distance or alienation or antithesis” solves humanity’s quandary (*GD I*, 155). Full communion is the reality of God’s Son alone, for He is true God and true human. The actual union of the God-human comes with an internal fissure, however. Jesus’ deity is not His humanity; Jesus’ humanity is not His deity. The historical Jesus as such is not inherently divine or deified. Likewise, for all of humanity’s homecoming in the divine union of revelation, no blending with God is possible, no apotheosis occurs in the union. Barth instead affirms the “dialectical distinction and unity of the divine and the human in Christ” of the definition of Chalcedon in AD 451 (*GD I*, 154).

But Barth goes beyond Chalcedonian Christology. Through Heinrich Schmid’s collection of scholastic Lutheran theologians and Heinrich Heppe’s compendium of scholastic Reformed theologians, Barth discovered a line of medieval Christology, namely, the dual concept of *anhypostatos-enhypostatos*. Alexandrian in nature, the original terminology was an attempt to set forth the *priority* of the divine nature over the human

nature without disintegrating the latter, though Lutheran and Reformed theologians alike had molded the terms for their own uses.⁸⁶ What the terms came to mean – or, rather, how Barth interpreted them, was this: Jesus Christ’s humanity is not a person and does not subsist in itself (*anhypostatos*), but is fully dependent upon the divine Logos for its existence. The human nature has no life in itself. It requires the grace, the initiative, and the power of the divine. The negative thrust of the term protects against Ebionite thinking, including Neo-Protestant historicization. Stated positively, Jesus’ humanity, being assumed and sustained by the Logos, is genuine, alive, and has being (*enhypostatos*). “It has personhood, subsistence, reality, only in its union with the Logos of God,” wherein the flesh is reified, given concreteness, raised to life (*GD I*, 157). The positive thrust distances one’s Christology from docetism, and Barth found in the concept an establishment of humanity in the midst of its dissolution. Humanity was put in its place, rightly ordered, negated and affirmed, in this union.

Up to this point Barth’s dialectical language gravitates around the subjective event of revelation, the illumination by the Holy Spirit, “the resurrection of the dead.” But now Barth has put into place the objective basis for this encounter, sanctified unity and difference, through the person of Christ. This is the *Realdialektik* (the central, objective dialectic) of the Christian faith: the God-man, Jesus Christ, the prototype of all revelation. From this point on Barth does not rely so much on the (rather cloudy) time-eternity dialectic as the more concrete, inner relations of the Son.⁸⁷ While his theology

⁸⁶ F. LeRon Shults claim that these terms were adopted and distorted by Protestant scholasticism before being passed to Barth, who distorted them further. In my opinion, Shults tends to miss the Alexandrian forest for the Leontian trees in the search for terminological exactitude. Yet Shults points out two important observations about the Alexandrian family: that the Lutherans wanted the same thing as Leontius, and that Barth follows the Lutheran usage more closely than the Reformed (“A Dubious Christological Formula: From Leontius of Byzantium to Karl Barth,” *Theological Studies* 57 [1996]: 442, 445).

⁸⁷ This is one of the major features of the periodization from Bruce McCormack (*Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 19-23, 327ff.).

was far from maturity, Barth has set aside the resurrection dialectic in order to pursue a more objective basis in a Chalcedonian, Alexandrian Christology. The hypostatic union of the incarnation is the original dialectic; the pneumato-eschatological “raising” in the subjective Moment of revelation is but an echo. The person of Jesus Christ *is* the resurrection of the dead, where revelation to us in the Spirit “only *proclaims* the resurrection of the dead” (*GD* I, 155, emphasis added). Since Christology also moved into the heart of Barth’s program, eschatology could and would become methodologically ancillary.

Finally Barth’s doctrine of the end could have its own content – though he hardly knew how to articulate an eschatology that was not prolegomena. The *Einleitung* on eschatology and §35 in *UCR* depict eschatology as a kind of methodological bookend, a postscript explaining the axiomatic nature of the doctrines and their dialectic of hope, a way to speak of the “eschatological limits” (*UCR* III, 420).⁸⁸ But Barth goes on to devote four sections to the last things: §35 “Hope,” §36 “The Presence of Jesus Christ,” §37 “The Resurrection of the Dead,” and §38 “The Glory of God.” And in them we discover a remarkable feature of Barth’s theology, viz., that *he frames eschatology entirely within the rubric of revelation*. The doctrines of the *eschata* are simply the unpacking of that which is the case in God’s disclosure to us in the here and now. It is the exposition of human nature caught up in the event of revelation. Eschatology describes our being and knowledge in the manifest presence of God. If Barth’s doctrine of the Word of God forms a prolegomena by explaining the penultimate condition of humanity in the presence of God, then his doctrine of the end time forms a postlegomena as a prospective statement about the ultimate condition of humanity in

⁸⁸ This sort of approach is detectable only through the remnants of a theology of limit in *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf* (1927), and has dissipated by *KD*.

the presence of God. Since Barth never lived to complete *CD V*, *The Doctrine of Redemption*, these sections are tantalizing and suggestive. Let us entertain a few of his insights.

Barth continues to define eschatology as the encounter with God at the perimeter of our earthly limitations. Eschatology speaks of *the coming God*, and is therefore not overly concerned with *the last things*, whether historical-sociological projections, geological-astronomical calculations, historical predictions, parapsychology, ontological speculation (be it from Plato or Kant or anyone else looking for a necessary postulate to bolster ethics) or mythology. The history of Protestant dogmatics has suffered the double failure of rank speculation and over-spiritualization. Rather, eschatology is supposed to speak about God's eternity touching our frail reality. Like his saying that Christianity is "altogether thoroughgoing eschatology" (*ER*, 314), Barth comments:

Eschatological contents in their fullness are the whole of Christianity. The eschatological question in particular goes under the cloak of the promise which hides fulfilment. If it is already really there in that cloak, then the hour of its pure manifestation [*reinen Erscheinung*] is also coming, near to this already advanced hour (*UCR III*, 464).

The doctrines of the End are the fullness of the Christian faith. In this life they lie under the veil of the dialectical encounter with God, but there is coming a final resurrection, "the hour of its pure manifestation" in which the whole truth of things is disclosed.

Who and what are we in the end? By my reading, §36 is the key section for Barth. Eschatology is really only an outworking of the idea of the presence (*Gegenwart*) of Christ, that is, our being present with Him in His eternal contemporaneity, His eternal Now. This is what is meant by "parousia." Toward this explanation, Barth appeals to a robust concept of eternity. Jesus Christ lives in the state of exaltation,

which is His whole person displayed in the eternity and glory of the Father. He comes to us, then, as the Crucified and Resurrected Lord whose in-temporality is also granted an overarching existence through all of time. In fact, we can only profess Him as the eternal Lord: if Reconciler, also Creator and Redeemer. These three moments – creation, reconciliation, redemption (or past, present, future) – appear to be dispersed throughout time according to our fleshly perspective, though in eternity God’s movements are “an undivided, unbroken act, *actus purissimus*.” Were we permitted to behold this meta-display (*Zentralschau*), were we to exercise unfettered participation (*Teilnahme*), we would understand the perfect, pure, eternal act that is Jesus Christ’s (UCR III, 435). We would understand that all things belong to Him, and that all things, *sub specie aeternitatis*, are given a share in the eternity which surrounds and upholds them. We would be standing in Christ’s *presence*. Comprehension of God, of God with humanity, of eternity with time, is the promise of the resurrection. Just as Christ is being revealed as true human in fellowship with true God, so humans will fellowship with God; not in an extended chronology but at the *end* of time, at “the eternal, terminal, final Hereafter [*Nachher*] of all time” (UCR III, 453). We will be revealed as those gripped in the unifying power of eternity, the Today of Jesus Christ. His parousia is the unveiling of life in God, an eternity for all.

Not that we see such unity from this side, warns Barth, for the state of the creature in time is a glory with God veiled by *death*. Humans are caught in the here but not yet. We are forced to exist, think and speak in dialectic. But the presence of Christ draws nigh, and when it comes definitely, there will be “a replacement [*Ersetzung*]” of this temporal “interim” (UCR III, 456). The last hour approaches – not as an episode of time, but as that which comes at the frontier of time, at time’s demise. Does this transition from contradiction to unity occur at physical death, then? Is the collapse of

an individual's time coincidental with eternal life? Barth's answer is unsatisfying. He says that we cannot be rigorously dogmatic at this point, since death is still a phenomenon on this side, though we need not fear termination, and may even look forward to Christ's *final* presence at our *final* breath, for "these two hours . . . can no longer be distinguished" (UCR III, 458).

While Barth distinguishes between parousia, the resurrection of the dead, and the glory of God (the Last Judgment), these are minor conceptual distinctions. His doctrine of the general resurrection corresponds to, and is really just a subset of, the presence of Jesus. In fact, "the new presence of Jesus Christ *is* the content, the *whole* content, the one and all of Christian hope" (UCR III, 466). Barth's prioritization of the parousia over the resurrection reflects the fact that he thinks it better to speak of Jesus Christ's coming, to hope for His presence, to long *for* Him, rather than to pine for something *from* Him. The general resurrection's content is really just an extended meditation on what it means to be fully and finally *present with Christ* in the pure sense.

Barth, having established that true life is life in eternity, makes reminder once again that believers do not yet possess such life. Jesus Christ's risen presence has brushed against them in time just enough to bring their existences into contradiction. They are alive in Him and dead in the flesh simultaneously. "So long as time endures," they are not defined fully by the Moment of revelation, they are not yet fully in the Spirit, and the Church must be the *ecclesia militans* (UCR III, 469). However, the presence of Christ promises an *absolute* Moment in which, Christ having appeared unequivocally to the saints, "their collective life with Christ will be *truly* direct, immediate, on display" (UCR III, 469).

Redemption involves subtraction and addition.⁸⁹ The resurrection of the dead involves a kind of subtraction, for it only happens with the cessation of time, according to Barth. While time is not exactly evil, it is the veil of death and dying under which humanity is kept from its eternal presence with Christ. The mode of time must be taken away conclusively, the seal of deathliness must be broken, the veil must be lifted. Barth's thought thus keeps its negative thrust: the resurrection of the dead will be the abolition of every current world-order, "the removal [*Aufhebung*] of all impeding, obfuscating, retarding not-yet" and "the demolition [*Abbruch*] of the tent" (UCR III, 470). On the flip side, the resurrection of the dead can just as well be understood in positive terms. It is a summation: only by the conclusive removal of the contradiction of the flesh to the Spirit can all earthly existence be gathered, unified and come to resolution in God. Only in this ultimate sublation will there be "no expectation, no privation, nothing unresolved," each moment of time characterized by "completion and also sequence, history as eternal history, a striding from prosperity to prosperity" (UCR III, 466).

The whole of time must be *resolved* so that humans may live in eternity.⁹⁰ Then all of time, rather than being extended, will be "rolled up" like a carpet (UCR III, 447-8). Barth again discourages speculation about life in the final state, but he agrees with the basic Christian beliefs that the end will hold out for us the *visio Dei*, the intimate perception of God, and the *fruitio Dei*, the enjoyment of God. These things need not be

⁸⁹ Cf. William Stacy Johnson, *Karl Barth and the Postmodern Foundations of Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 130.

⁹⁰ This supposedly allows for a communitarian expression of the eschaton, since in this inclusive picture of eternity the resurrection is obtained "simultaneously, or rather co-eternally, by all the dead" (UCR III, 474).

objectified or examined too closely, suggests Barth, since the consummation of all things is ultimately a matter of *God's* glory.

What about corporeality? Does he sense an imperiled bodiliness in the post-temporal presence of God? Barth in *UCR* rejects the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, saying that the resurrection (in sharp contrast to the popular conception of the afterlife) deals not with the division of body and soul but the unity of the two as the person beyond time is united with the eternal Christ. Barth reaffirms his commitment to corporeality by making four related points. First and foremost, he says that a human remains creature in the resurrection:

Redemption does not mean that the person ceases to be himself, and something else comes to be. One will *not be God*. God *remains* the Creator, and humanity *remains* the creature. The creaturely limit is *not* lifted [*aufgehoben*] by the lifting [*Anfheben*] of the eschatological frontier (*UCR* III, 478).

Secondly, nothing substantial is superadded in the resurrection. The veil drops and one simply becomes what he or she already is.⁹¹ In the power of one's unity with Christ, one "only needs to become the subject of the predicates which on this side of the parousia is Jesus Christ alone" (*UCR* III, 479). Thirdly, redemption lands the person in the same region as one lived beforehand, for the New Jerusalem is placed upon earth. And fourthly, "the most remarkable and incomprehensible thing" is that the resurrection will not happen in another time, but in this one (*UCR* III, 480)! Time is ended – but radically, miraculously safeguarded. The collective force of these four points clarifies the nature of this dialectic in its consummation. The human creature in its corporeal nature must be dissolved and ended *precisely so that it may endure in eternity*. In all this Barth

⁹¹ This passing point makes clear why Barth does not think his eschatology is speculative, I suggest. All that is being said about the future is that which is already given in the present Moment of revelation. Nothing is added. Christ simply makes reality "realized" as we enter His unbroken – but familiar – presence.

weaves a difficult logic: flesh, by being transported out of its own mode and manifested in the presence of God, holds together as flesh.

Preliminary Conclusions

We have followed a long path in order to get to this point. We found that Karl Barth's triple education in Pietism, Romantic Idealism and religious socialism each contributed to his conception of an "eschatological present." Though reluctant to speak about the end times early in his career, he took up eschatology as a wonderful medium for articulating the revolutionary immanence of God's power on the earth. For Barth, speaking of the kingdom of heaven as a coming force connoted the *critical yet unifying* power of God's movement in history. Having started a battle in *1Rö* against religious individualism from within, Barth launched a more severe dialectic via Platonic and radical Lutheran traditions, and, just as importantly, via his studies in the Pauline texts. The resurrection of the dead was made the touchstone for Barth's dialectical approach, discernable through his exegesis of 1 Corinthians 15 in *AT* and also in texts like Romans 1:3-4 in *2Rö*. The dissolution and establishment of the old world by the new world of God guides Barth's epistemology and ethics, although as an "existential" statement about the predicament of humanity it also points beyond the crisis to a final ontological reality, unity with God which somehow preserves human identity, even human identity in the flesh. Once Barth had shifted the weight of prolegomena onto the doctrine of the Trinity and repackaged his dialectic within other doctrinal loci, the resurrection of the dead could surface as its own material doctrine. From that point on the resurrection could be spoken of on in its own right. From his concluding lectures of *UCR* in 1926 forward, Barth would teach that humanity is slated for the absolute

expression of the resurrection of the dead, that is, taken fully into the *presence* of Christ so that time (with its existential contradictions) is resolved.

Because of its deep importance, let me revisit an equation at the heart of Barth's thinking on the resurrection of the dead: resurrection = sublation. Everywhere in his early work Barth chooses to articulate his dialectic eschatologically and his eschatology dialectically. The verb *aufheben*, translated technically as "to sublimate," permeates his discourse. The term is important because of its enormous semantic range: "to lift," "to cancel," "to raise," "to evolve," "to abolish," "to comprehend," or, in Barth's complicated sense, "to dissolve – and establish – and in its establishment to preserve that which it has dissolved." Sublation (*Aufheben*) describes the dialectical movement of ideas or forces in their relative positions, confrontations, and resolutions; in its more pedestrian form, the meeting of a thesis with its antithesis which leads upward into a synthesis. Sublation is associated most often with Hegelian Idealism, but in the early Barth's case it gathers a somewhat different meaning from his heritage in Pietism, Romanticism and (neo-Marxian) religious socialism, developing into a radically critical form through engagement with Platonic philosophy and Lutheran theology. By the time he was through with it, Barth's dialectic would barely resemble the Hegelian idea of world evolution in the Spirit. Nevertheless, Barth's critical *diastasis* never erased the positive note, the beautiful synthesis which could only be the conquering placement of the rebellious creature into the simple presence of God. In the end, the dissolving No will be understood as a subordinate and completed moment in the establishing Yes of God.

Barth's marriage of resurrection with sublation betrays a deeper equation: resurrection = revelation. Barth speaks of each as the personal disclosure of the God who keeps His own subjectivity even in acting subjectively in others. Each is the event

of eternity pervading time so as to raise it to itself. Each is the presence of Jesus Christ, His contemporaneousness with every time even as it is personally and specifically *His* presence. Barth would have much more to say through this avenue in the years ahead.

Die Auferstehung ist die Offenbarung ist die Aufhebung. Barth's basic equation of resurrection, revelation and sublation would hold for the next decade,⁹² lightly developed through volume I of *KD*,⁹³ and remained something that informed Barth's thinking to his final days.

More specifically, such an equation sows the seed for a mature doctrine of resurrection of the dead in *KD* III and IV. The resurrection of the dead will come to mean "lifting into divine duration," that is, *eternalization*. It will mean "removal of the veil," that is, *manifestation*. And it will mean a "raising into union with God," that is, *incorporation*. These three themes start to surface in Barth's early work and become the dominant expressions of the general resurrection in his mature work.

Finally, we detected in the first few decades of Barth's life a concern for embodiment. Indeed, from the beginning of his interest in the resurrection (regardless of his exact use of it), Barth makes pains to describe it as the resurrection *of the flesh*. God's Word is spoken to those in the flesh – and if they are raised in that encounter, then their flesh will be raised. Corporeality is to be maintained if we are to speak of the real human. Barth underlines this point in *AT*, *2Rö* and *UCR*, and for this Barth should

⁹² There is little decisively new material added between *UCR* and *Die Christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf* (1927), concludes McCormack (*Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectic Theology*, 375). Let us only observe that Barth achieves his characteristic schematization in the latter, speaking of revelation's objective being (§9), objective possibility (§14) and subjective possibility (§17). I have also elected not to address Barth's fruitful debates with Erik Przywara and Roman Catholicism during the late 1920s. However, see Keith L. Johnson, *Karl Barth and the Analogia Entis* (London: Continuum, 2010).

⁹³ For expedience I have opted to bypass the rather rich developments in *CD* I/1 and I/2, though see John Drury, "From Crib and Cross to Resurrection and Ascension: The Resurrection of Christ as the Revelation of God Incarnate in Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* I/2, §§ 13-15," unpublished paper, <http://www.drurywriting.com/john/Christ'sResurrectioninBarthCD1.2.pdf>, accessed June 2010. I would also mention in passing the obvious parallels between resurrection and revelation as Barth describes the Word of God revealed in §5, "The Nature of the Word of God," namely, as spiritual, personal, purposive, contingently contemporaneous, powerful to rule, "worldly," etc.

be commended. But his description of the sublative force of the resurrection calls for a healthy suspicion. That is, how can eternity's dissolution of time be, in the end, an establishment of time? How can the translation of the creaturely mode of existence into the divine lead to a preservation of the former? And when the "pure" presence of God with humans and humans with God is achieved, will fleshliness hold any value? These questions are best directed at Barth's mature work, to which we now turn.

CHAPTER 3

The Resurrection of the Flesh as Eternalization

“God raised Jesus Christ from the dead” – and we too will be carried over the threshold of death into eternal life. For reasons biographical as well as structural, I first want to pursue the idea of the resurrection as eternalization. Of course, Barth had plenty to say about the relation of time and eternity in his early work. Even in his mature theological output the topic is not so far from the foreground, for he still addresses temporality near the head of his dogmatic projects, and thoughts about time always lie close to the heart of his doctrine of God. One might say that Barth prefers to approach metaphysics in theo-temporal terms.¹ That being the case, one can only understand Barth’s doctrine of the resurrection by understanding how Jesus’ temporal life is related to eternity at Easter, and how our own future involves a very specific conception of “eternal life.”

I will approach this facet in four steps. We begin with God’s eternity, which Barth casts as a “pure duration” expansive enough to encompass all of time and be “simultaneous” with it. Second, Jesus Christ’s own being in the resurrection is that of a

¹ The temporal category is for Barth “*the ontological dimension*” (Richard H. Roberts, *A Theology on Its Way?: Essays on Karl Barth* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991], 70).

limited, temporal existence which has been gifted with eternal simultaneity by the Father. God fulfills time by claiming it in Jesus incarnate life, then, in the resurrection, grants Jesus' delimited historical existence an eternal mode. Third, Barth says that time, as opposed to the wholeness of eternity, bears a wound of limitation: it is fragmented, fleeting and uncollected, a sequence with no durability, a degenerate and dying movement. The solution, and our fourth step, is the resurrection of the flesh. As a corollary to Jesus' resurrection, God intends to confer to humanity (that is, each human in his or her limited, de-terminated lifespan) the eternal Beyond of God. The divine existence's pantemporal comprehensiveness will be our own, says Barth, even as this eternalization will sustain as its basic template the same bodily existence each person lived in his or her own earthly life. That is, the resurrection of the flesh bestows a trans-temporal duration to the boundaried history one enacts between conception and death. God's gift of eternity, His perfect time which already includes sequential time, is able to "raise" a limited human sequence to simultaneity with all times. The selfsame limited and historical definition of one's life is made like God's, alive and comprehensive and complete: "Resurrection of the flesh . . . opens the perspective of human life to eternity: you will find human life in eternity."² The resurrection of this flesh is the "eternalization" of fleshly people who would otherwise remain temporally terminated. Barth therefore makes a creative reconnection of embodied history and eternal life, though along the way I must register concern about the Platonic closure of time endemic in such a vision of the future, and the extent to which this conception invites a romanticization of death.

² Karl Barth, *The Faith of the Church: A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed*, trans. Gabriel Vahanian (London: Fontana Books, 1960), 136.

The Freedom of God

In the last chapter we found that Barth's eschatological dialectic changed throughout his career, and with this change came an increasingly positive assessment of the relationship between eternity toward time. In spite of the change of mood of the dialectic, it is reasonable to say that Barth always intended to speak of God who is free in His own pan-duration, free on one hand *from* the world's time, yet also (and thereby) free *for* the world's time. To describe God's eternity is to speak of divine transcendence and immanence together. His being perfectly circumscribes time. Each Person acts eternally in revelation: thus God displays Himself; thus Emmanuel joins us; thus the Spirit comes to us. The Deity fills time and exceeds it. He fills time *because* He exceeds it.³ That is God's freedom.

To understand the importance of eternity for Barth, I think it wise to revisit his changing articulation of the concept. Beginning with the period in which he radicalized his sense of eschatology, bringing eternity into an overtly critical relationship with time (1919-24), we saw how Barth implemented the thought-language of Luther, Kierkegaard and Overbeck. Perhaps even more influential on Barth's thinking with regard to the issue of God and time was the voice of Kant.⁴ First, Kant had argued that God was not an object of perception, and that any argument for His existence (or non-existence) along empirical lines was sheer sophistry. Likewise, God could not be made a category of pure reason – though He could be spoken of through practical reason, as the unconditioned reality which guarantees ethics (“unconditioned,” meaning God never

³ “It could be said of Barth's God, with little exaggeration, that he is radically transcendent *in order to be radically immanent*” (Colin E. Gunton, *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartsborne and Karl Barth*, new ed. [London: SCM Press, 2001], 195).

⁴ Note Barth's admission that he has rewritten the Romans commentary under the influence of Plato and Kant (*ER*, 4).

becomes an object to the creature within the causal order of phenomena). Barth adopts the basic schema of difference between the unconditioned God and the conditioned human even as he holds open the possibility of revelation of the divine Subject through faith.⁵ More germane to our point here, Kant held that time itself was not an independent reality but an *a priori* intuition of the human. Rather than being an objective feature of the universe, time (like space) is a thought-category supplied by the human mind in order to understand the world.⁶ Barth works within Kant's basic paradigm, making time and eternity two very different categories of *perception*. "Time" is the limited and conditioned category of thought provided by the human mind, where "eternity" is the perfect and unconditioned knowledge of God. "Time" is the human's partially successful attempt to comprehend the universe and the impossible attempt to understand God. On the other hand, "eternity" is God's perfect grasp of all things. He is the unconditioned reality in whose perception all things are created and sustained. Furthermore, Barth extends the Kantian paradigm to speak of time as a *sinful* human claim about self-being (the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*), when God's comprehensive claim on us is that which alone guarantees being (*cogitor ergo sum*⁷). In any case, if we speak of an antithesis of time and eternity in Barth's early critical work, we must do so against its Kantian background.

After 1924, Barth repackaged his concept of revelation into a trinitarian format with greater emphasis on Jesus Christ as the Word of God, though this did little at first to resolve the tension between the unconditioned and conditioned, between eternity and

⁵ Cf. Barth's 1929 lecture on Kant in *PTNC*, 252-98.

⁶ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Transcendental Doctrine of Elements I.2; second div., II.ii.3.b.

⁷ See *RD*, 46, though its coinage is Franz von Baader's.

time. The perceiving God, grasping all, is free from time. This is His unity, His simplicity, His aseity. But, construed as a total independence from the creation, “freedom” suggested a distance of God from chronology. For instance, in the mid-twenties Barth still agreed with Schleiermacher and Biedermann about the “absolute timelessness and spacelessness” of the divine (*GD I*, 434), a life which is omnipresent by virtue of the fact that it is *outside* all time. In revelation God does not become temporal, though He does invite the human into a paradox: communion with God “means standing in this *antithesis*,” being taken out of time even as one remains in time.⁸ Only paradox can result. But as for God, He remains the unconditioned One, the ever-Subject-non-object, He who seizes us and is not seized, the Totally Other.

Barth justified (and tempered) this devouring view of eternity by invoking the Reformed scholastic Polanus’ description of God as *nunc stans*, He whose “standing alongside” is multidimensional enough to “coexist [*koexistieren*]” with the earth and cloak it, He who “contains in Himself the meaning of time.” A thousand days in God’s time are but a watch of the night, says the psalmist, meaning that eternity *duratio quae tota simul est* – eternity is the duration in which all things are simultaneous.⁹ God’s omnitemporality is His power to be gracious to us in our time. His presence says Yes to us even in its No.¹⁰ Through this teaching Barth clearly wanted to avoid portraying God’s freedom as a kind of transcendent prison away from time, though one gets the

⁸ Karl Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians*, trans. James W. Leitch (Richmond: John Knox, 1962), 114.

⁹ Karl Barth, *UCR II*, 161-2 = *GD I*, 436. By this neither Polanus nor Barth mean that eternity is the summation of time, but that eternity crosses over each present in such a way that all can be present to it.

¹⁰ While Barth does not develop this conception of simultaneity (*Gleichzeitigkeit*) until *CD II/1*, Richard Burnett calls attention to the fact that the Yes of simultaneity can heard in the stormy No of each edition of the *Römerbrief* (*Karl Barth’s Theological Exegesis*, 107ff.). Dawson finds the same feature in *RD* (*The Resurrection in Karl Barth*, 62-3).

impression that God's coexistence with the earth means not an accompanying as much as a puncturing of the time-space continuum at each intersection.

Even the first volume of *CD* demands the absolute difference between God's mode and our own. In Barth's theology of the Word of God, God is said to interject His own transcendent moment into consciousness so that revelation may occur. In the moment of revelation a believer understands God as the One who is the living Lord, that is, the One who lives trans-temporally. In *CD* I/2, especially §14 "The Time of Revelation," Barth again presses for a sharp distinction between eternity and time spurred by Kantian thought.¹¹ God can, in His freedom, "have time," even "have time for us," but in no way does this time cease to be eternity. Jesus Christ can, in His freedom, become incarnate, though His identity is never given over to spatio-temporality. He is the Son of God, flesh and blood in union with His deity. In its union with eternity, time gives way to "mastered time," "a present that is not a present without also being a genuine perfect," "a genuine, indestructible present" (I/2, 52). Eternity creates its own time by entering and overruling the sinful human activity of sense-making. Time is "overtopped and dominated" by the eternity of the incarnate Son (I/2, 66). God's perfect mode means for the earth "suspension, the total relativising of all other time and of its apparently moved and moving content" (I/1, 131). God perceives His creation, and on that basis alone is there really objective spatio-temporal reality. Nonetheless, only an eternal perception sees things rightly. Over the years Barth made it explicit that he did not intend to portray eternity and time

¹¹ Barth appeals to Kant's antinomies as evidence that time belongs to (broken) human apperception, that we do not know what true time is save by the Word of God (I/2, 47-9).

as oppositional concepts,¹² though a kind of violence hangs over their relationship in his writings, even through *CD I*.

Some readers have observed a significant modification to this relationship in Barth's thinking as he wrote out his mature dogmatics.¹³ I would be more specific and say that his leaning towards a more time-positive eternity had its decisive transition in the mid 1930s, as he finished *CD II/1*.¹⁴ There we find Barth making sure to note the freedom of God at every point in perfect alignment with the love of God, expressed together in Jesus Christ. God's eternal being *is* His freedom to love, His transcendent freedom exercised by His willingness to be with us. In the midst of writing out this doctrine of God, Barth's mind underwent a seismic rearrangement via a new perspective on election, one gleaned from Pierre Maury in 1936. In short, Barth came to view predestination as a decision within God Himself, as God's own *Self*-election as the means of covenant with the creature.¹⁵ Specifically, Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, ordained Himself and was ordained as the concrete toward-ness of God to humanity, the One in whom all are determined. In the one God-man Barth can even postulate (supralapsarianistically) that the Father establishes His "double election," Jesus Christ under reprobation for the sins of humanity and Jesus Christ chosen for the glory of

¹² E.g. *GD I*, 435; Karl Barth, *How I Changed My Mind*, trans. John D. Godsey (Louisville: John Knox, 1966), 48. However, it is certainly with some sort of repentance that he reflects on how he and other eschatologizing theologians unwittingly capitulated to something like the pre-temporality of the Reformers (and even the supra-temporality of the Neo-Protestants), positing an idea of "qualified time" with eternity equidistant from every point of time (*II/1*, 635).

¹³ Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, rev. ed., trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), 60, 62ff.; Bent Flemming Nielson, "Karl Barth – A Brief Introduction: Time and Eternity," unpublished paper, personal collection, 3.

¹⁴ *Pace* those who would locate the shift at the beginning of *CD*, e.g., Cornelius van der Kooij, *As in a Mirror: John Calvin and Karl Barth on Knowing God: A Diptych*, trans. Donald Mader (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 359.

¹⁵ See Karl Barth, foreword to *Predestination and Other Papers* by Pierre Maury, trans. Edwin Hudson (London: SCM Press, 1960), 15-8; McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 453-63.

humanity. Though he does not spell it out until *CD II/2*, Barth's revised doctrine of election makes itself felt as he pairs the perfections of God's eternity and glory at the end of *II/1*.

The payoff is this: the contradistinction of eternity and time is mediated within God's own being. If God is the predestined basis of His own temporal creation, then time in its creational dimension can be spoken of and embraced simply because it is, in the most important sense, the time belonging to the eternal Son. History unfolds in the first place because it is already enfolded in Christ's pleromic presence. Time is good because it exists as something already "in" and coming "from" God's inner life. What we find in the elected Jesus Christ is that time, in a very concrete sense, is *proper to* God's being by virtue of His eternal decision. He exists as "the prototype and foreordination of all being" (*II/1*, 611), the One who shows eternity as the absolute basis of time, and therefore absolute "readiness" or "preparedness" for it (*II/1*, 618, 621). By the power of His eternal being-in-decision God has made time compatible with eternity. The doctrines of creation and anthropology follow after this insight, not alongside or independently of election. In contrast to Barth's work in *Romans* well into the 1930s, eternity in Barth's doctrine of God does not have to "replace" or "overtop" time in its objective or subjective sense, for eternity expresses itself by making, permeating and sealing the river of time. By couching the doctrine of creation within the covenantal purposes of predestination, time *qua* time can and may and must be called good, for it is, in a vitally important sense, already from and *in* God. Jesus Christ's election sets the covenantal Alpha and Omega in place for creation to play out.¹⁶

¹⁶ Creation takes priority "formally" and "historically"; covenant takes priority "materially" and "substantially" (*III/1*, 232). Cf. G.C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth* (London: Paternoster Press, 1956), 55-7.

Barth's Kantian framework becomes obsolete when he comes to understand God's "native" perception this way. Creational time can be spoken of as fundamentally good because from before time it is foreordained as a mode of God's perception, not simply the human's sinful thought-category. God fills both worlds categorically; His intuitive powers comprehend from above *and* from below; His own being spans unconditioned *and* conditioned reality. With a rewired doctrine of election Barth had found a way to make eternity the basis, core, and telos of temporal process.

Barth continues his claim that eternity is not time and time is not eternity, but the difference now becomes that eternity alone has "duration."

Eternity simply lacks the fleeting nature of the present, the separation between before and after. Eternity is certainly the negation of created time in so far as it has no part in the problematical and questionable nature of our possession of time, our present and our beginning, continuation and ending. But eternity is not the negation of time *simpliciter*. On the contrary, time is absolutely presupposed in it (II/1, 613).

Endurance, durability, a holding onto the succession of things: God grasps each moment present within the all-embracing Now of His unique consciousness. For the mature Barth, God's freedom is best described as *reine Dauer*, "pure duration."¹⁷ He means "pure" not in that eternity avoids time through a heavenly transcendence. Rather, "pure" in that eternity has in itself all times at once, "pure" in that God possesses all moments, the past and present and future together. Rather than omitting the fluidity (*fluere*) of time, God incorporates it into His standing (*stare*). The mature Barth is henceforth able to integrate a certain Hegelian sense of *nunc fluens* into the Augustinian *nunc stans*.¹⁸

¹⁷ II/1, 608 (= *KD*, 685), et al. Barth prefers to speak of durational eternity, though Gunton's preference of "eminent temporality" may be the more helpful term (Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 179ff).

¹⁸ George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 187-9.

With the doctrine of election in the background, Barth attempts to explain his view of eternity again, this time using medieval sources, especially the sixth century philosopher Boethius. The key feature of pure duration, he says, is *simultaneity*: “The being is eternal in whose duration beginning, succession and end are not three but one, not separate as a first, a second and a third occasion, but one simultaneous occasion as beginning, middle and end” (II/1, 608), a “simultaneity and coinherence of past, present and future” (III/2, 526). Where humans experience time in a fragmented present, in God “all beginning, continuation and ending form a unique Now, steadfast yet moving, moving yet steadfast” (II/1, 617). In the divine life there is no distance between times.¹⁹ The ages do more than appear to His omniscience; they are present to Him and held in His hands. Toward this meaning Barth invokes the scholastic term *sempiternitas* to describe the everlastingness of God, the everlastingness which sums up of all time in His omnitemporal Now. After all, is it not written that Christ is and reveals God the Alpha and Omega, *ho ōn kai ho ěn kai ho erchomenos, ho pantokratōr* (Rev 1:8)? God freely rules over time and space in such a way as to grace them, making them a part of the great *simul* of His eternity.

Barth goes on to elaborate the richness of eternity, calling upon the doctrine of the Trinity to diagram the way in which eternity embraces time. God can be said to have a threefold eternity: pre-temporal, supra-temporal and post-temporal. The eternal God exists pre-temporally, before anything else was, in His self-sufficient being. Though this pre-time was the “pure time” of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (II/1, 622), it was also the time of the election of the Son to take flesh, and therefore of God’s will to create and ordain all things. Secondly, in reiterating what was said about

¹⁹ Readers find in simultaneity a more sinewy version of Barth’s earlier conception of the “contingent contemporaneity” of God’s Word (*GD* I, 145-8; I/1, 145-9, 205f).

simultaneity, God has His supra-temporal²⁰ existence in which He accompanies the whole of time. Eternity carries on with a before, now and after, but in perfect harmony and confluence. Proffering a maternal image, Barth explains that created time's "whole extension from beginning to end, each single part of it, every epoch, every lifetime, every new and closing year, every passing hour: they are all in eternity like a child in the arms of its mother" (II/1, 623). Like a mother, God is hardly "outside" or "without" time in the distancing sense. He co-exists with the creature in the sense that He surrounds it and makes it to co-exist with Himself.²¹ Far more remarkably, in the incarnation the Son of God lives *in* time, diachronically, and so enacts a covenantal history at the heart of time history, the time in which all other times participate.²² Thirdly, eternity means post-temporality, the rear bracket of time, in which God already resides in the future, even the future when there will be no more time given. He dwells in the place to which all things are moving teleologically. At that end-point, when all creation meets Him there, He will strip away the concealment of time to reveal the glory of His already-accomplished reconciliation (II/1, 630). These three forms, pre-temporality, supra-temporality and post-temporality, like the triune God, should be

²⁰ Sensitive to the non-temporal, anti-temporal tone of "supra-temporality" (*überzeitlich*), Barth acknowledges possible parallel German terms such as "co-temporal" (*mitzeitlich*) or "in-temporal" (*inzeitlich*), though he defends his choice by arguing that "supra-temporal" keeps with the truth that eternity "embraces" (*umschließende*) time on all sides (II/1, 623 = *KD* II/1, 702).

²¹ Cf. III/2, 523; III/3, 12.

²² The history of the world has a representative history in Israel and the Church, and, more importantly, the history of God's people has its ultimate history bound up in the history of Jesus Christ (II/1, 625; cf. IV/1, 508-513; IV/2, 760). When Barth says, "He Himself is time for us" (II/1, 612), one does not go too far in saying that Barth understands time and space "as forms within God," and that in the incarnation, "God *becomes* the mystery of time" (van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 360). He enters into the imaged existence of which He Himself is the form, and so all other image-bearers in space and time already participate in Christ on some level. Jesus Christ's becoming flesh is "the actualization of the eternal God's *essential* temporality into the relative temporality of the creature" (David Guretzki, *Karl Barth on the Filioque* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009], 155).

thought of in their perichoretic unity.²³ Time itself is spun out and caught up, as it were, in the waltz of God's triunity.

For all its improvements, Barth's mature conception of eternity has had its critics. Oscar Cullmann commends Barth's revisions, but does not see him freed from a Platonic idea of eternity's timelessness. God's all-temporal quality removes Him too much from history.²⁴ Cullmann says we must subscribe to the biblical concept of "linear time," by which he means only that we must remain agnostic to God's eternal being and remain fixed to the narrative of redemptive history.²⁵ Richard Roberts puts forth a more sweeping critique by claiming that Barth's temporal quality within eternity is no more than a useful fiction. In his attempt to eradicate natural theology Barth construes eternity as a totalizing force, a black hole that never lets time stand on its own. Barth uses the incarnational structure of the person of Jesus Christ to ground all other being, but this account credits historical existence as real only to the extent that it is "the very self-explication of the divine being, a gigantic celestial tautology, the *circulus veritatis Dei*."²⁶ In Roberts' appraisal, eternity's all-encompassing grip means not sustenance but stranglehold. Barth's attempt to re-temporalize eternity by encapsulating time does not

²³ Barth does not make perspicuous the extent to which these three forms of eternity correlate to the three hypostases. His weak prohibition against making too much of these concepts opens the door for Robert Jenson's "communicative" Trinity in which the divine persons have one-to-one identification with their distinct (but perichoretically shared) temporal categories (Robert W. Jenson, *God after God: The God of the Past and the God of the Future, Seen in the Work of Karl Barth* [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969], 191f).

²⁴ Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 62-6. See also his critique of W. Kreck in Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 62 et al. Cullmann's objection is blunted by his failure to show how Barthian "qualitative difference" necessarily means "timelessness," though it counts for something that he cannot detect sufficient evidence in scriptures to underwrite Barth's view of eternity.

²⁵ Cullman, *Christ and Time*, 11f. In response, Barth charges Cullmann with playing dumb about presuppositions, harboring a pre-established conception of time into which he inserts Jesus as the midpoint (III/2, 443).

²⁶ Roberts, *A Theology on Its Way?*, 61.

mend the sense that eternity “is nevertheless not in *substantial* coinherence with our time.”²⁷ He sees in Barth “a logical implosion into timelessness,” and therefore an incipient docetism.²⁸

While I share his concern that the Barthian interpretation of eternity risks a kind of subsuming monism, Roberts’ analysis overplays the logical deduction that God cannot establish a genuine historico-temporal other if that other derives from and is framed within Himself. Indeed, though I sympathize with their wariness, both Cullmann and Roberts fail to appreciate the way that Barth has re-inscribed God’s transcendence as a freedom to love. The divine being is a wholeness that, from before time, wills to impart itself to that which, by definition, is not whole. Eternity does not stand apart as a timeless and distant thing. Eternity has conceived in itself time, a reality guaranteed with nothing less than the election of the Son of God. What God is to Himself He is also to others.²⁹ Eternity is free *for* time.

Barth’s soteriology is not far from this thought: eternity can gift its freedom *to* time. The gift of simultaneity is exactly what Barth sees in the Easter miracle; in His own resurrection, Christ possesses the freedom of duration even as He continues to exist as a human. Along these lines, participation of time in eternity has become his basis of thought for the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

²⁷ Ibid., 76.

²⁸ Ibid., 26. For one rejoinder, see John C. McDowell, *Hope in Barth’s Eschatology: Interrogations and Transformations beyond Tragedy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 126, 146.

²⁹ “Time – which is in a sense the special creation of the ‘eternal’ God – is the formal principle of His free activity outwards. Eternity is the principle of His freedom inwards” (II/1, 609).

The Eternalization of the Risen Christ

The resurrection of the flesh means the fulfilment of time, a fulfilment which begins with and flows from Jesus Christ, the firstborn from the dead. In Him God's freedom addresses human limitation. In Him we discover the One who shares the deathly, delimited existence of the human in order that He might in this existence share eternal life with God and share it with others. The Judge is judged in humanity's place, but vindicated by the Father by being raised from the dead. Barth understands the Father's verdict to be an appointment of Jesus to an enduring life without borders.

For Barth, the Son does not have an afterlife so much as a "Beyond" (*Jenseits*). Awakened by the Father, the Son comes to dwell contemporaneously with every time, transcending time with the fullness of time. For God, eternity has the "texture" of Jesus' history, and Jesus' history in return enjoys the freedom of omnitemporality.³⁰ The solution to human deficiency – eternalized time – is announced in His glorious resurrection.

Barth devotes considerable attention to Jesus Christ's resurrection in *CD IV/1*, §59.3 "The Verdict of the Father." Since Dawson expositis this subsection at length,³¹ my task will be to explain Barth's complicated idea that the resurrection is for Jesus an appointment to a kind of transcendent time. What we are told to see here is the Christian hope: durable, completed, contemporaneous life.

We start by summarizing Barth's five points about the "Beyond" of the resurrection in §59.3: 1) The resurrection of Jesus is *God's free act alone*, 2) *a new episode*

³⁰ From here forward I will use "texture" as an important way to describe the earthly-temporal dimension of Barth's actualistic ontology. The term has been used in passing in Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, new ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 144. For more on Barth's "actualism," see chapter four.

³¹ E.g. Dawson, *The Resurrection in Karl Barth*, 113ff.

marked off from the cross, 3) though *identical to the cross in substance*, 4) constituting a *historical event in time* 5) *of the selfsame Jesus Christ* who went before.³² These five points can be interpreted in various ways, but for our purpose here let us take a step back and see these points with eternity and time in mind. Consider how the emphasis of the points includes aspects of both divine “non-history” and human history. Point one emphasizes that God alone is the agent, and that therefore the Beyond of Jesus’ life means something no human has ever seen or heard or experienced, being wholly of God’s world. Points three and five secure the personal content of the resurrection, that is, who it is that is eternally alive. Points two and four explain how this divine event concerning the person of Jesus Christ, even in its divine nature, accesses and makes genuine history. Put more generally, Barth depicts eternity as preceding time (point one), incarnationally united to time (points three and five), and therefore able to exercise lordship in such a way that eternity, for all its transcendence, can run concurrently with time (points two and four).³³ The Beyond means in a primary sense something totally other than time. But, because it is the Beyond *of the temporal Jesus Christ*, the Beyond is able to flood over into any age by the power of its historical comprehensiveness.

As seen in the first two points above, Barth is concerned to recognize God’s freedom in the gift of resurrection. In IV/1 he concentrates on the first Person, narrating the drama of the cross and resurrection from the perspective of the active Father and the passive Son. God’s active freedom meets Jesus’ passive condition. The human has no way to grasp the fullness of life, but God may, through a supernatural act,

³² IV/1, 297ff.

³³ David Ford extends an interesting interpretation, matching points one and five (referring to the agency behind the event), points two and four (clarifying the nature of the event), and point three as the substantial unity of the resurrection and the cross: a chiasmic structure with point three, the Crucified One = the Resurrected One, at the heart (David Ford, *Barth and God’s Story: Biblical Narrative and the Theological Method of Karl Barth in the Church Dogmatics* [Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1985], 40-2).

bestow it upon the human. For all intents and purposes, Barth says, history ended with Jesus on the cross: He suffered death, was buried, descended into hell. So both Son and Father are there at Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, but only God the Father acts. He alone is the active agent. Easter Sunday "is unequivocally marked off from the first happening [Good Friday] by the fact that it does not have in the very least this component of human willing and activity" (IV/1, 300). The Father lives, the Son is dead, and, put starkly, "To be dead means not to be" (IV/1, 301). Jesus was not playing dead. His history was over. Barth wants to acknowledge the reality of this terminus, this end of human power at the end of life. Therefore the awakening of this human Son was God's act, from above, outside of Christ. There is something like creation going on at Easter Sunday as the Father organizes the *tobu wa-bobu* again. His act is not collaboration or correction. It is, practically speaking, creation out of nothing.³⁴

We might expect Barth to qualify his statement so as to speak about Jesus Christ strictly according to His human nature. But no, even according to His divine nature Jesus Christ participates in the event by His passivity:

We obscure and weaken the character of the resurrection as a free pure act of divine grace (in contrast to the character of His death on the cross suffered in obedience), if appealing to His divine sonship we describe it as His own action and work. No, not simply as man, but even as the Son of God Jesus Christ is here simply the One who takes and receives, the recipient of a gift, just as in His death on the cross it is not only as man but as the Son of God that He is wholly and only the obedient servant. 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 (IV/1, 304).

With His last breath the Son entrusts His spirit into the Father's hands, then says no more, for in His voluntary dying He trusts the Father. Jesus "delivers Himself up" to the Father's "decree and disposing" (IV/1, 306). This is the Son's freedom. Jesus

³⁴ Cf. I/1, 413; III/1, 17, 78; IV/1, 349.

offers His dying time to God in hope. In the economy of salvation we see the Son exercising His prerogative to condescend unto judgment and death. He is free to assume time and to play the part of the obedient, passive one before God. This drama recapitulates on earth what has been eternally true in heaven, that the Son freely submits to the Father.³⁵ Accordingly, just as the Father joyfully begets the Son eternally, so also the Father uses His eternal freedom to vindicate through resurrection the beloved Son's obedience.

To Barth's third point, that crucifixion and resurrection are to be read together: with this point Barth draws up the objective basis for the same dialectic at work in his early writings on the resurrection of the dead. The gracious act of the Father upon the Son at Easter can only be paired with Good Friday. The resurrection's new, eternal power from the Father's hand has built into it God's No to human merit. A human is not self-sustaining; one depends on the eternal God. The crucifixion meant for Jesus (and, in Him, for all) rejection, condemnation and termination. The old passed in most definitive fashion on the cross. The resurrection, being that *novum* from above, reinforced the hard truth that the creature really has no claim to eternal life. That is Easter's distinct No, the echo of Golgotha. But Barth prefers to hear the final Yes of Easter, which is God's word of eternal welcome to the dead human. For Christ Himself it is the Father's verdict, the Father's "justification." The Father did this freely for Christ. The Son committed Himself into the Father's hands, and the Father joyfully gave new life to His altruistic child. The resurrection "was a second act of justice after the first to the extent that it was the divine approval and acknowledgment of the

³⁵ The subordination of the Son to the Father does nothing to detract from true deity of each, for "genuine miracle stands side by side with genuine miracle" (I/1, 414). The Son has *potestas* to be obedient to the Father (IV/2, 97).

obedience given by Jesus Christ, the acceptance of His sacrifice, the proclamation and bringing into force of the consequences, the saving consequences, of His action and passion in our place” (IV/1, 305). To reinforce the notion of the uncoerced nature of the Father’s gift to humanity’s representative, Barth adds the wobbly side note that God did not have to justify the Son by raising Him and presenting Him to the world.³⁶ In any case, the Easter drama between Son and Father displays the kind of relationship Barth has been talking about all along between time and eternity. Time acknowledges its limitation, and eternity freely lifts time up to a new dimension.

What is the nature of this gift that the Father bestows on the dead Jesus? Is it not eternal life, i.e., the *simultaneity* of eternity? This is the payout of the third point of the Beyond. On one hand, we might say, the resurrection had the effect of gathering up His voided history which had disappeared at His crucifixion. Jesus’ history was restored and “rescued” (II/2, 762). But Barth is more interested in the wider application of the gift of duration, as seen when we read IV/1 together with what he says earlier in III/2. Christ’s time was bracketed by a beginning and an end, in the resurrection it became characterized by a “removal of the limitations of its yesterday, to-day and to-morrow, of its once, now and then” (III/2, 464), effecting “the perfection of this limited temporally restricted life” (III/2, 571), the passing away of the “imprisonment” of “temporal, spatial and personal singularity” (IV/4, 24). What took place in the resurrection was a “putting into effect . . . of what had taken place before,” resulting in a pan-cosmic significance and application (IV/1, 318). Jesus “acquires” (*bekommt*) the duration which allows God to be equally available to all times (III/2, 440 = *KD*, 528). He “was made eternal and therefore always present in His resurrection and for every age from the days

³⁶ IV/1, 306ff. Such a refusal to raise the Son would have been at odds with election, a disparity that should have been inconceivable for Barth considering his marriage of the two (see chapter five). Note also Dawson’s critique (*The Resurrection in Karl Barth*, 122f.; 220ff.).

of His resurrection” (IV/1, 322).³⁷ As the Crucified Jesus Christ may be known through all times, since He now comes to all times as the Crucified. His appearances during the forty days impress upon the disciples that their Lord can be and is “really but transcendentally present,” overstepping the bounds of yesterday to be “absolutely present temporally” (III/2, 467). He is risen!: He lives in the *Gegenwart* of God, the all-transcending, all-encompassing, all-suffusing Now of the divine life. He is risen!: Christ was and is and is to come.

Barth believes the resurrection’s pan-application of the sacrifice of Christ to have a soteriological importance. It means that Jesus Christ is high priest forever. Instead of His ended life becoming a “dead history,” the resurrection made it to redound throughout all of time, becoming “as such eternal history” (IV/1, 313), “the one truly contemporaneous divine act to us” (IV/1, 316). His atoning work did not come and go, as with the slaughter of cultic animals. It remains (and will remain forever) a once-for-all act that has become Christ’s living intercession. I think it important that one not miss Barth’s exchange of terms here: instead of describing Christ’s priesthood in terms of an *ongoing* history with resurrection *power*, he speaks of the *concluded* history of Christ with resurrection *duration*.³⁸ Jesus, now risen and ascended, is omnipresent in the sense that He has access to all places, though Farrow rightly observes a kind of repackaging of Luther’s ubiquitarianism into the temporal key.³⁹ The

³⁷ Donald MacKinnon follows the same tack, saying that in Christ’s resurrection “an eternity is bestowed upon his work,” according universal contemporaneity to the “stuff” or “very substance” of what had transpired historically beforehand (D.M. MacKinnon, “The Resurrection: A Meditation,” in *The Resurrection: A Dialogue by G.W.H. Lampe and D.M. MacKinnon*, ed. William Purcell [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966], 65).

³⁸ The difficulty of this concept has perhaps obfuscated and minimized Christ’s priestly office, as argued in Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 206f.; Colin Gunton, “Salvation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 153).

³⁹ Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia*, 292.

ransom for the whole world is kairologically full, actual and immanent because the potency of the sacrifice of Jesus belongs to His eternal present.

The idea of the contemporaneity of Jesus has a philosophical function for Barth as well. The Enlightenment writer G.E. Lessing spoke of the impossibility of belief in the occurrence of Jesus Christ's resurrection because an "ugly, broad ditch" of time stood between it and the modern person. How could one possibly verify such a miracle, since it was nowhere in the vicinity of the present day and so could not supply immediate empirical data? Phrasing it as a maxim, Lessing concluded that "the accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason."⁴⁰ While one might point out a categorical fallacy here, Lessing's cry for skepticism had the ring of common sense. Barth was well aware of this objection and addressed it on multiple occasions.⁴¹ His answer to Lessing, however, was quite simple: the risen Jesus is present. He is not a figure of history swallowed by the past. His miraculous life and power have not been swept away by the tides of time. More to the point, His resurrection is not like other events, for it perdures. The Living One is immanent in the moment of revelation; His presence, we might say, is momentous (in the expanded sense of that term).⁴² One need not invent clever ways to vault over the ugly ditch, for

⁴⁰ In the same passage, regarding the resurrection, Lessing teaches, "Since the truth of these miracles has completely ceased to be demonstrable by miracles still happening now, since they are no more than reports of miracles, I deny that they should bind me in the least to a faith in the other teachings of Christ" (G.E. Lessing, "On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power," in *Lessing's Theological Writings*, ed. and trans. Henry Chadwick [Stanford University Press, 1956], 55).

⁴¹ E.g. Karl Barth, *The Theology of the Reformed Confessions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 46; *GD* I, 65; *PT*, 251ff.; I/1, 146f.; IV/1, 21; IV/2, 113. See also the source paper for the Lessing material of IV/1: Karl Barth, "Das Problem Lessings und das Problem des Petrus," in *Evangelische Theologie. Sonderheft: Ecclesia Semper Reformanda: Theologische Aufsätze Ernst Wolf zum 50. Geburtstag*, ed. W. Schneemelcher and K.G. Steck (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1952), 4-17.

⁴² "Lessing's problem of the 'accidental' historical fact of the crucifixion falls away here because the moment of this 'accidental fact of history' is the moment of all moments. The answer to Lessing's criticism is the intercession of Christ *now*" (Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 139).

the risen Savior constantly bridges His way to us in the power of eternity. Lessing's objection is a mere "methodological question" (IV/1, 289), a technical objection which in the end turns out to be nothing more than a disingenuous delay tactic against faith (IV/1, 292, 348).

Another problem, and one which Barth does not sufficiently address, is how the eternalized Jesus can have His entire history in the flesh raised if that means the perpetuating of *tragic* components of His life. That the effect of Christ's sacrifice should be available in every time I do not contest, but it seems obscene for us to say that Jesus' sin-bearing and suffering themselves carry on into the ages. Is not the Resurrected One immune to any kind of future death, having suffering death once and for all (Rom 6:9-10)? Did He not despise the shame of the cross (Heb 12:2)? Jesus retained His manifold scars in glory, certainly, but even these were mementos of dying *overcome*. The perpetuation of the flesh as an eternally actualized history does not seem to allow for the skimming off of the dross of sin or the ending of the horrors of bodily torment. I therefore struggle to come to terms with the concept of an eternalized history as being a desirable kind of glorification. Yet Barth is intent on salvaging the whole history: "Because as crucified and dead He is risen and lives, the fact of His death on the cross can never be past, it can never cease to be His action . . ." (IV/1, 315). How, then, is Jesus not eternally damned? If His history has been eternalized, if He is eternally living as the One who was dying and dead, how does He come in unfettered glory and not in perpetual suffering? If the Father's justifying word to the Word is to mean deliverance, then it must also be a leaving behind of the cursed historical components. As it is, however, Barth has made no provision for the alleviation of cursedness, since the crucifixion is Christ's hidden glory and the resurrection is the glorious meaning of His dying. If death and resurrection are the sustained dialectic of judgment and mercy, then

Jesus' deliverance from death is in fact only an extenuation of His cross-bearing. This is the bitter fruit of eternalization: one is not at liberty to leave anything to the past.

Others have objected to a kind of false openness to the future here. Robert Jenson's rigorous critique exposes Barth's eagerness to close off futurity by creating a vortex of the bi-une drama between Father and Son. The lack of the Holy Spirit's venture into the world as a fresh movement among human agents stems from the overrealized sense of eternalization, "putting the historical event of Jesus's existence in the place formerly occupied by changeless 'Being.'"⁴³ The resurrection of Jesus and the procession of the Spirit do not make for a radical openness to the world, and therefore the Church has little hope of entering into the trinitarian drama in any significant way. Similarly, Colin Gunton speaks of a lingering Platonism in Barth's work, a "partial failure" in that a certain static quality sets in at the death of Christ, whereupon His actual life is rounded up and "the history of God with man is telescoped."⁴⁴ Here Barth is "not being trinitarian enough . . . [f]or if the meaningful activity of God is already completed in the past – or timeless – eternity, the outworking of the divine decision has all the necessity of a timeless concept, and our theology becomes the quest . . . for timeless truths."⁴⁵ More room is needed for a kinetic ontology.

Without baptizing the respective projects of Jenson and Gunton, I feel their apprehension about Barth's lingering Platonism is warranted. Has Barth really escaped the lure of immutability? Has reality been dynamized in the life of Jesus only to plunge back into stasis at Easter? I am not so convinced by Jenson's and Gunton's criticism

⁴³ Robert W. Jenson, *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1963), 140.

⁴⁴ Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 183.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 218.

about Christ's eternal history cutting off human agency (at least in the penultimate age), for reasons to be explored in the next two chapters. But I am left uneasy with a related question: Does Barth leave room for a newness in Jesus' agency, an open-ended *continuity* of Christ's *personal* history?

Barth gives something of an answer in his fourth point about the Beyond: Jesus' resurrection was a genuinely historical event. The forty days of resurrection appearances were actual happenings in time and space, enacted by the selfsame Jesus Christ who lived and died in the flesh. Having started with the power of eternity, Barth now seeks to reaffirm the resurrection's temporality, saying that the resurrection event "must stand in a sequence of time and space. However different it may be in other respects, as history it must be like all other history in regard to its historicity" (IV/1, 298). Mimicking 1 Cor 15, Barth asserts, "If Jesus Christ is not risen – bodily, visibly, audibly, perceptibly, in the same concrete sense in which He died . . . we are still in our sins" (IV/1, 351f.). Jesus Christ had to be raised in the fullness of what He was. Who is the One who has victory? The some-body who went before. Who is the High Priest of the ages? The man in flesh and bones who served God in His once-for-all role. If Jesus was historical on one side, and if He is the same person now, then He must be historical in the Beyond. In eternity Jesus is still Himself, the historical God-man. By His eternalized historical identity He has freedom to roam within the wider boundaries of history. That is the sense of Barth's logic, at least.

Not to be misunderstood, Barth excoriates all backtracking into natural theology through a naked, historicized account of the resurrection. So, for instance, he rejects rationalistic explanations saying that Jesus' body left the tomb by theft or because He was not fully expired (H.S. Reimarus, K.F. Bahrtdt, F.D.E. Schleiermacher, R. Seeburg), as well as the psychological explanation, that the disciples hallucinated because of their

grief or their overpowering messianic expectations (D.F. Strauss, Ernest Renan). Likewise, Barth refuses to label the resurrection “a myth” (A.E. Biedermann, Rudolf Bultmann) or ethical symbol (Paul Tillich), for both approaches put the New Testament accounts on a Procrustean bed, making out of the resurrection ornamental portrayals of “the non-spatial and timeless being of certain general truths, orders and relationships” (IV/1, 337).⁴⁶ Jesus Christ is not raised into an abstraction! Finally, Barth rejects the apologetical approach (i.e., historical-positive) in the same way he rejects historical-critical explanations. One does not encounter the resurrection as normal history. It cannot be probed and apprehended and synthesized like normal historical research. Because God alone is at work in resurrection-revelation it is better to speak of the forty days as “saga”: a particular historical event indescribable except through poetic language and inaccessible to verification except through revelation.⁴⁷ This is *special* history, history suffused with eternity. No wonder the New Testament supplies a marvelous and bewildering and seemingly contradictory testimony to these days.

I do not want to be distracted by the historicity debate, which has received enough attention in Barth studies.⁴⁸ Our concern at this juncture is how the forty days, as the chief expression of Jesus’ eternalized time, are portrayed as non-historical history by Barth. Non-history and history alike, though it seems clear to me that Barth, even

⁴⁶ Frei takes up Barth’s tenacious defense of the particular: far from a myth, the biblical narrative is “a demythologization of the dying-rising savior myth” with “an unsubstitutable individual . . . inseparable from the unsubstitutable events constituting it, with the resurrection as its climax” (Hans W. Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997], 174f).

⁴⁷ IV/1, 336f.; cf. III/1, 80ff; III/2, 452; Karl Barth, *The Heidelberg Catechism for Today*, trans. Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr. (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1964), 76.

⁴⁸ For resources along this line see Daniel Fuller, “The Resurrection of Jesus and the Historical Method,” *Journal of Bible and Religion* 34 (January 1966), 18-24; Thorwald Lorenzen, *Resurrection and Discipleship: Interpretive Models, Biblical Reflections, Theological Consequences* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1995), 66-71; Peter Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 46ff.; Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ*, 139-52; Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 370-83.

late in *CD*, gives the non-history of eternity the upper hand during the forty days. He remarks at the “peculiar character of this history, which bursts through all general ideas of history as it takes place and as it may be said to take place in space and time” (IV/1, 335). It is a “second history” at the place where history stops (III/2, 441). This newness dominates because Jesus Christ is alive in His eternal power, coming to the disciples not as a resuscitated man but as the One-who-went-before in transcendent duration, “the totality of the event of the existence of Jesus” (III/2, 337). Barth calls the reader to see in the forty days the history of non-history, a first and potent expression of non-history in and “at” history. The divine kairological makes residence among the chronological for these forty days.

Let me point out once again that resurrection and revelation are usually equivalent terms for Barth. Whenever God reveals Himself through the Son or the Spirit, the normal conditions of perception and reality cease to apply. This was true for Abraham, true for Moses, true for Jeremiah, true for Macrina and Anselm and Calvin. God is always “future” to us. He abides in the Beyond and breaks into history in order to make Himself known in Self-revelation, making all history submit to the greater eternity-history breaking in. To summon the language of the *Römerbrief*, eternity “dissolves” and “establishes” history. For Barth, the forty days of Jesus’ risen appearances to the disciples are this subjective dissolution and establishment *par excellence*. The raised God-man uses His freedom to puncture time and raise *it* into His eternal presence. The seconds keep ticking on earth for the disciples; they walk; they fish and cook; they eat and dialogue; but they are *with Jesus* in His unconcealed glory. These men and women step (but only step!) onto the bridge of simultaneity over which Jesus crossed over to them, overleaping temporal boundaries in “the assumption of their time into His” (III/2, 470). They are taken up into His contemporaneous life

without leaving their own sequential histories.⁴⁹ Their time is paradox, plodding forward in clock-time but suffused by eschaton. The forty days are the premier form of revelation, after which all revelation takes its shape.⁵⁰

Barth's central point, however, is that the first Eastertide is primarily the story about Jesus, *His* forty days. He makes this history and is there at the center of it. He appears bodily. The forty days are the objective occurrence of Jesus Christ, taking place as He claimed the concrete, tangible setting of history for His interaction with Mary, John, Peter and the like. Only secondarily can it be about human faith in response to His revelation. In contrast, Rudolf Bultmann's interpretation of the forty days breaks apart the historical-subjective and historical-objective elements, classifying the former as faith and the latter as a mythological husk. The objective (which is not objective at all) must be stripped away to get to the spiritual truth. Barth charts a different course in that he affirms the objective with the subjective, and does so because it is the selfsame historical Jesus at work in history: "No, it was because God Himself, the Creator, who was first hidden in the lowliness of this creature, in the death of this man, was now manifested in His resurrection, that it was absolutely necessary for this event genuinely and apprehensibly to include nature, and therefore to be physical" (III/2, 451). The tomb really was empty; His body really did interact with their bodies; He really ended this time with His ascension into heaven. Is this not at least something like sequential

⁴⁹ The forty days are not the theological equivalent of "overtime," an "extended play" or "bonus round." Metaphors fail immediately. But we might say, restructuring Barth's mathematical image of the tangent and the circle, that the *world* is the line and eternity the circle – rather, a double circle: the first circle loops around the forty days and the second circumscribes the whole of time (see chapter five).

⁵⁰ Because the disciples' experience cannot be verified by historical-scientific method, Barth does not say much about the forty days as the fount of apostolic authority. Nevertheless, he can join Bengel in saying that the gospel writers (and their narratives) "breathe resurrection" (e.g. *DO*, 102; IV/2, 132). The scriptures represent the memoirs of those who were directly *in* the resurrection like no one after them would ever be. On the other hand, the days of appearance to the disciples can be said to bear a certain all-importance, since Barth compresses Jesus' human history in the Beyond to the forty days instead of extending it in the heavenly session (Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999], 247f.).

history? Like the incarnation, the resurrection means eternity has time. Super-nature has nature. Anything else is docetic. Barth's commentary on the forty days gives priority to the divine even as it affirms creation.

Still, I think it wise to pause and admit how difficult a concept this is. A non-historical history? A creaturely narrative impenetrable to any scientific apparatus? What does it mean to understand the resurrection physically, yet all the while reading the accounts "typically" (III/2, 452)? The possibility of Barth's double-termed reality always falls back on his description of God's freedom among us, even as the bodily Jesus who lived historically and so who, in the power of eternity, has authority to live over and at and even "in" history. Jesus Christ's eternal freedom is, even in the Beyond, a freedom for time. I really have no serious objection, then, to the possibility that God's action should effect historical elements within His otherwise ontologically and epistemologically distinctive action, as T.F. Torrance (following Michael Polanyi) labored to show.⁵¹ My remaining concern is that Barth has not efficiently shown how Jesus' forty days are a *continuation* of His history. If Jesus' temporal identity is exhaustively established at His death, then the eternalization of His life is immutable. Nothing new happens to Him or by Him. The eternal Jesus influences others – but is He interacting? More specifically, Barth's risen Jesus has a *bodily quality* – but does He have the possibility of the newness of change inherent to *bodily life*? The risen Lord goes forth into history – but does He really dwell there? David Ford detects a similar problem when he writes that the resurrection appearances "have much more the character of 'sendings' into the future" than a genuine expression of eternity in time.⁵²

⁵¹ Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 22.

⁵² Ford, *Barth and God's Story*, 144.

Would it not be more consistent for Barth to say that the living Christ is busy in the act of resurrective history-*making*, and leave it at that?⁵³ If this critique holds, then Barth differs from Bultmann only in his claim that the resurrection-effect of Jesus comes from Jesus' objective being, and that His being somehow objectively trickles over into diachronic process. On the nature of the resurrection's historicity and reports they are much the same.⁵⁴

What we may conclude from this is that Barth shows boundless optimism about the pliability of eternity's freedom. The divine has no temporal restraints, and therefore Jesus' life, eternally actualized by the verdict of the Father, makes Jesus' time contemporaneous with every time. Freedom is attributed to Him, and therefore to Him in His body. Jesus Christ's interposition in history "in the mode of God" is also in His particular presence "in the flesh." So much is said about the Son of God's death and resurrection – now what about our own?

The Limitation of the Human

In contrast to eternity, says Barth, creaturely time has no freedom for comprehension of moments. It has no duration. The "now" flits from moment to moment, leaving to the void a trail of irretrievable past happenings.

⁵³ As in e.g., Karl Barth, *Credo: A Presentation of the Chief Problems of Dogmatics with Reference to the Apostles' Creed*, trans. J. Strathearn McNab (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 109; IV/3, 212. Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. by James W. Leitch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 180f.

⁵⁴ At least in this one respect Barth comports well with Bultmann. Such is the conclusion of Peter Carnley, who cannot fathom a category for non-historical Easter history if Jesus really has stepped into history again: "But as soon as Barth debar[s] the use of critical-historical research even from analysis of the New Testament traditions concerning the experience of Jesus' appearance, and uncritically accepts them, so that the resurrected Jesus seems to remain *in time*, in a very concrete, material, tangible, and audible sense, then why the tradition cannot be treated by historical methods becomes a puzzle" (Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief*, 126).

What is the present? It is the time between the times. And this, strictly speaking and as we actually experience it, is no time at all, no duration, no series of moments, but only the boundary between past and future . . .” (III/2, 514).

Even when Barth comes to speak of time as a created good, he never accords it any sense of intrinsic permanence. It is simply the flow in which things have an opportunity to live out their determination. Time is the flux and decay in which humans have their meager present. I will look at this limitation of the human, which Barth describes as a kind of wound or incapacity. Human existence transpires as a passing act, delimited by God through birth and death.

Having identified Barth’s later shift, we may go back and glean insight from *CD* I/2’s §14.1 “God’s Time and Our Time.” There Barth classifies three types of time: creational, sinful and redeemed. After II/1 his teachings on creational and redeemed time do not hold, since time, posited by God within His own being, is now good. It can be spoken of in objective terms. But some of what Barth says about sinful time is still relevant to his systematic. Outside of Christ’s mastery of time, creaturely time as such can only be described as a “flow from one conjectural present to another,” a course fragmented and uncollected (I/2, 68). The changing phenomena fly away from humans, who can only try to grasp them in their lame, deformed consciousnesses. They seize the past through memories and ponder the coming times through imagination, but their *attentio* is abbreviated at best.⁵⁵ The movement of creation really does exist objectively because it has been made part of God’s being (according to II/2), but human time (read: time-gathering) still cannot make sense of the voided past, the fleeting present and the unknown future. Such perception is a diseased subjective sequencing of time.

⁵⁵ Cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, XI – though note Barth’s repudiation of Augustine’s intra-cognitive measurements, which he says falls into the same trap as Martin Heidegger’s philosophy (I/2, 45-6).

Barth sometimes speaks of this incapacity in terms of an injury. The risen Christ “does not extinguish time He normalizes time. He heals its wounds” (III/1, 74). For time to persist and thrive, it must lean wholeheartedly upon another, supernatural dimension. George Hunsinger is right to say that this neediness does not have to reflect a moral deficiency.

Note that time’s healing is distinct from salvation from sin. Time’s wounds, as here set forth, are inherent in the good creation. They may be exacerbated and corrupted by sin, but they are not identical with it, nor are they hostile to God. When measured by eternity, they are merely imperfections, not corruptions.⁵⁶

God does not make corrupt humans in corrupt time or commit some sort of violence against them in creation. He does, however, make them “unperfected,” as a creature in need of its divine supplement, and so we might substitute the more neutral “impaired” for Barth’s “wounded.”

For all its reality, time as we experience it does not have simultaneity with other times.⁵⁷ It is imprisoned in the simple, evaporating present. It possesses no comprehensive being, no contemporaneous mode. Here we might extend one of Barth’s favorite metaphors about doing theology: trying to live life fully is an attempt to sketch a bird on the wing.⁵⁸ Is that not time’s metaphysical quandary? It lacks cumulativeness. It lacks God’s perfect dynamism. It hobbles along with its impairment, seeking that dimension which will complete it. Fragmented and supine, human life reaches out in utter dependence to Him who alone is immortal and who dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim 6:16).

⁵⁶ Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 204. Cf. Roberts, *A Theology on Its Way?*, 29.

⁵⁷ Cf. II/1, 608; III/2, 463.

⁵⁸ Human perceptions and correspondences of God in thought, word and deed are no more than “momentary view[s] of a bird in flight” (*WGW*, 282). Similarly, Christian theology can only be a “living procession,” a humble mimicry of the dynamism of its uncaged Subject (Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Grover Foley [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962], 9-10).

A chronic situation for time! – but necessarily and purposefully so. Its void is God-shaped. Limitations are evil, says Barth, only when humans pridefully (and insanely) assert their self-sufficiency.⁵⁹ God intends limitations to become good as they spur us to the good, for by them we are led unto Him who can bestow an eternal identity. The finitude of one’s own existence knit between conception and death can be a righteous plea unto God to subsume this frail history into a higher order. As that which presupposes and encourages dependence on the eternal God, the limited, dying quality of time is an auspicious condition, a *felix plaga*.

§47 “Man in His Time” is an important section because of the way it defines human life in needy juxtaposition to eternity. Having already commented on the resurrection of Christ in His divine-human history (the content of §47.1 “Jesus, Lord of Time”), we may go on to look at anthropology more directly. From the resurrection of Jesus Christ, however indirectly, Barth’s asserts four aspects of human time: given, allotted, beginning and ending.

In §47.2 “Given Time” Barth begins to spell out, using means of deduction and contrast to Jesus Christ’s fulfilled time in the resurrection, what *mere* time looks like. Humanity has this time. Indeed, humanity “is temporality” (III/2, 522). God supplies this mode to them in order to play out His purposes among them. He gives them room to act, bestowing and maintaining the form of their creaturely existence. But this moving-room is not the safety of eternal life; their existence is ever imperiled. Because humans have their humble being in the sequence from past to present to future, because the stream from the past to the future must be continually forded, because the “now” can commence only by fragmenting away from the past and toward future, the present is the most vulnerable tense. Humans call upon memory and imagination, dim powers

⁵⁹ Cf. IV/1, §60.2 “The Pride of Man.”

that they are, for temporal ligation. But only God can give time in the first place. He alone supplies that concrete but fragile reality, the flux in which people may live and move and have their being.

Barth expands this theme with §47.3 “Allotted Time.” God gives time, but only a set interval of time. The human is born and dies. The person’s time commences and ends, and through that allotment one has his or her own bracketed history. The “rock walls” of conception and death form a “workshop” for human action and response toward God (III/2, 563).⁶⁰ Human life at its creaturely core comes with *die Grenze*, borders which limit human time even as they define it, borders which terminate flesh even as they make it a concrete history.

I think it important at this juncture that I clarify and begin speaking explicitly about Barth’s actualism. Actualism maintains that one’s being can be identified directly, even entirely, with the extent of one’s actions and enacted relations. It identifies one’s being with one’s history: “the ‘I’ emerges in the unique story I manage to tell between birth and death.”⁶¹ A rather unconventional metaphysical approach, actualism allows us to “sum it all up and simply say: ‘My time’ – I am my time!”⁶² We have already seen how God has an actualized existence through the election of Himself to be the human Savior within time and space, a central truth about Jesus we will spell out further in the next chapter. Here we speak of actualism strictly in its anthropological application. All

⁶⁰ Barth’s allotted time, then, is not entirely unlike the concrete spectacle of John Calvin’s *theatrum gloria Dei*.

⁶¹ Mangina, *Karl Barth*, 94. “At a sheerly descriptive or phenomenological level, Barth stands firmly within this [broadly existentialist] tradition of thought. He is in his own way an existentialist . . .” (ibid.).

⁶² Karl Barth, “My Time Is Secure in Your Hands,” sermon, 31 Dec 1960, in Karl Barth, *Call for God: New Sermons from Basel Prison*, trans. A.T. Mackay (New York: Evanston, 1967).

that a human has done (and leaves undone) in his or her fleeting stretch of movement is that person's life.

Something in us resists life's borders, especially death. "Human life protests against this 'only.'" It desires duration, and rightly so, admits Barth, "for if it is to fulfil its determination it would seem to need unending time" (III/2, 555-6). Covenantal life with the eternal God cries out for more, even infinitely more. Should we not see limitations as evil, then? Not at all, argues Barth. Rather, we should accept with joy the limitations inherent to our allotted time. First of all, limitations are proper to the time had by the creature. They designate the creature as creature; they give definition to historicity. It is God's design for the creature to have its identity in limited but concrete action. Since humans are by nature not coeternal with God, their good lies in the restricted period of their days and years. Possessing a definite beginning and end is what it means to live in the dimension of time, "a dimension which fits and suits [human life] like a tailor-made garment" (III/2, 559). Secondly, Barth says that the prospect of infinite, limitless time does not offer hope of completion anyway. Time is given in order for humans to have opportunity to reach the perfection of their relationships to God and others. Perpetual life would not advance this quest, avows Barth, as "it is hard to see how everlasting life can guarantee duration and fulfilment in relation to its determination" (III/2, 561). Only so much time is needed.⁶³ Barth's disregard for perpetuity has a third reason, that unending time would mean a sorry

⁶³ "It is understandable that [humanity] wants a sufficient measure of days and years for its development as the fulfilment of its destiny" (III/2, 560), Barth admits, though he dismisses the problem of early demises without an explanation. This leaves him open to a chorus of protests: Has the stillborn child had enough time? Have enough days been given to the teenage soldier consumed in a landmine explosion? What about the elderly who do not conclude with Simeon's and Anna's joy, those waiting in vain for an answer to prayer? How does this hope address the horror of countless truncated lives? (Cf. Brian Hebblethwaite, *Philosophical Theology and Christian Doctrine* [Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005], 112.) And how would Barth explain trito-Isaiah's flat equation of longevity with blessing in the New Jerusalem, in which even the dead centenarian shall be considered accursed (Isa 65:20)?

situation of endless seeking and dissatisfaction. With no possible completion and culmination to life, a person would be condemned to the hellish life of continuous want with no hope of “the peace of permanent life under God and with other men” (III/2, 562).⁶⁴ Continuation of earthly life suggests tedium to Barth. What humanity really needs is eternal *rest*, a divine Sabbath.⁶⁵ The real reason for the rejection of infinite life, Barth ultimately gets around to saying, is that completion only comes by turning to God. A finite human existence needs the eternal God for vital supplementation. As the “Counterpart” to humans in time, God “can encounter us and be our Neighbour on all sides” (III/2, 565). Humans must not try to be gods alongside Him. Rather, they must hold out their hands to their Maker and Sustainer, to Him who confronts and offers complete duration to them at the very borderline of non-existence. Their bounded existences call out for His unbounded one.⁶⁶ In Barth’s appraisal, human life needs its divine context. Allotted time poses the question to which eternity gives the answer.

A problem looms, however. How has the Creator made humans good if they are destined for non-being? Of what value is a concrete history if that history is *dead*? In §47.4 “Beginning Time” and §47.5 “Ending Time” Barth further explains his theology of limitation with an eye to answering this sticky issue. He first makes the basic point that the creature has a beginning in time. One is conceived, and only then

⁶⁴ The same idea is at work in God’s benevolent eviction of Adam and Eve from the garden (III/1, 284). To eat from the tree of life (that is, to seek perpetuation) after rebelling from the grace of God is to damn oneself without end. Yet mortal men and women, dejected and obstinate, desire the barren hope of becoming gods on their own terms. “All evil begins with the fact that we will not thankfully accept the limitation of our existence where we should hope in the light of it, and be certain, joyously certain, of the fulfilment of life in the expectation of its end” (IV/2, 468).

⁶⁵ The resurrection is a “a *rest* that fills time,” “the eschatological limit” of work, “achieved culture” – and inquiries into the potential boringness of this quietude are “stupid questions” (Karl Barth, *Ethics*, ed. Dietrich Braun, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [New York: The Seabury Press, 1981], 223).

⁶⁶ Barth rarely ventures into matters of psychological motivation (which often draw upon natural theology for force), but, reading between the lines of §47, he clearly sees death as a stimulus for the crisis of faith. I have already noted how for the early Barth the line of death is a (the?) chief signpost to one’s dependency upon the Primal Origin (e.g. *ER*, 156, 168).

has being. Christian belief permits no room for emanationism or the pre-existence of created souls. It explicitly rejects the Platonic possibility of pre-existence as held by Origen (III/2, 573). Nothing precedes the human self but the eternal God.

Then comes death. To the psyche the ending of existence feels more threatening than its beginning. Barth does not soften the initial blow, since he makes no allowance for a continuation of the person through a disembodied soul. A person dies, then is no more; no natural life remains in body or soul; one is temporally, historically, truly extinguished at this final boundary. As far as creaturely life is concerned, one suffers *Ganztod*.⁶⁷ No one likes the fact of death, admits Barth. It claims all. It ends existence. It threatens the creature by placing it under the weight of its sentence even while it lives. For the human consciousness it presents a terrifying, inscrutable riddle.

Even so, death's moral status should not be decided too hastily, chimes Barth. Non-being need not mean something evil. In God's providence, death can be good. The end of the human means the termination of all its own possibilities and potentiality – but only those possibilities and powers coming from *oneself*. The eternal God is still there: He was there before one's life and He will be there after it. Temporal being returns to the One who called it out of non-being, says Barth, and one's apparent end is hardly a tragedy if it ends "in God." Death "signifies something supremely positive if it is the case, as we have seen, that we come from God. It can be negative and evil only if our end means passing not only into non-being [*Nichtsein*] but into the negation [*Nichts*] of being" (III/2, 595 = *KD*, 724). For Barth there is a distinction within death: "It is really our nothingness [*Nichtigkeit*] in His sight which is revealed in the destructive work

⁶⁷ Cf. IV/3, 310. Karl Barth joins Paul Althaus, Helmut Thielicke, Gerhard Ebeling, Jörg Baur and Wilfried Joest, along with Eberhard Jüngel and Wolfhart Pannenberg in rejecting the soul as a pivot-point of personal existence, thus leaving the human as such to total obliteration after death (Christian Henning, "Wirklich ganz tot?: Neue Gedanken zur Unsterblichkeit der Seele vor dem Hintergrund der Ganztodtheorie," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 43 [Jan 2001], 238).

of death” (III/2, 608 = *KD*, 740). Death can only finish off our temporal journeys, not determine the *relational position* of our histories vis-à-vis God. Only He may judge that position. It is appointed for us to die and then face judgment (Heb 9:27), for then and there we are sequestered into God’s hands. Can it be that God will vouchsafe our ended histories? Indeed. We shall be alive no more, and yet, “We shall not be alone in death. We shall be with God who is the Lord of death” (III/2, 609).

That is, Barth makes a pronounced distinction between death and judgment. He refuses to see death *per se* as a curse, for in Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection the real enemy is revealed: our guilty alienation from God. Cursedness would be established fully at death were it not for the crucified and risen Lord to escort us into God’s own eternal life. But as it is, *this* sting of death – the nothingness of “hell” – has already and conclusively been removed, “so that we can now contemplate the prospect of death as something which is really behind and beneath us” (III/2, 614). After Christ death no longer has the meaning of perdition and negation. The Victor has dissolved all guilt, “making death irrelevant as its consequence” (III/2, 621). Death comes, but without the connotation of dire judgment from God, for that He has already taken on His own shoulders. The “first death” is not the “second death.”⁶⁸ Therefore Barth would have his readers see physical death as a mere sign of judgment, not the real negating judgment.⁶⁹

Death is a creational good, then? Yes. Having had its meaning liberated by Jesus Christ, death may be understood as something free from every harmful association of judgment, patently “belong[ing] to the life of the creature” and thus “necessary to it”

⁶⁸ This terminology stems from Barth’s exegesis of Rev 20:4-6 (e.g. III/2, 628, 634).

⁶⁹ E.g. III/2, 626; IV/1, 349f.; Karl Barth, *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings, 1946-52*, ed. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), 238f.

(III/2, 639). Death is revealed as negation, but as a negation negated by the Savior.⁷⁰

For the Christian death is a sign of God's judgment only in the sense of a hollow phenomenon disarmed by the greater sign of the cross. All that is really left operative is the good and proper order of the creation. Stripped of its damning significance, death meets the human as a natural terminus.

Barth entertains an objection to the division of death and guilt: How can we vindicate death, since we know of no example of death that does not involve guilt? Barth refuses to comment on the question of a death of a sinless prelapsarian Adam, but he does offer a tortured deduction about the death of Christ (III/2, 628ff.).⁷¹ Jesus Christ, because He took on this burden *voluntarily* and lived it *sinlessly*, did not have to die the death of judgment. Nevertheless, Jesus did die. Therefore He had to be capable of dying, and since His death was not *out of necessity* a death of judgment, the only death fitting to Him would have been a natural death. He did not die *just* this natural death, of course, but, hypothetically speaking, this was the only death required of Him. In His innocence Christ could have died a "different" death, such as that of Enoch, Moses, or Elijah (III/2, 635ff.), though to fulfill His role as Mediator He experienced death *qua* judgment, to overstep this accursed boundary. The remaining arguments Barth makes for a blessed death are piecemeal and rhetorical, reiterating earlier contentions.⁷²

⁷⁰ This is not to say, however, that death can be identified with Christ or "resolved in a play of harmonies," as in the "romanticizing principle" of Novalis (*PTNC*, 366-7). Consider Barth's parallel discourse on the void in the creation account (III/1, 372ff.), that darkness is in no way the counterpart of light or the secret eternal wellspring, but that which exists only by not being that which is posited by God.

⁷¹ For the following cf. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, who calls the following argument "a piece of abstract reasoning," insufficiently christological (p.336).

⁷² We may extract two of them. One, death brought salvation, so it cannot be entirely bad: "And if His dying – in virtue of what it was as His – is the sum total of the good which God has shown to the world, how can we dare to understand man's mortality as something intrinsically negative and evil?" (III/2, 630). Two, death ends our sinning: endless life "could only mean in fact that we should be able to sin infinitely and even qualitatively multiply our guilt on an infinite scale" (III/2, 631).

It makes sense for Barth to want to domesticate death for his actualistic ontology, but – and I say this in direct contraposition to the exegetical portions of §47.5 – his interpretations are simply misguided. For example, he views the cacophony of cries to God for deliverance from death eclipsed by the holy resignation of Jacob and David, who are content to “go the way of all flesh . . . full of years” (III/2, 634). Or again, instead of seeing the assumptions of Enoch and Elijah as a blessing from God in which they are spared death altogether, Barth interprets their termini as equivalent to divine euthanasia, God putting them to death-sans-penalty (III/2, 635ff.), which in turn suggests to him that biological death is “general and neutral” (III/2, 637). Or, as a third instance, Barth makes much out of the New Testament’s talk of death as “sleep,” postulating that the early Christians reinterpreted the cold reality of death as nothing more than a somnolent slipping away, seeing in a person’s external death-throes “the last conclusive symptom of a life surrounded by the peace of God” (III/2, 639). One does well to challenge these comfortable sentiments. Do the Bible’s euphemisms mean to beatify death, as Barth would have it? Are the Bible’s consolations surrounding death meant to exonerate it? No, for the above texts say nothing about the natural goodness of death, and everything about the goodness and power of God *over* death.

Barth claims that God should be justified and not death as such.⁷³ Yet for its service in handing humans over to God, Barth cannot help but name death as “a servant commissioned by God” (III/2, 608), and its ministry of termination “an unequivocally welcome, because gracious, event” (IV/3, 927). Much like Jesus’ shrouded victory on the cross, our own deaths are but the shadowy flip-side of God’s gracious resurrection.⁷⁴

⁷³ God is the frontier of the frontier, after all (III/2, 609ff.). Barth also includes, though far too late in the *Dogmatics*, the point that some will not die, being alive at Christ’s return (IV/3, 924-6).

⁷⁴ Cf. Timothy J. Gorringer, *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 60.

Death, while not salvation *per se*, is salvific insofar as lays out the boundary between time and eternity.

Are we to believe Barth when he says that the torturous spiral into oblivion is in fact only a toothless oarsman rowing us over to glory? *This* is the final foe of God (1 Cor 15:26), the great enemy about to be hurled into the lake of fire (Rev 20:14)? Barth's exoneration of creaturely death seems to me both dangerous and unconvincing. His arguments are insufficiently Christological, appealing to the same sense of crisis that informs existentialism, i.e., the awareness of mortal limitation invites us to decide for that which is limitless. My only conclusion is that, behind the doctrinal and exegetical gymnastics, Barth's thanatology is an embarrassing remnant of natural theology.⁷⁵

Still, as much as I cannot accept his theology of limit, I do not mean to dismantle his more basic point, that human time's main weakness is that it lacks duration, that it needs a mode of perception that binds every moment into a life "secured firmly, properly held together, arranged and refined."⁷⁶ Let us then move on to discuss the general resurrection as a solution to human fragmentation.

The Eternalization of the Risen Human

Nowhere in Barth's writings do we find a lengthy discourse on the afterlife of the human. In fact, he discourages too much curiosity or longing for redemption as such. One is supposed to pine for Jesus, in whom glorification lies.

⁷⁵ According to Emile Durkheim, 1) psychological dreams, 2) wonder at nature and 3) *anxiety about death* provided the primal orientations for natural human religion (Randall Collins, "The Classical Tradition in Sociology of Religion," in., *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. James A. Beckford and N.J. Demerath III [London: SAGE Publications, 2007], 24). Barth manages to smother the first two.

⁷⁶ Karl Barth, "What Is Enough," sermon on 31 Dec 1962, in Barth, *Call for God*, 82.

This all-embracing glorification includes that of the Church and of every individual Christian. This does not mean, however, that the Church, or the individual Christians within it, can or should live with a view to their own future glorification. This, too, would be treachery against their living hope (IV/4, 199).⁷⁷

Barth is particularly stubborn about cashing out a doctrine of the *beneficia Christi*, yet it should be transparent by now that he *has* given us a doctrine of glorification. All of his talk about God's duration and humanity's limitation converges in the resurrection of the God-man. Biblically speaking, since Jesus Christ is the firstfruits from the dead (1 Cor 15:20-23), all eschatological assertions follow after Christological guidelines. And this is the case with Barth, whose Christological actualism (God's eternal being is freely identified with the act of Jesus' own finite history) enables a resultant anthropological actualism (the human's temporal being is by grace identified with God's eternal being).⁷⁸ As sharers of Christ's risen life, humans too can enjoy the freedom of the simultaneity of God. Pointedly, *the resurrection of the flesh means eternalization of this delimited life*.

The hope of the Christian has not to do with an individual's awakening to a fresh, improved episode of time, says Barth.

There is no question of the continuation into an indefinite future of a somewhat altered life. The New Testament hope for the other side of death is very different from that. What it looks forward to is the "eternalizing" of this ending life [*die «Vereinigungs» gerade dieses unseres endenden Lebens*] (III/2, 624 = KD, 760).

The "eternalized" human has had his or her time sublated and fulfilled, transformed into a pure perception, a total duration, a simultaneity of all times. One is elevated into a totally other way of life: thus the resurrection is radical *discontinuity*. Yet one is elevated

⁷⁷ Thus saith the Logos: "I am not inviting you to speculate about your being in eternity, but to receive and ponder the news that here and now you begin to be the new man, and are already that which you will be eternally" (IV/3, 250).

⁷⁸ Something Athanasian is detectable here in that the former actualism is rooted in God's nature and decision; the latter actualism is true only by God's gift. Just as God's eternity is capacious enough to embrace time, so each human's finite existence may enjoy in God's eternal embrace by grace through faith.

with the historical texture of “this ending life”: thus the resurrection is radical *continuity*. In this future one becomes an eternal version of what one was. Observe how the resurrection does not undo human limitation so much as translate one’s bodily existence to “the other side of death.” (Not even death is reversed, unless one understands Barth to mean human limitation *per se*.) Through eternalization one’s fleshly existence enters the overarch of past, present and future. Such life is not the human’s as an independent quality, but something communicated by God. At this Day of days, “all the dead will live through [God] as that which they have been through Him and in relation to Him in their time” (II/2, 283). On that day the creature will see “the investing of its corruptible with incorruption, the clothing of its humanity in divine glory, the perfecting of its creation by the new creation of its form in peace with God and therefore in and with itself” (IV/3, 315).

Instead of tasting destruction by the fragmentation and dissolution characteristic of the flux of temporal becoming, humans have their lives given to them whole and free. *Whole*, in the sense that their lives are made truly composite, knit into a durable tapestry by the weft of eternity. They possess “life in the unity and continuity of times; in unbroken rest and movement” (IV/2, 317). *Free*, in that they with God may transcend a point of space-time in order to access other times. They become contemporaries with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, with Jesus and the disciples and all of God’s redemptive history. They accompany God in His divine omnipresence, having been “assimilated” and “transposed” into the full scope of the Kingdom (I/2, 66).⁷⁹ Their encounter with eternity, given in part in this life through the Spirit’s revelation,

⁷⁹ Pannenberg follows suit, subscribing to the end of the process of time as “the lifting up of temporal histories into the form of an eternal presence . . . dissolving all the differences between particular processes and instants” (Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Constructive and Critical Functions of Christian Eschatology,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 77:2 [Apr 1984], 138).

will one day open up into a uncontradictory experience of fulfilled time, covenant time, the great Sabbath, the totality of God's dealings with the world. The resurrection of the flesh, therefore, means making accessible one's life-act to all times, and all times accessible to one's life-act. Humans have their mortal mode overcome and superseded by the eternal mode. Temporal men and women will live, vicariously in Christ, in the mode of God.

Amazingly, to Barth none of this implies a surrender of the body. Eternal duration has as its texture the very life lived in the body, so the simultaneity of this life must be corporeal in an enduring sense. Since body is a *sine qua non* of human identity,⁸⁰ God's eternalization of the human identity reproduces a fleshy existence. Barth makes no provision for an abstracted essence and disembodied eternity. The Christian faith is ineluctably about concretions, and so "when we confess *credo resurrectionem carnis* we cannot overlook the real and whole man who is a soul and yet also a body, we cannot overlook his hope as though the resurrection was not also promised to him" (IV/1, 653). Barth will not say much more than this, only that eternity does not abolish flesh without reconstituting it on a higher, truer, pan-temporal plane.

Others have picked up where Barth leaves off. Torrance surmises along the same lines when he says that our "eternity will not be a timeless monotone but an eternity with time in the heart of it."⁸¹ More explicitly, Jürgen Moltmann has suggested that theologians begin talking not so much about the resurrection of the dead as "the resurrection of life," the resurrection of one's selfsame life, the divine embrace of our bodily histories. Since bodies are what people are, eternal life can only mean bodies in

⁸⁰ Barth, *The Faith of the Church*, 91.

⁸¹ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Apocalypse Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 145. Since human identity is the actual existence of a body lived in time, any resurrection that is not a bodily resurrection "is surely a contradiction in terms" (Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 82).

“the transmutation into the beauty of the divine life.”⁸² Moltmann notes Barth’s dependence upon the Boethian tradition in which, “[a]ppplied to human beings, eternal life means unrestricted livingness, perfect fullness of life in unrestricted participation in the life of God.”⁸³ We are designated by the Father as those who may live in eternity even as our finite, concrete selves.

I do not want to overlook the strengths of Barth’s creative proposal about human glorification through eternalization. For one, the idea of duration allows for a profound sense of ethical urgency. If *this* life is the life slated for eternalization, then one must invest in the here and now, knowing it to be eternally significant.⁸⁴ Christians have a living hope (that is, a hope for living) because their earthly lives are the lives destined for eternity. John McDowell rightly praises Barth for a “non-escapist, eschatologically contoured ethic,” one which encourages responsible and even radical living in the present life.⁸⁵ Crafted in this way, actualism means a rejection of the opiate of heaven latent in so much of the Christian tradition, offering in its place a most praiseworthy existentialism of sorts.

Second, no matter how confusingly he presents it, Barth’s stubborn commitment to the flesh is praiseworthy.

[One] does not hope for redemption from the this-sidedness, finitude and mortality of His existence. He hopes positively for the revelation of its redemption as completed in Jesus Christ, namely, the redemption of his this-

⁸² Jürgen Moltmann, *Son of Righteousness, Arise!: God’s Future for Humanity and the Earth*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 60-2.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁸⁴ “Real created time acquires in Jesus Christ and in every act of faith in Him the character and stamp of eternity,” says Barth, “and life in it acquires the special characteristics of eternal life” (II/1, 617).

⁸⁵ John C. McDowell, “Barth’s Having No-Thing to Hope For,” *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 11 (2006), 39. Cf. McDowell, *Hope in Barth’s Eschatology*, 56, 134, etc. This is certainly what Barth aims at when he says, “Eschatology, rightly understood, is the most practical thing that can be thought” (DO, 154).

sided, finite and mortal existence. *This psycho-physical being in its time is he himself* (III/2, 633, emphasis added).⁸⁶

The durationalizing of humanity does not, in Barth's mind, detract from his belief in the resurrection of the body. According to his logic the resurrection cannot be anything less than psychosomatic, for what is raised is the life of the whole person, the soul of a body, the body-soul. God saves humans' indelible temporal texture. Time is not eternity, of course, but the contours of temporal life are preserved within the ontological pleroma of eternity. In such a way Barth's actualistic formulation allows for a fresh affirmation of the Apostles and Nicene creeds' teaching on the resurrection.

Still, something feels strained about Barth's reconfigured doctrine. As I warned from the outset, there are significant consequences to his equation of the resurrection with revelation, and here we detect a first set of problems. First, the reconstitution of time in eternity turns time into something that, for all its purported superiority, is only *time-like*. Barth's insistence that space and time are ended leaves a kind of memorialized stasis; human histories simply "stand" in God's attention. In this same vein, G.C. Berkouwer fears that a concept of eternal standing lacks the basic earthly sense of something *preserved* or *continued*.⁸⁷ Just what does full humanity look like once sublated and diffused into eternity?

A related critique can be heard in Farrow's objection to the "refracted" life-act of Jesus: "Is this not the raising of a history rather than a person?"⁸⁸ That is, either with Jesus or with ourselves, the resurrection does not reconstitute the kind of living, forward-moving self we are in this life. In the eschaton we are collected – but are we

⁸⁶ Cf. IV/2, 316f.

⁸⁷ Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in Karl Barth*, 163f., 344.

⁸⁸ Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia*, 234, 249.

agents?⁸⁹ We have time – but do we have future? We have the fullness of our corporeal history – but are we animated bodies? Barth’s presentation yields bodies somehow lighter and more inscrutable than flesh.⁹⁰ Consequently, even after all Barth does to wed act with being, his doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh has a strange odor of timelessness, the very objection Cullmann and Roberts, Gunton and Jenson have posed in their own ways.

Furthermore, as I argued before, Barth’s actualistic anthropology is forced to reverence death as the noble servant of God. Ethically, the death-limit spurs humans to faith in the transcendent Lord of Life. Ontologically, death is the finalization of the creaturely life, the provider of the terminus. Death gives final definition to a human history so that this texture might be raised to the eternal level. (Should it be any surprise that Barth comes around to saying that personal death is interchangeable with the return of Christ?⁹¹) Death offers the point of translation of first-order time to the second-order duration, and therefore must be considered necessary and even holy. Here, aside

⁸⁹ If we might transfer some John Webster’s critique of Jüngel’s theology to Barth, the idea of human availability to God in death does not secure the mutuality characteristic of the relationship between the living human and the living God: “We are known, we are limited, but in no sense are we able to contribute to a reciprocal relationship with the God who is our beyond” (John Webster, *Eberhard Jüngel: An Introduction to His Theology* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986], 92). It is almost as if Barth feels that death sanitizes our creaturely rebellion for God’s presence, for “God and man, despite fine passages to the contrary, are still defined by their opposition to one another, an opposition which can only be resolved by the death of man (which belongs already to the determination of his finitude) and by his reconstitution as a moment in God’s eternity” (Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia*, 246). It is much like what Mangina says about the cross of Christ: the apocalyptic summons means “there are no agents left to act” (*Karl Barth*, 127).

⁹⁰ It also comes with the burden of theological quandaries and impenetrable metaphysics. For instance, consider Barth’s silence about the historical, history-making quality of those who are dead. If each human has a Beyond, either now or at death, why do they exert no agency among us who are alive? Are they not to have, on some level, the same historical, history-making quality Jesus possessed in the forty days and possesses even now? Is this special freedom to walk and be in time withheld from them? Barth might rebut that at the return of Christ chronological time will cease, so the dead will have no time-in-process in which they might act. But that rebuttal does not necessarily preclude the in-temporality of the saints now, before the world’s time has ended. Besides, what difference is “ended” time if all times are present to the divine mode?

⁹¹ End by death and end by final parousia are “the same transition to the same participation in the same glory” (IV/3, 925). See chapter six.

from possible influence from Plato and Feuerbach, Barth has drawn too deeply from the well of existentialism. His respect (however grudging⁹²) for physical death as the transportation to the realm of eternalization sounds very much like other twentieth-century theologians influenced by existential philosophy.⁹³ For all its usefulness, this position cannot be squared with the violent hatred God has for death in the scriptures. Barth cannot say unequivocally, “The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Cor 15:26). Barth cannot join Jesus in weeping at the tomb of Lazarus (Jn 11:33-38). This is simply unacceptable. Any eschatology worth its salt must do more than neutralize or reinterpret or reprimatinate death. Death must be reversed and eliminated from the field.

To recount our first approach to Barth’s doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh, Barth describes God in His eternal freedom. He Himself dwells in eternity, viz., in the pure duration of all times together. By His gracious Self-election He is even able to create creaturely time and then enter it. In contrast, creaturely time needs God. As that which is fleeting and fragmented, limited by conception and death, human time needs eternity. The flux of moments need to be gathered into the divine consciousness. Time as such, impaired time, becomes sinful to the extent that it refuses its reliance upon God in His divine duration, but time is fulfilled by the resurrection of the dead. Jesus Christ demonstrates this in His own resurrected being, which is His selfsame history translated into the eternal mode. At least as one aspect, we may understand the

⁹² E.g. II/2, 265, 362; IV/2, 462f.; IV/3, 924ff.; IV/4, 15.

⁹³ Wolfhart Pannenberg (*Systematic Theology*, volume 3 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 602) sees an analogy between Barth’s view and that of Tillich and Schelling with their idea of “essentialization.” A similar interpretation has cropped up in a surprising number of places in recent decades, including Eberhard Jüngel, *Death: The Riddle and the Mystery*, trans. Iain and Ute Nicol (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 115-36; Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*, rev. ed., trans. C.H. Henkey and W.J. O’Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 26-31; Nicholas Lash, “Eternal Life: Life ‘after’ Death?,” *The Heythrop Journal* 19:3 (July 1978), 271-84; Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 79-119; Katherine Sonderegger, “The Doctrine of Providence,” in *The Providence of God: Deus Habet Consilium*, ed. Francesca Aran Murphy and Philip G. Ziegler (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 152ff.

obedient, dead Son to be eternalized by the Father through the resurrection. Jesus is appointed the Son of God. This very One who lived and died as our priest is now contemporaneous with all times, most notably in the forty days of appearances, but really throughout all times. His eternally actualized being has a corresponding anthropological gift. Through Christ every human may enter into the same kind of simultaneity in and over the ages. By grace through faith they may receive the resurrection of the dead, which, for all the transcendence involved, is still an event with temporal and fleshly results. As the gathering of each earthly life, Barth claims, eternal life is *supremely* temporal and fleshly.

Perhaps it is best to say that Barth's weakness lies at his very point of strength. He finds human life not simply *from* God but *in* God. This paradigm forbids the vagaries of a deistic theism in which humans rely upon their own autonomous intellect and constitutional immortality. Barth's approach is something participationist to the core: only in God may one find real being, only in Him the fount of creaturely life and source of final glorification. Time and flesh and even death become good in the hand of the Eternal One. For Barth the Christian afterlife is an anthropological doctrine couched in the doctrine of God. Since *He* alone is immortal, what more can one say besides, "God is my Beyond" (III/2, 632, 640)?

I have suggested, however, that a theology that sublates the earthly into the heavenly has not necessarily saved the earthly. Totalizing the earthly condition by raising it into the divine has been presented by Barth as a fulfilment. But it could also be construed as a quarantine. Barth too often portrays human continuity as a matter of closure rather than a matter of perpetuation. The perceived messiness of the dimensions of time and space, change and flesh, seems to cry out for *resolution* – but resolution does not necessarily mean *redemption*, even if that resolution happens in God

Himself. We will need to follow a second line of thought from Barth to see if human continuity remains intact after being raised into the divine.

CHAPTER 4

The Resurrection of the Flesh as Manifestation

“Jesus Christ arose and appeared to His disciples” – and we too will appear with Him in glory. The scriptures have this sense of resurrection too, the active disclosure of the Son who is, by definition, the Lord of life. In fact, I have risked misleading the reader by portraying Barth’s view of the resurrection so much in terms of an ontological shift, a superaddition of eternal duration to the otherwise temporal human. Barth’s other (and preferred) line is very much oriented to a second sense of resurrection: the revelation of one’s true, already-established identity. For him, each is true Christologically. From the position of the condescending Son of God, obedient and helpless before the Father, resurrection is the eternalization of His being; from the position of the exalted Son of Man, glorious and empowering to other humans, resurrection is the manifestation of His being. The former underscores the Father’s livening verdict, the latter the Son’s own living declaration. The former suggests an effected retroactivity, the second a mere retrospectivity. The former is more ontological, the second more epistemological. The complexity of Barth’s Christology

(and through it, his anthropology) prevents neat categorization, so let us simply affirm what was said in the last chapter and, as it were, begin again from the beginning.

Our second approach involves a discussion of the integrity of Jesus Christ. As the God who takes flesh, the Son is the perfect union of deity and humanity. The unity of the divine essence and the human essence *is* salvation for the latter. Barth says that Christ's two natures, fully communicative, operated simultaneously, actualizing themselves fully in His incarnate life. Jesus Christ wrought salvation, became salvation, even was saved – *before and without the resurrection*. The integrity of His being-with-God secured all. Jesus' resurrection revelation to others in the subjective sphere, then, has nothing to do with the perfection already accomplished in the incarnation's exchange of natures. This is Barth's way of standing firm on the finality of Jesus Christ. What, then, is the resurrection? Barth asserts that it can only be the active *manifestation* of Jesus Christ's own life as He opens it publicly to the world. It can only be the public power of His integrated being as it goes out to vivify others and win them to Him. It can only be a making-known, a "noetic" moment which displays the power of a fixed reality. In what follows, I acknowledge that Barth successfully guards the objectivistic *solus Christus* against subjective elements which Neoprotestants, Roman Catholics and Pietists would try to add to the one work of salvation, though I also point out that Barth's Christology (and therefore his soteriology) operates with an internal framework similar to early Lutheranism, and is even more clearly partial to Alexandrian logic. That is, Christ's glorification is already accounted for in the communication of attributes irrespective of the resurrection. Jesus' resurrection is a showing of His innate glory to others.

In contrast to Jesus Christ, other humans dwell in the hiddenness of earthly existence. They show no integrity, they do not reflect the *imago Dei*. By sin their creational otherness becomes alienation from God. While Jesus Christ's atonement has

healed the disjuncture between God and humanity, no one yet reflects perfect wholeness. Every person (especially the Christian) lives as a walking contradiction: saint and sinner, enlightened and darkened, caught between life and death. A person's creaturely condition as such does not display its appointed glory. That is the condition of mere flesh. Only the resurrection of the flesh will disclose one's true identity in Jesus Christ. The raising of the dead makes public the truth of one's identity as a child of God. At Christ's appearing the saints will appear with Him, purified and overjoyed at the vision of His glory. They will be present in His presence. The manifestation is of one's whole identity in its union with Christ, so Barth insists that the person in the resurrection maintains his or her own bodily nature. God reveals Himself to those in the flesh, thus those in the flesh must rise. And just as the Son reveals Himself to others in the fleshly quality of His whole self, so humans will be conclusively revealed with their fleshly character.

My critique of Barth intensifies in this chapter. I will argue that the resurrection-as-manifestation line of thought suffers from a certain implausibility, as our coming disclosure does not carry all the same meanings as Christ's. More seriously, the fleshly dimension of the resurrection becomes spiritualized in Barth's strongly noetic function of the resurrection. Since eternal life is put in terms of knowledge of God and self available through "manifest presence" (an idea sibling to the beatific vision), the ultimate meaning of resurrection sounds more like a "going to heaven" than a public re-identification of the bodily person in the world. Somewhat unexpectedly, Barth's description of glorification in terms of the revelation of the human nature lifted into the divine has the effect of morphing the doctrine of the resurrection into something of a doctrine of deification. The flesh gets harder and harder to find.

The Integrity of the Son

To Barth's credit, every construction in the *Church Dogmatics* is done under the auspices of the Mediator, a working out of the great truth that all Christian doctrine is an unpacking of the theme of Christ. As George Hunsinger puts it, "That there is only one work of salvation, that it has been accomplished by Jesus Christ, that it is identical with his person, and that being perfect it needs no supplementation but only acknowledgment, reception, participation, anticipation and proclamation for what it is – these are the great themes of Barth's soteriology."¹ If the Christian understanding of salvation really banks on Christ, if it indeed holds to a *solus Christus*, then there can be no talk of addition. The great temptation of soteriology is, at some point or another, to leave the domain of Christology and center oneself in anthropology. It is to cast an independent inquiry about what salvation is, rather than persist in the person and work of the Son, whether that be Neoprotestant theology with its looking through and past Jesus Christ to true salvation, Roman Catholicism's exercise of the infused grace of Jesus Christ under the guidance of the institutional clergy, or "positive" Christianity's reliance upon a further rational or experiential or volitional activation of salvation.² Barth begins and ends with the *finality* of Jesus Christ.

The way he guarantees the finality of Jesus Christ is to speak of the Son's own integrity of being, a theme that comes out in some depth in §64.2 "The Homecoming of the Son of Man" and §64.3 "The Royal Man." It would be hard to say too much about

¹ George Hunsinger, review of John Webster's *Barth's Moral Theology Human Action in Barth's Thought*. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 53:3 (2000), 410-1.

² *CD IV/2* can read as an extended response to these three groups. Barth explicitly mentions the three at the head of the part-volume (*IV/2*, ix-xi). While he comes to new agreement with Pietism and extends a fresh response to Roman Catholicism's claims about sanctifying grace, Barth refers readers back to his early work for a repudiation of Neoprotestantism.

Barth's Christology, to which he devotes extended attention and profound comprehensiveness. His own treatment portrays Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the covenant between God and humanity. To accomplish this Barth takes up the terminology of Christian orthodoxy – nature, person, union.³ But it is important to understand that he is working hard to restructure classical metaphysical categories into something more dynamic: the great exchange of the incarnation happens as a historical act. Barth creatively inhabits the legacy of the fourth ecumenical council, at which the Church at Chalcedon laid the general parameters for discourse about the incarnation of the Son of God.⁴ Christ's two natures must be interpreted as "without confusion" (*asugchutōs*) and "without mutation" (*atreptōs*), guarding the distinction between deity and humanity, yet also without "division" (*adiaretōs*) or "separation" (*achoristōs*), guarding the unity of the person. Historically, numerous positions have been laid out within the Chalcedonian boundaries, and Barth offers yet another fresh interpretation, the deceptively simple move of "actualizing" Jesus Christ's two natures in one "history." Each nature is specific and distinguished, yet together unified and integrated, in the one personal act of Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Logos become flesh. "We accept [Chalcedon's] insight, even if we have to give it another form," Barth says optimistically. "But the whole point is that we do have to give it another form" (IV/2, 109).

Rather than metaphysical discourse, Barth's narrative structure of the incarnation plays out as two different but simultaneous story-lines. Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the state of humiliation (*status exinanitionis*), humbling Himself and pouring out His divine glory by taking up a human existence. Yet He is at the same

³ Barth comes to prefer the more dynamic term, "essences." I will use the terms interchangeably.

⁴ For the following, cf. Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 131-47. A good summary of volume IV can be found in Mangina, *Karl Barth*, 115ff.

time the Son of Man in the state of exaltation (*status exaltationis*), being brought under the auspices of the divine life. These aspects are simultaneous, being “two opposed but strictly related moments in that history which operate together and mutually interpret one another” (IV/2, 106). To tell one side of the story is not to tell the other exactly, just as the condescending divine nature cannot be confused with the elevating human nature. Still, the totality of Jesus Christ’s one incarnate life is a marriage of operations: the two “movements” or “aspects” happen concurrently in the one person of Jesus Christ as He lives out His incarnate mission.⁵ Here is where Barth squeezes the communication of natures to say something novel about the Jesus-narrative itself: just as there can be no chronological succession of the natures, there can be no chronological succession of states. Barth rejects the traditional teaching that Jesus Christ as God and man was humiliated through the incarnation, suffering, death and burial, but exalted through resurrection, ascension, session and return. Rather, the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ happen *simultaneously*. Instead of the typical “V” adumbrated in the ecumenical creeds, Barth identifies the states hypostatically, overlapping humiliation and exaltation into an “X.” Instead of resurrection being the decisive point of the Jesus story, now the attention goes to Christmas and the cross.

We recall that *Church Dogmatics* IV reflects this schema. The Christology of IV/1 attends to the aspect of the divine nature: the Son of God’s obedient “going into the far country,” His display of power through the powerlessness of sinful human existence, His humble exercise of freedom as the Judge judged in our place. The Christology of IV/2 describes the human nature: the Son of Man’s acquired splendor, His restoration of humanity’s place as the covenant partner of God, and in Him the “homecoming” of

⁵ The two movements are “the inner dialectic of the Christian doctrine of reconciliation” (IV/3, 5).

humanity as it is lifted up to a royal place. After telling Christ's story these two ways, all that is left for Barth in IV/3 is to speak of these two aspects synthetically, in the unity of the "descent" and "ascent" of Jesus Christ's single being-in-act, and the unity of the pre-resurrection and post-resurrection movement toward others.⁶ In all this Barth has smashed together the pre-Easter narrative and metaphysics. No longer is the apparent meaning of Good Friday the real meaning of Jesus' Christ's story: His condescension, suffering, death and burial are not humiliation *per se*. To His human essence at least they are His hidden glory.

This one Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, is complete and glorious in Himself without any kind of augmentation by our subjective appropriation of His gift. That is Barth's chief point after all is said and done. To safeguard this truth he makes a bold move, compressing the complete, objective, saving being of Jesus Christ into His incarnation proper. The thirty or so years of Jesus' temporal existence culminating with His atoning crucifixion constitute the whole reality of salvation – without His resurrection, ascension, session or return. When from the cross Jesus utters, "It is finished," *all* salvation is sealed with the closure of His history. Because "any limitations of the *tetelestai* are quite alien to the New Testament," there can be no talk of a continuation of the atonement or further actualization of a latent possibility (IV/1, 306). His death achieved "absolute fulfilment" (IV/2, 256).⁷ God had stepped,

⁶ One of the charming (and frustrating) things at work in Barth's schema is its upending of the neat categories of "high" and "low" Christologies. Why call IV/1 a "high" Christology if it recounts the Son of God in humiliation, needing resurrection? And why call IV/2 a "low" Christology if it is the Son of Man in exaltation, who all the while possesses resurrection? Might IV/1 not be the "low" and IV/2 the "high"? Accurate titles for the part-volumes would require something clumsy, such as "high-low-high" for IV/1 and "the-low-which-is-made-high" for IV/2.

⁷ One can see this doctrinal move as a ratcheting up of the Reformational *solus Christus*. Some commentators have wondered if the force of Barth's "Christological perfect" leaves room for anthropological and eschatological unfolding. E.g. Gerhard Sauter, *What Dare We Hope?: Reconsidering Eschatology* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 76, 102ff.; Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 208f;

once for all, into humankind's place, enacting the purposes of God as the true image of God. His history achieved its telos as Jesus expired on Golgotha, for there the full intention of the incarnation was met, for there God subjected Himself to the lowest point, for there the human nature ascended to the pinnacle of life with God. The death of Christ is "*in nuce* the redemptive act and actuality of His existence" (IV/2, 257). Or, perhaps more accurately, "The secret of the cross is simply the secret of the incarnation in all its fulness" (IV/2, 293). Just as Good Friday has its wellspring in the nativity, the nativity has its sights aimed on Good Friday. This explains in part why Barth's doctrine of reconciliation, depending on the context, can feel either incarno-centric or staurocentric. In either case, reconciliation (justification and sanctification together) is understood as perfected in Christ's terminal history.

In His divine condescension He actually and finally procured justification for humankind; in His human exaltation He actually and finally procured sanctification. The unity of His two essences is an integrity unique to Him. However much two identities operate in His history, He is perfectly at one with Himself, and His perfect integrity has made salvation certain for humans.

Before examining how Barth pairs Jesus' resurrection with the finished work of the incarnation, I want to suggest that it is possible to classify historically Barth's Christology. His own preference for Reformed nomenclature has led many readers to overlook the extent to which he orders his Christology along Lutheran lines, or, perhaps more fundamentally, within the Alexandrian legacy.

Donald G. Bloesch, *Jesus Is Victor!: Karl Barth's Doctrine of Salvation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 32-42; Gerhard O. Forde, *The Preached God: Proclamation in Word and Sacrament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 82).

To make my claim it is helpful for us to revisit the debate in Lutheran and Reformed scholasticism.⁸ The Christian Church has always held to some sort of conception of the state of humiliation and state of exaltation of Christ, but it was only after the Reformation that competing interpretations surfaced. Following a certain line of thought through Augustine, Lombard and Aquinas, a Königsberg professor by the name of Stancarus promoted the idea that Jesus Christ was mediator according to His human nature alone. This was initially opposed by sixteenth-century Lutheran and Reformed theologians alike, though their positions on the states diverged in the following years. Luther had promoted, for the sake of divine immutability, the traditional view that Christ's human nature alone underwent the change inherent in humiliation and exaltation, emphasizing that His divinity was merely concealed. More important to Luther, however, was the unity of the natures in the incarnation, the deep transfer of predicates which secured not only salvation but also underwrote a consubstantial view of the sacraments. The deity of Christ, hidden with, in and under His humanity, lifted up His humanity. In the hands of Martin Chemnitz and Johann Brenz this hiddenness involved not only the glory of the divine Son but also the concealment of already-glorified humanity. Even with the concession to the Giessen faction (which held that the divine attributes were temporarily unexpressed in Christ's humanity during His lifetime), Lutheranism continued to teach the communication of properties as the source and content of glorification. The *status exaltationis*, then,

⁸ For the following historical points, see Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 97-101; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus: God and Man*, 2nd ed., trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), 307ff.; John Thompson, *Christ in Perspective: Christological Perspectives in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1978), 20ff.; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 3: Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 364ff.; Heinrich Hepp, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set out and Illustrated from the Sources*, rev. and ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G.T. Thomson (reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 410-509; cf. IV/1, 180ff.

referred to the degree to which the already-present exaltation of Christ's humanity was permitted to shine through.

Calvinist theologians of the time, ever on guard against idolatry, opposed the Lutherans' direct exchange of attributes between the natures. In their minds, failure to guard the distinction of the natures at every point would surely lead to the apotheosis of the human. They therefore emphasized more strenuously the need for distinction by couching the unity of Christ, His common idioms and operations, in the one *person* of Christ. The divine nature had to retain its unblemished power, and the human nature had to be guarded against absorption into deity. That is, on one side, the Reformed preserved a sense in which the deity of Jesus Christ exceeded the activity of His human nature, even during His earthly ministry;⁹ on the other side they promoted the sense in which the human nature was always thoroughly human during Jesus' earthly life and death, resurrection and ascension. Even during His heavenly session He lives in our flesh, so as to be our High Priest. This meant that the *communicatio idiomatum*, however important to the Reformed, never included the *genus maiestaticum*, that is, the human nature's exercise of divine predicates like omnipotence, omnipresence, etc.¹⁰ So as not to be outstripped by the Lutheran emphasis on the unity of Christ, Reformed scholastics highlighted the state of humiliation and state of exaltation as two distinct chronological movements undergone by *both natures together* in the same Person's

⁹ Lutherans applied to this view the pejorative title, *extra Calvinisticum*, "the Calvinistic extra," suggesting that the Reformed had succumbed to the Nestorian heresy which taught that Christ was actually two persons, His divinity operating independently of His humanity.

¹⁰ Reading the communion as an interpenetrating exchange in consequence of the union of the person, the early Lutherans taught the *genus maiestaticum*, that is, that "the human nature has become partaker of the attributes of the divine nature, and therefore of its entire glory and majesty" (Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, third ed., trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1899], 314). This was of course reflected in the consubstantial view of the eucharist, a kind of paradoxical reality of Jesus' body "in, with and under" the elements, where the (non-Zwinglian) Reformed view of the Lord's Supper settled for the more conservative but equally ambiguous notion of "real presence."

condescension or exaltation.¹¹ Each occurrence affected the natures differently, according to the character of that nature (for instance, Jesus' death meant concealment for the divine nature, physical death for the human nature), but – and this “but” is the point here – the humiliation or exaltation of the divine nature runs parallel to, and in utter solidarity with, the human path of mortal abasement and new glory. Each nature goes in the same “direction.” Lutheran theologians did not express that common narrative so simply, instead holding that the human nature was secretly exalted while the divine nature condescended to hiddenness during Jesus' life.

Barth's self-assessment can be misleading. He claims to be in closer agreement with the Reformed perspective when it comes to Christology,¹² and this is accurate to the extent that Barth rejects any interpenetration of the natures, and positions the unity of Christ in the context of His single “person” or “history.” He rightly fears the bleeding over of divine properties to the human, so characteristic of anthropocentric theology. However, in the end he builds his Christology along lines closer to the Lutheran blueprint.¹³ I see this happening in three ways: his primary interest in the unity of the two natures, his portrayal of the states operating in divergent directions, and his concept of human glorification.

¹¹ See Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 488ff. Also observe, e.g., how Francis Turretin in his *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* follows a rejection of the Lutherans' formal communication of attributes (XIII, q.7) with a discussion of the states of exinanition and exaltation (XIII, q.8).

¹² IV/2, 52, 68f., 79ff.

¹³ Barth confesses that his actualistic, chiastic model of Christ's unity, full of “decisive innovations” (IV/1, 133), can hardly be called a theory of the “states” at all (IV/2, 110). Is this not his way to “appreciate the attraction of the particular Lutheran interest in the *communio naturarum*” (IV/2, 69), to suggest an even *better* innovation? No wonder Barth admits that “we have left even Reformed Christology far behind. We cannot expect to be praised for our ‘orthodoxy’ from any quarter” (IV/2, 106). See below.

First, Barth's emphasis falls most heavily on the unity of the two essences. Barth's ongoing war against abstraction (the "original sin" of all theology¹⁴) impels him toward this intense connection of the natures in order that he might cut off speculation about the divine nature apart from the flesh of Jesus Christ. The divine nature is to be found at no other place than the humanity of Christ, and the humanity of Christ at no other place than in His deity. There is no hidden God apart from His humanity, and no humanity apart from His deity. Accordingly, he presses for a robust sense of the divine-human exchange through full communication: the *communicatio idiomatum* (the mutual impartation of the two essences), the *communicatio gratiarum* (the address of the divine essence to the human essence), and the *communicatio operationum* (the shared operations of the essences).¹⁵ By my reading, Barth privileges the third communication as a holding category for the first two. This would seem to be a Reformed move until one considers that he has reinterpreted the shared operations of the natures in one person as *the common actualization of the natures in the one history of Jesus*. This approach is neither Reformed nor Lutheran exactly, but the fruit of the approach serves to underscore the intimacy of the union of the natures as they shape each other. Therefore, Barth's repeated warning in §64.2 that unity cannot mean a union in which the two natures are blended or confused is proof not of his Reformed leanings so much as an awareness of his own commitment to the deep exchange of predicates between the natures. Note how he returns to unity (not to differentiation) as the fundamental fact about the person of Christ: "If the word union were not strictly understood, we should completely miss the actuality of Jesus Christ, and speak this time of two arbitrary figments of the imagination" (IV/2, 64). Indeed, "all that we have seen concerning this union – the

¹⁴ Gorringer, *Karl Barth*, 133. Cf. John Webster, *Karl Barth* (London: Continuum, 2000), 116.

¹⁵ IV/2, 73ff.

two-sided participation of the divine and human essence, the genuineness of both even in their conjunction, but also the reality of the union as such – in short, *the whole doctrine of the two natures in the strict sense depends on this primary and proper union and unity . . .*” (IV/2, 65-6, emphasis added).” Unity is the fundamental thing at stake for Barth, a strange feature for a Reformed theologian.¹⁶

Let me unpack this claim further by looking at his interpretation about Christ’s states. Instead of reading (with the Reformed) the two natures’ parallel paths and meanings in their common external operations, he relativizes the distinction of the natures by compressing them into an inner exchange in Christ: “[I]t is the act of the humiliation of the Son of God as such which is the exaltation of the Son of Man, and in Him of human essence” (IV/2, 100). The old Reformed view saw the occurrences of the Jesus narrative as having a concurrent “path” for each respective nature: both condescend together, both rise together. This is the union of the two natures: their harmony in the one Subject. The natures play out their distinct actions *together*, natures worked out towards the same ends and undergoing the same circumstances. As it is, Barth’s making the states simultaneous has an alternate effect, more along the lines of the Lutheran logic of exchange. The incarnation “brings down” the divine essence as it “lifts up” the human essence. The union is expression not in a parallel set of experiences in the same phenomenal history, but a counterdirectional set of relations between the two natures. In Barth’s view, deity and humanity do more than communicate in Christ. Rather, they become inverted movements or inner counterparts within the one narrative. While I know of no Lutheran who made the states operate counterdirectionally, Barth’s view comports better with the Lutheran willingness to

¹⁶ Among Calvinists Barth is alone in stressing unity rather than distinction, says Colin Gunton (*Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Essays toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology*, 99).

reconfigure the states of humiliation and exaltation, to read them not at historical face-value but paradoxically,¹⁷ even to make the states coincidental on some level during Christ's life, as with Brenz.¹⁸

Third – and here is Barth's most overt step toward Lutheranism – glorification is a subset of the incarnational unity as such. The assumed human nature gains its nobility not from the resurrection but the human nature's proximity to God. Its future does more than come from God: it is the life *of God in God*. Glorification comes not from bodily vivification but from the unveiling of the hidden, divine glory previously imparted to the whole self. Christ's glory has only gone undercover so that the communication of the covenanted natures appears inactive. While the Reformed have not been without their crucicentricism, the resurrection, ascension and session of the bodily Christ have been understood as determinative for Christ's glorification. That has not been the case for classical Lutheran dogmaticians, who to a much greater extent have frontloaded the glorification of Jesus' human nature into the history between Christmas and cross.¹⁹

To summarize, Barth allies himself with Reformed Christology in his terminology, especially his situating the communion of attributes in the unipersonality of Christ. Yet so far as he places the emphasis on unity, so far as he abandons the chronological presentation of the states, so far as the concept of glorification is concerned, Barth should be numbered with the Lutheran Christologists – a classification

¹⁷ As one example, Luther's idea that the state of exaltation begins with Christ's descent into hell in Jesus' secretly glorified humanity (Luther, *Small Catechism*, q.184, cf. Edward W.A. Koehler, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine: A Popular Presentation of the Teachings of the Bible*, rev. ed. [reprint: St. Louis: Concordia, 1971], 100f.).

¹⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, new ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 326.

¹⁹ E.g. Formula of Concord (Solid Declaration), VIII.7-9; Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, volume I: *The Theology and Philosophy of Life of Lutheranism, Especially in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), 248.

at which others have already gestured.²⁰ This is not to say that Barth's Christology has been readily assimilated by Lutherans; or that non-Lutherans have spurned it; neither is it to say that Calvin or the Reformed scholastic theologians never entertained similar ideas. My conclusion certainly does not reflect Barth's own self-analysis.²¹ I simply want to point out that Barth's cluster of concerns and strategies with the communion of natures caters to one side of the Reformation debate.

If we consider the matter more foundationally, Barth's position can be classified within the original opinions surrounding the legacy of Chalcedon.²² Both before and after the fourth ecumenical council, Alexandrian and Antiochene schools competed for the exact meaning of the *vere Deus, vere homo*. Barth is a closer relative to the former.²³

²⁰ George Hunsinger notes Barth's reliance on Luther for an "eminently substantive" Christology with its attendant *theologia crucis* (*Disruptive Grace*, 283-90). Amy Ellen Marga points out that Barth's retrieval of Luther's Christo-logic freed him from the gravity of Enlightenment subjectivism ("Jesus Christ and the Modern Sinner: Karl Barth's Retrieval of Luther's Substantive Christology," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 34:4 [Aug 2007], 260-70). Per David Ford: "As in the similar dispute over Christ's divinity and humanity the bias of Barth's method is Lutheran and he makes up for this by all the stronger assertions of the hierarchy [of the divine over the human]" (*Barth and God's Story*, 140). No wonder that one might conclude that Barth re-opens the door to an even stronger version of the *genus maiestaticum* – without having to stray from Lutheran resources (Piotr J. Malysz, "Storming Heaven with Karl Barth? Barth's Unwitting Appropriation of the *Genus Maiestaticum* and What Lutherans Can Learn from It," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9:1 [Jan 2007], 73-92)! Therefore, to conclude that "Barth has done as much as he can – on Reformed soil – to honor the Lutheran concern" (Bruce L. McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008], 243) grants too much credibility to Barth's self-analysis. In my judgment, Barth has done as much as he can to shore up Reformed concerns before operating in the Lutheran spirit, having "left Reformed Christology far behind" (IV/2, 106).

²¹ Again, Barth can certainly advocate the Reformed identity over the Lutheran, including in matters of Christology (e.g., I/2, 70, 830ff.; IV/2, 52, 66; Barth, *Letters, 1961-1968*, 255). Nevertheless, his intention to find middle ground between the two camps is vocalized when he classifies the 17th century wrangling as "useless controversy" (II/1, 487). Perhaps Barth's most authentic attitude may actually be found from a lecture at Göttingen: "There is enough Lutheranism in Calvinism, and for good or ill Lutheranism has had to take enough Calvinism into its system, to prevent us from talking about a fork in the road . . ." (*GD I*, 173).

²² Barth's attempt at balance has elicited the praise that it is fully Chalcedonian (Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Chalcedonian Christology," 127-42), or, in one case, the roiled accusation that it is doubly heretical, both docetic and Nestorian (Regin Prenter, "Karl Barths Umbildung der traditionellen Zweinaturlehre in lutherischer Beleuchtung," *Studia Theologia* 11:1 [1957], 1-88)!

²³ Here I am in basic agreement with Waldrop's assessment, though his categories are sometimes caricatured or muddled. See Charles T. Waldrop, *Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Alexandrian Character* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1984); Charles T. Waldrop, "Karl Barth's Concept of the Divinity of Jesus Christ," *The Harvard Theological Review* 74:3 (Jul 1981), 241-63.

Where Alexandrian theologians sought to defend the unity of the two distinct natures in Christ, Antiochenes hoped to preserve the unity of the two distinct natures. Where Alexandrian theologians held that salvation depended on the flow of the divine nature to the human nature in Christ (and so removed theoretical impediments to the communion of the natures), Antiochenes were more concerned that the divine benefits conferred to Christ's humanity never come at the expense of His humanity (and so drew a thicker line of definition between the natures). Where the school of Alexandria emphasized the one divine Subject who assumes the human nature so as to live in a composite existence, the Antiochenes thought it better to err on the side of the distinction of God and humanity in the person of Christ.

Since theologians lean (often subconsciously) toward either Alexandrian or Antiochene camps to this very day, it should come as no surprise that Barth's Christology has received mixed evaluation. For example, in the Alexandrian vein Thomas Torrance praises Barth's reclamation of the Eastern resources in order to undo "a damaging disintegration of the wholeness of God's reconciling work in the incarnate life and passion of our Lord,"²⁴ and Andrew Burgess unflinchingly describes Barth as teaching that "it belongs to the true *divinity* of Jesus Christ that He is also truly human."²⁵ Similarly, others have found in Barth's actualistic syntax the chance to eradicate dangers of a *deus absconditus* associated with the immanent Trinity.²⁶ On the other side, when G.C. Berkouwer complains that Barth's doctrine of the simultaneous states lead to "an obscuring of the decisive [temporal] transition from humiliation to

²⁴ Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, 234.

²⁵ Andrew R. Burgess, *The Ascension in Karl Barth* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 30.

²⁶ E.g., Eberhard Jüngel, *Barth-Studien* (Köln/Gütersloh: Benziger Verlag und Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1982), 51-3; McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern*, 192-6.

exaltation which took place at the resurrection,”²⁷ or when Douglas Farrow concludes that the fusing of the natures with the states results in a “thinning” of Jesus’ post-mortem history, in which the human nature “remains trapped in the circle” of an already-actualized life,²⁸ the red flag of the Antiochene school is raised. Those of an Alexandrian persuasion will praise the actualized nature-states as “dynamic,” even “time-affirming.”²⁹ Those sensitive to the Antiochene concerns will fear that this incarnational dynamic “undermines the claim that Jesus Christ is fully human.”³⁰

I will hold my judgment until after a discussion of the resurrection. At this point it is simply helpful to recognize that Barth dons Reformed armor even as he wields Lutheran weaponry, and blesses Antioch even as he establishes citizenship in Alexandria. For now it is better to move on, acknowledging that Barth does all this to preserve the finality of Christ and His work. The glory of Christ – the glory of the whole *theanthropos* – is complete in the determinative drama of the incarnate life. All that remains is the lifting of the curtain.

The Manifestation of Jesus Christ

The startling consequence of Barth’s understanding of the incarnation is that Christ’s resurrection, ascension, heavenly session and return are not exaltation for Him. In fact, they do not add a single iota to His person and work. The “afterlife” of Jesus generates nothing new on the ontic level, since His full identity transpired in the history between

²⁷ Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 315.

²⁸ Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia*, 247-9.

²⁹ Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 192. Cf. Mangina, *Karl Barth*, 121.

³⁰ Waldrop, “Karl Barth’s Concept of the Divinity of Jesus Christ,” 263.

conception and cross. “His work, His being and action, were not augmented by the resurrection,” Barth says matter-of-factly. “How could they be? His work was finished” (IV/3, 282). Christ was (and is and ever more shall be) the Living One, so His death does not need to be “undone.” What is more, since reconciliation has been absolutely completed between the two termini of His earthly arrival and His earthly death, nothing salvific needs to be added to His one sacrifice. He was (and is and ever more shall be) the absolute salvation of His people. How, then, should one classify resurrection?

The resurrection is the *manifestation* of that which has already been accomplished, says Barth. By expressing it this way, Barth has reframed the problem of objective and subjective elements of salvation into the problem of promulgation, that is, the question of how the objective reality in Christ becomes ours as He shines forth and illuminates other subjects by His shining.³¹ Barth is interested in a whole new set of questions with the resurrection: How does “reconciliation” also become “redemption” for us? How has His finished act extended its reach so as to awaken us to God? Or, as Barth comes to put it, “How can that which He was and did *extra nos* become an event *in nobis*?” (IV/4, 18). The answer to each question is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We may observe throughout *CD IV* that Barth retains his early dialectic of veiling and unveiling with regard to Christ’s death and resurrection. In 1935 he says,

The *secret* of Easter . . . can in its substance be none other than that of Good Friday – which again is that of Christmas. There is only *one* secret of the Christian faith: God and man in their community through God’s free grace. What in particular makes, in this instance, this one secret the mystery of Easter is, to put it in the simplest way, this: that all that we have recognised as the mystery of Good Friday is, as God’s decree, will and deed, *true* and *valid*. . . . All that in the crucifixion of Christ was done by God in a hidden way is by the resurrection set in the *light* and put into *force*.³²

³¹ Barth holds onto the problem of the one and the many, however.

³² Barth, *Credo*, 102.

The resurrection is the greatest importance of all signs since it makes God's incarnation in its totality "active and knowable" (I/2, 183). In God's decision to resurrect the Son, His life is disclosed. That which was veiled at Christmas and the cross was unveiled at Easter. An older Barth affirms the same in more detail, saying,

As His *self-revelation*, His resurrection and ascension were simply *a lifting of the veil*. They were a step out of the hiddenness of His perfect being as Son of God and Son of Man, as Mediator and Reconciler, into the publicity of the world for the sake of those for whose reconciliation He was who He was and is who He is. His resurrection and ascension were simply *the authentic communication and proclamation of the perfect act* of redemption once for all accomplished in His previous existence and history . . . (IV/2, 133, emphasis added).

This last passage, ostensibly about resurrection, is especially characteristic of Barth's doctrine of revelation. Note how the resurrection is the *personal* disclosure of Jesus Christ, God Himself revealing Himself by Himself. Yet resurrection has a rich epistemological sense, something *dialectical*, resurrection being the positive expression of revelation's "lifting of the veil." And, of course, such manifestation goes forward as the *declarative* phase of a previously perfected act. Nothing new comes to Jesus' own identity through His resurrection, neither must anything new come, since He always had life in Himself. Easter merely opens up an aperture through which Christ's eternal majesty illuminates and conforms others to the theanthropic reality perfected in Him. The forty days following mark the demonstration (better, the remonstrations) of the mystery of the Incarnate One. Jesus, in the newness of His resurrection mission, appears again so that He might decrypt the mystery of that which He was and did before. The light concentrated in the life and death of the Savior is transcendentally unleashed in this "interspersed history [*Zwischengeschichte*]," this "transposed report [*Zwischenberichte*]" (IV/2, 132 = *KD*, 148).

While this paradigm is not without its perils, let us acknowledge that Barth's construal of the resurrection as manifestation has some sort of biblical basis. Nine times in scripture the phrase "He was seen/He appeared" (*ōphthē*) is used to describe the post-Easter event of Jesus Christ. Similarly, deutero-Mark and the gospel of John claim that "He was revealed" (*ephanērōthē*) or "He revealed Himself" (*ephanērōsen*). In a unique construction, Peter preaches that "God raised him on the third day and made him manifest (*edōken auton emphanē genesthai*); not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:40-41 [RSV]). Barth reads this manifestation as a kind of supernatural interaction that displays Jesus, not Jesus in a new life, but Jesus as He once was, now presented in the mode of God: *present* to the disciples in all openness. Can this not also be the sense of the *horisthentos* of Rom 1:4, that He was "declared" to be the Son of God?

In such a way Barth gives the resurrection an illuminative character. Where Jesus Christ's earthly life-to-death history accomplishes, achieves, enacts, and completes reconciliation, the resurrection manifests, declares, reveals, communicates, confirms, and makes known that history. At regular intervals Barth refers to the former as "ontic," the latter as "noetic."³³ The ontic side of things concerns the Son's *esse*, His

³³ To my knowledge no one has traced Barth's usage of the ontic-noetic to its fountainhead. Certainly the terms existed in philosophical literature, and around the same time as the writing of the *Church Dogmatics* Martin Heidegger was using the terms (albeit very differently). Barth's language here is undoubtedly "idiosyncratic" (Dawson, *The Resurrection in Karl Barth*, 214). The apparent entrance of ontic-noetic nomenclature comes into play during Barth's (second) class lectures on Anselm, written in 1930 and published the following year. In this study he notices that, contrary to general consensus, for Anselm knowledge of God is not something worked toward, speculated about or deduced. God's givenness starts theological inquiry. God speaks objectively and is thus subjectively heard, for "when we speak of the gift of this Word, the effect of the Word is, invariably, that both the Word and the event of the hearing of the Word are understood together" (Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, trans. Ian W. Robertson [Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1962], 34). God's Word facilitates the *intelligere*: from His side the ontic has a noetic movement, and from our side the noetic has its sure, ontic basis. In Anselm Barth finds being and knowing brought together even as they are distinguished. "The establishing of knowledge of the object of faith consists in recognition of the basis that is peculiar to the object of faith itself. Ontic necessity precedes noetic" (p.50), and, similarly, "Ontic rationality precedes noetic" (ibid.). But God, Truth itself and the *causa veritatis*, stands behind the ontic *ratio* and noetic *ratio* alike, assuring their unity. Since his work on Anselm represents the coming of age for Barth's dogmatic method, it comes as no surprise that

being, the matter-of-fact life He led and the reconciliation won through it. The noetic side is the *noese*, the knowledge of Him and His work, the “movement” of revelation as it enlightens and seizes others outside of Him. The former concerns the objective, the latter the subjective (or, more accurately, the objective-crossing-over-to-the-subjective). The cross and resurrection are really one act of majesty in which the objective reality of Christ at the cross has a beyond, an “also.” The actuality of the finished incarnational history comes with an intellectual *possibility*,

the possibility of a special perception to meet it, a perception which is controlled and mastered by it, attaching itself to it, following and accompanying it, imitating and repeating it. . . . In short, we have to reckon with the fact that the same divine act of majesty with which we have to do in the incarnation of the Word has not merely the character of objective being and occurrence, but also, as an event within the world and therefore in the sphere of human cognition, a subjective character as well (IV/2, 120).

The subjective event of the one “divine act of majesty” is the resurrection. In this move Jesus offers those in the world a seeing, knowing and doing which corresponds to the fact of His own life-act. Christ’s being and work are finished, yet there remains a subsequent movement of the Son to others, the *Heilsgeschichte* of His person as it blossoms into an *Offenbarungsgeschichte*. Rather than the crucifixion of Jesus becoming a great star collapsing into itself, the finalization precipitates a noetic supernova. Christ makes Himself known.

A noetic – yet just when the reader begins to sink into this conceptual distinction, Barth refuses to let the two terms divide: “What we have is a divine noetic which has all the force of a divine ontic” (IV/3, 297). It is certainly true that Barth, from his earliest writings, defined “knowledge” as more than cognitive, something more

he carries over this terminology into the doctrine of revelation in *CD I* (e.g. I/1, 22, 307; I/2, 170ff., 181) and, ultimately, into the treatment of the resurrection (that is, manifestation) of Christ in *CD IV*, especially IV/3. In Barth’s mature work it was only a matter of replacing the ontic *ratio* with “the incarnational history,” the noetic *ratio* with “the resurrection,” and the God of the *rationes* with “the Mediator.”

in line with the full-orbed Biblical terminology (*yada, ginōskō*). Knowledge is no ratiocinative cognition at a distance, but intimate, personal acquaintance. Christ makes such knowledge possible by overstepping the bounds of death and drawing near to the human. He presents Himself, and by so doing makes the distance between Subject and object (or subject and Subject) vanish.

A noetic with the force of an ontic! The resurrection as such may not be determinative for the being of Jesus Himself, but that does not preclude it from having an abiding ontic character. Barth never catalogues the ways in which this is true, but, in loose correspondence with Barth's five points about the "Beyond" of the cross in IV/1, I might list off the following: 1) The resurrection is a noetic with the force of an ontic in that *knowledge of God comes about through God's free act*. He is the Subject overseeing this subjective echo of reconciliation. More specifically, in the resurrection it is the transcendent Jesus Christ who acts and effects such knowledge. He who is in the mode of God raises others' consciousness to His perfect perception.³⁴ 2) The resurrection is ontic in that *its knowledge is a distinct movement³⁵ beyond the cross*. For as much as reconciliation precedes cognition, Jesus' manifestation comes as new shedding of light beyond the old boundaries. Jesus reaches out to establish new relationships, and "for Barth relation is an ontological category."³⁶ 3) *Resurrection knowledge was already implicit in the cross's ontic*. Barth is not entirely consistent on this score, but he says one thing clearly enough, that even when God's Yes was concealed by Jesus' suffering and death, it was still a Yes. Resurrection inhabited Golgotha as its hidden glory, an intention ready to be

³⁴ Christ is not transformed in His Self-revelation – though He does become the *trans*-former, the one who through His manifest presence brings change from God's eternal vantage point.

³⁵ I detect in Barth's terminology a growing willingness to speak of the "movement" of revelation rather than the "event" of revelation. Salvifically, the movement concerns that of Jesus to others in the range of His open effect. Dogmatically, Barth deploys the resurrection as the transition of Barth's Christology to discussions of soteriology, hamartiology, ecclesiology and the Christian life.

³⁶ Gunton, "Salvation," 144.

vocalized.³⁷ Revelation has its basis in the ontic act of dying, but the ontic has its goal in revelation. 4) *This knowledge allows humans to step into a fresh historical reality.* Christ's revelation in the resurrection imparts a transformational kind of knowledge that actively conforms human lives into Christ's likeness even while in this world. By this knowledge they actually come to reflect, however provisionally, the new life belonging to the children of God. Those in the Church are illuminated, transformed, changed. The cross alone did not do this; it required the resurrection. He arose, He appeared, He interacted with those in history. Even now through the resurrection, the kingdom comes on earth as in heaven.³⁸ 5) *Resurrection knowledge is ontic insofar as it is the coming presence of the selfsame Jesus Christ.* The very same Savior is at work in the noetic task. He Himself shows up in this knowledge, and He Himself is the real. What is at the heart of this movement is Jesus' own concrete person. If He acts as the personal agent of this impartation of personal self-giving, how can one possibly categorize the resurrection as mere knowing? We see in Barth's arguments a relentless unity-in-differentiation of the ontic and noetic.

Barth's tangled terminology makes more sense when understood as a response to three competing theological systems: liberalism, Roman Catholicism and positive evangelicalism. The great temptation of soteriology is, at some point or another, to leave the domain of Christology and center oneself in anthropology. It is to cast an

³⁷ "Reconciliation is not a dark or dumb event, but a perspicuous and vocal. It is not closed in upon itself, but moves out and communicates itself" (IV/3, 8). Yet this connectedness privileges a kind of ontic core secured on Good Friday, for "[w]hat happened on Easter Day was nothing new: it was simply the flaring up of the light already lit in that darkness and at first shrouded by it" (Karl Barth, "The Brief Moment," sermon on 2 Apr 1961, in Barth, *Call for God*, 53).

³⁸ Katherine Sonderegger ("Et Resurrexit Tertia Die: Jenson and Barth on Christ's Resurrection," in *Conversing with Barth*, ed. John C. McDowell and Mike Higon [Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2004]) supports the view that Barth's divine noetic category does not compromise the historicity of the event (p.200), if by historical one means that happenings of the resurrection "will be historical in the proper and exalted sense: the unfolding of the life, death and victory of God with his creatures, the unfolding of God's own time" (p.201). Cf. Lorenzen, *Resurrection and Discipleship*, 66-71.

independent inquiry about what salvation is, rather than persist in the person and work of the Son. Barth was painfully familiar with the ways Christians of the nineteenth century had succumbed to this temptation. In Neo-Protestant theology (and its latest reinvention in Rudolf Bultmann) the *experience of faith* had become the substance of salvation. In Roman Catholic theology a similar anthropocentrism prevailed, requiring that a believer exercise the infused grace of Jesus Christ in his or her own heart (a program which fostered monasticism, Marianism, and the institutional power of the clergy to facilitate this salvation). Positive evangelicals fared little better, augmenting the death of Christ with their own pietistic appropriation of grace, requiring a decision of faith to apply an otherwise passive reality. *Church Dogmatics* IV can be understood as a lengthy response to these three groups.³⁹ Barth rightly sensed that each of these enterprises had come to violate the finality of Christ, since each called for a salvific component to be added or appropriated by the believer, a component which went above and beyond the work of Christ so as to complete it. The subjective work facilitated by the individual Christian (or the Christian in direct intercourse with God) became an idolatrous substitute for the one Mediator.

One can appreciate Barth's attempt to reduce the resurrection to a noetic movement when one sees how in the history of doctrine it has often been a source of anthropocentric infection. For liberal theology the resurrection could be reinterpreted as one's own attainment of spiritual enlightenment and performance of moral deeds somehow prompted by the love and teachings of Jesus. Similarly, Roman Catholicism had rejected the agenda of the Protestant Reformation by following the Augustinian notion of the infusion of grace. Believers are to fan into flame the deposit of salvation, and so "resurrection" comes to mean the moral awakening inherent in this spiritual

³⁹ Cf. IV/1, ix; IV/2, ix.

development. Even European evangelicals had reduced the resurrection of Christ into a brute fact, mere apologetical evidence to spur one to a faith commitment that applied salvation through a personal faith-decision. Was Jesus Christ – the actual history and person of Jesus Christ – really the content of these claims? How could He be the final word on salvation when every group wanted so badly to move to a “real,” personalized expression of salvation? With these groups Barth affirms the resurrection as a subjective reality. But against these Christian groups Barth defends the *absolute* work of Jesus Christ, the totality of justification and sanctification, the full integrity of His character, His finished work and being before any kind of appropriation – and therefore the resurrection as a noetic. We do not “add to” salvation; we simply know Christ’s perfect reality. The resurrection does not add to salvation, it declares it. The resurrection is *noetic*.

Yet Barth must respond a second time to the anthropocentrism of these groups by insisting that it is a noetic with the force of an *ontic*. The resurrection of Jesus is indeed subjective, intimate knowledge of a perfect reality – but it is knowledge of the One who is actually risen, living and active. Liberal theology had forsaken the ontic of the resurrection by affirming Jesus Christ’s alive-ness only in the spiritual sense. For instance, Barth’s teacher Adolf von Harnack taught that the resurrection was to be conceived as the center of the Christian religion provided that one understood “resurrection” to mean that one had arrived at inner, utter confidence in Jesus’ teachings on the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and that these truths were inviolable and resistant even to death. “The Easter message” of Jesus rising from the dead was symbolic, and could be abandoned once “the Easter faith” had been

perceived.⁴⁰ The doctrine of the resurrection signifies only that *the believer* has come to life in some spiritual sense, and is somehow justified in projecting that faith back into the statement that *He* lives forevermore. Had Bultmann said anything different when he taught that Christ is raised kerygmatically in the congregation through “faith in the cross as a salvation-event”?⁴¹ Roman Catholicism supplanted Jesus’ actual ministry, claiming that His gift of life could be mediated only through institutionalized sacraments (with the help of the array of assisting saints). Positive evangelicals generally did better in affirming Jesus’ bodily resurrection, but they too found ways to cut off the active ministry of Jesus Christ by denaturing Easter into language about one’s subjective response to the dying Jesus. Pietistic hymnody turned incessantly inward, singing, “You ask me how I know He lives / He lives within my heart,” all the while demanding a legalistic self-mortification before God.⁴² In each of these distorted theologies, the resurrection is domesticated as the subjective event in the heart of the believer; only in a secondary sense is it about the object, Jesus in His prophetic mission to us today. It flirts with the idolatrous thought that we “take over” and “become” Christ’s risen body, or “continue” the incarnation in order to complete it. This Barth will not permit. Jesus Christ is risen, and His risenness has all the force of an ontic. Only in and with the ontic of the incarnation does it have a corresponding noetic, by which other humans may participate in the completed reality of the one God-man.

⁴⁰ Adolf Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 160ff.

⁴¹ Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma und Mythos*, vol. 1, ed. H.W. Bartsch (Hamburg/Bergstedt: Herbert Reich-Evangelischer Verlag, 1960), 46f.

⁴² While Alfred H. Ackley’s hymn, “He Lives” (1933), would probably not be familiar to Barth, the subjectivistic tradition in hymnody from Novalis onward certainly was (e.g., *PTNC*, 101, 366; I/2, 256).

To bring us back to the question of corporeality, let us attend to one question with Barth's talk of manifestation: Which nature is manifested in Jesus Christ's resurrection? His answer: both: "Each is to be recognized in the other" (III/2, 216). In chapter three I examined how the resurrection for Barth presents Jesus Christ in divine freedom. The disciples "came to see that He had always been present among them in His deity, though hitherto this deity had been veiled" (III/2, 448). For all His condescension unto flesh and suffering and death, Jesus is shown by the Father to be the Son of God, contemporaneous with all times, fully durable, having access to all moments. From Easter on, but especially during the forty days of appearance, Jesus became present to others "in the mode of God." This is a key idea in IV/1, written from the perspective of the Son of God, for which the resurrection is "the true, original, typical form of the revelation of God in Him and therefore of revelation generally" (IV/1, 301).

Interestingly, however, the revelation of the divine essence comes out more strongly in IV/2, from the supposed perspective of the Son of Man in exaltation. Significantly, there deity is shown to be deity *expressed through* the exalted human nature of Christ, for "if He was and is revealed as the Son of God in His resurrection and ascension, it is in the power and glory of His unity with the man Jesus of Nazareth" (IV/2, 150). There in His human existence Jesus Christ's deity is manifested, intermittently through His incarnate ministry and fully in His resurrection and ascension. In IV/2 He is "the royal man," the human essence raised to majestic fellowship with God. Human essence has been brought to the heights of heaven, made holy, welcomed into the kingdom of God. According to this Alexandrian perspective, God stands, and in His standing humanity "rises." On the wings of His now-apparent deity rides Jesus Christ's humanity, displayed for others to behold. The resurrection is

the power of life “aimed at the establishment of genuine human life,” though the means to this genuine humanity is a “divine predicate . . . ascribed to this life” (IV/2, 316f). The governance of the divine essence over the human essence in Jesus’ person shines through in the resurrection. Jesus Christ’s humanity is manifested with His deity; Jesus’ deity is expressed with His humanity.

Has Christ’s humanity really been sustained in the resurrection? Like the early Church, Barth recognizes that the litmus test for the preservation of Jesus’ human essence has to do with His bodiliness in the resurrection. Statements about Christ’s bodily resurrection pepper the *Church Dogmatics* in answer to this very test. The resurrection is undeniably bodily because the incarnation involved the *unity* of God’s essence with human essence, therefore the *whole* Christ died and was raised, and therefore the *whole* man died and was raised. Barth spurns any division between body and soul or divine and human. How can we say it is the risen Christ if He comes to us without His full self?

It is impossible to erase the bodily character of the resurrection of Jesus and His existence as the Resurrected. Nor may we gloss over this element in the New Testament record of the forty days, as a false dualism between spirit and body has repeatedly tried to do. For unless Christ’s resurrection was a resurrection of the body, we have no guarantee that it was the decisively acting Subject Jesus Christ Himself, the *man* Jesus, who rose from the dead (III/2, 448).

Risen – but risen *flesh!* For all the dominance of the divine essence in the incarnational union and the manifestation thereof, for all the exaltation of the human in the divine, the human essence abides.

The power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ may be known by the fact that it snatches man upwards. But again we must make a careful differentiation. The higher level to which it snatches him is not the dubious height of an abstractly spiritual life, of pure inwardness. It is a matter of man’s life in its totality, of man as the soul of his body, and therefore of the outward life, with all its distinctive elements and functions, in which he is related to other cosmic creatures, and not merely of rational and spiritual life which seems to differentiate him from them. It is a matter of his life including, and not

excluding, its vegetative components. The exalted man Jesus, from whom the power of this life derives, is the One who is exalted in the totality of His soul and body, just as He is also the One who is humiliated in the totality of His outer and inner life. *He is flesh and blood in His being and therefore in its revelation.* It is inevitable, then, that the power which proceeds from His resurrection, and He Himself as the Resurrected, should sow a seed which is not only psychical but physical, and give nourishment which is not only spiritual but material – a whole preservation of the whole man. Eternal life as it is applied to man by this power is the declaration and pledge of *his total life-exaltation*, from which not a hair of his head or a breath that he draws can be excluded. . . . The power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ will be seen in *the totality of the upward movement* which is its work” (IV/2, 316-7, emphasis added).

If Christ rises, revealing Himself, then the divine nature and the human nature alike are manifested. Who comes to us in the resurrection movement? The selfsame Jesus of Nazareth, body and all.

I think it important that we note two final things about the kind of manifestation of which Barth speaks. First, in his view, Jesus’ *original body* is raised. The physical, flesh and bone history of His earthly ministry is the raised human essence. The body He once lived in is not repaired, healed, recalibrated or changed in any way. It simply shows the divine identity underlying it. It is He as the selfsame human body and soul – albeit transformed, transfigured, turned inside-out so as to publicly display its godly predicates. Put another way, in the resurrection the old body of Jesus “appears” with its divine raiment, its heavenly features which had hitherto been concealed. In either perspective the body of Jesus is not a new body, but the old flesh manifesting the glory of its divine identification. With this exact body He returns to demonstrate His glory in a Paschal sequel.

Two, in Barth’s view, Jesus’ body is forever *the body of God*. Manifestation on the third day meant the manifestation of Jesus’ body, which, for all its mortality, had its share in the immortal life of the Deity. In the primal moment God elected Himself to be the Savior of humanity, thus defining this humanity through the bodily identity of the

unique person of the Son. This Son assumed a human nature, *the* human nature, defining humanity thereby. More specifically, the Son assumed the place of this one bodily man, Jesus, to be for humanity its sole Savior. His bodily identity is the humanity of God. Similar to the Alexandrian and Lutheran lines of logic, Barth sub-inserts the human essence into the Logos' divine essence in the hypostatic union. In His incarnation proper the Son has His deity hidden beneath human flesh; in His resurrection the Son has His human flesh hidden beneath this deity.⁴³ This goes a long way to explaining why, for all Barth's emphasis on bodily resurrection, the revelation of Jesus Christ does not usually show forth Jesus' embodiment very forthrightly. If He lives "in the mode of God" (III/2, 448), then no longer does He appear "in the mode of humanity" – at least, that is, front-forwardly. In any case, both natures are manifested in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the human and the divine, the human with the divine, the human in the divine.

The Ambiguity of the Human

What is humanity revealed as in the resurrection? Barth claims to be able to derive a portrait of the human from the glorified God-man. The human in his or her created and sinful state cannot be ascertained directly, but the manifestation of the Lord Jesus supplies us with an anthropology (and hamartiology) largely through contrast with what He is in His revealed integrity. In the last chapter we heard Barth teaching that humans are limited. In the present context he also says that they are *ambiguous*. The potential

⁴³ As one possible influence on Barth, the Lutheran Pietist J.A. Bengel taught that "Before the resurrection, the Spirit was concealed under the *flesh*, after the resurrection the *Spirit of sanctity* entirely concealed the flesh," though Bengel qualifies it by saying that Christ "laid aside, not the *flesh*, but what is *fleshy* . . ." (John Albert Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament*, vol. II, trans. Charlton T. Lewis [Philadelphia: Perkinpine & Higgins, 1862], 13).

ambiguity of the creature in the first place becomes real contradiction through rebellion against God. Even after the fact of reconciliation by Christ, believers are caught in a new ambiguity, swinging between their competing identities as saint and sinner in the present age. Registering Barth's thoughts on the ambiguity of the human helps to clarify what he means by the resurrection of the flesh for humanity in general.

Though he rarely develops it in any one spot, the idea of contradiction is important for Barth. Lacking all consistency and integrity, contradiction is the "ultimate fact" of human existence (III/2, 47). On a certain level, he says, this possibility of being at odds with God, self and the world is built into the very fabric of humanity. Humans are created good by God – but good only in relationship: "Man exists only in his relation with God. . . . [only] to the extent that not he himself but God is His sovereign Lord, and his own sovereignty flows from God" (III/2, 123). The human *qua* human loses his or her goodness if independent from God in any way. From the beginning humanity received its integrity from fellowship with God, not a self-possessed dignity. (A rather severe deviation from the modern western intellectual tradition!). Because humanity is not God, because it exists only by and with and for its divine counterpart, there is, seemingly by definition, a kind of built-in temptation to earthly existence. Creation comes with its day and night, its positive and negative aspects (III/1, 127). God calls the creation good, but goodness does not denote self-contained goodness. Will Adam see his "impairment," his necessary dependence on the Uncreated One, as an invitation to rebel? Will he turn to a religion of self-reliance and become *homo incurvatus in se*? The shadowy possibilities cast by creation do not have to fructify into evil contradiction, says Barth: "In the knowledge of Jesus Christ we must abandon the obvious prejudice against the negative aspect of creation and confess that God has planned and made all things well, even on the negative side" (III/3, 301). Like

limitation through earthly death, the ambiguous status of the creature does not have to result in immolation. Life in the covenant addresses the potential human disjuncture between “self-ness” and “selfed-ness.” Life in the covenant means being whole in God.

Sadly, we humans have plunged ourselves headlong into chaos, says Barth. Rebelling against our Maker, we lack the integrity achievable only in Him. Pridefully denying our divine judgment by and in Jesus Christ, we pursue an insane identity, pretending to be judge of God and others. We grow slothful and stupid. We attempt to rule ourselves rather than accept our true definition in Christ, thereby rending ourselves in two. We ignore the Spirit of God and lie to ourselves about our own autonomous spirit. Sin creates fissures between the self and God, the self and neighbor, even the self and self.⁴⁴ We continue to take our creatureliness, exalted as it is by God’s good gift, and pervert it into a contradiction of the highest order.

Sometimes Barth speaks of the false identity ontologically, in terms of “nothingness.” Sin does not have being exactly: “It ‘is,’ not as God and His creation are, but only in its own improper way, as inherent contradiction, as impossible possibility” (III/3, 351). By extension, when humans enter into sin they enter into a bizarre double status, a something trying to become nothing, the covenanted creature behaving as if uncovenanted, the children of God pretending to be strangers, in short, the living identifying themselves as dead. Likewise, Barth can call attention to this quandary in epistemological terms.

Human nature as it is and in ourselves is always a debatable quantity; the human situation as we know and experience it is dialectical. We exist in antitheses which we cannot escape or see beyond. We bear various aspects none of which can be disowned. Our life has no unity. We seek it, as the various theories of man bear witness. But we only seek it. All theories of man are one-sided, and

⁴⁴ “The order of our psychical and physical nature, to which the nerves also belong, is not attuned to the lordship of our inhuman nature. It can only break under it” (IV/2, 444). This contradiction plays out on the social scale, with billions of little would-be judges desiring to judge in God’s place (IV/1, 446f.).

must contradict other theories and be contradicted by them. There is no undisputed and ultimately certain theory of man. At bottom there is only a theoretical search for the real man, as in practice there is only a striving to attain real humanity. The final thing is always unrest . . . The ultimate fact about our human nature, as we shall constantly see in detail, is the self-contradiction of man, and the conscious or unconscious self-deception in which he refuses to recognise this truth (III/2, 47).

The result of disregard for God's Word leaves humans in the dark. We lack clarity about our identity because we will not hear the truth. Caught in our own delusions, we lack the kind of integrity handed to us in Jesus Christ.

“What a wretch I am! Who will save me from this body of death? Thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom 7:24-25). The only way out of the contradiction is by returning to the One who unequivocally defines humanity as God's own. Repentance involves faith in the Savior who alone can extract others from their schismatic identity.

In Him are the peace and clarity which are not in ourselves. In Him is the human nature created by God without the self-contradiction which afflicts us and without the self-deception by which we seek to escape from this our shame. In Him is human nature without human sin. (III/2, 48).

The dualistic human situation finds its remedy in the One who set the boundaries for human identity in the first place. Therefore Christian preaching calls the unconverted into the pure light of Christ, out of the darkness of “abnormal, contradictory and impossible being in sin” (IV/3, 807).

A lingering condition remains for believers, however. In faith they understand themselves to be the people of God, the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit. They know and act according to the truth of human identity in Jesus Christ. But they are still perplexed by their sinful machinations. They too often teeter between righteousness and wickedness, humility and pride, majesty and devilry, enlightenment and deceit. They have heard the voice of Christ, for He has spoken it to them.

However, “He has not yet spoken of it immediately [*unmittelbar*], i.e., in such a way that even those who are awakened by Him to faith and love can hear His voice in perfect purity [*vollkommenen Reinheit*] and to the exclusion of every conceivable contradiction and opposition and above all participation in human falsehood” (IV/3, 903 = *KD*, 1036). In short, Christians are caught between the already and not yet, in the kind of dialectical existence described in Barth’s early work. Revelation has touched us and raised us to itself – but somewhat tangentially: “Thus even at best our life is an indirect seeing, a seeing *in contrario*, and to this extent an improper seeing” (IV/2, 839). This indirectness, this contrariness, this double existence lingers for as long as the mortal has not yet been swallowed up by life (2 Cor 5:4). This present time can be lived by the Christian with confidence and hope, says Barth, for the future is sealed by the sure salvation of Him who died and rose again for us. Still, there is something indelibly painful about the contradictoriness of this life, since the dialectic of identities cannot be concluded by anything from our side. We are not able to resolve it by our own strength. Only Christ can accomplish that. Will He come and do that very thing?

The Manifestation of the Human

In 1961 Barth writes a fascinating letter to a Swiss layman who had become distressed while listening to a radio program in which Barth made a cryptic remark about the afterlife. Barth’s explanatory letter to Mr. Rüegg is an excellent summary of some concluding themes of *CD IV*, and offers a peek at his doctrine of redemption:

Eternal life is not another and second life, beyond the present one. It is this life, but the reverse side which God sees although it is as yet hidden from us – this life in its relation to what He has done for the whole world, and therefore for us too, in Jesus Christ. We thus wait and hope, even in view of our death, for our manifestation with Him, with Jesus Christ who was raised again from the dead,

in the glory of not only the judgment but also the grace of God. The new thing will be that the cover of tears, death, suffering, crying, and pain that now lies over our present life will be lifted, that the decree of God fulfilled in Jesus Christ will stand before our eyes, and that it will be the subject not only of our deepest shame but also of our joyful thanks and praise.⁴⁵

I think it worthwhile to unpack this rich, dense paragraph in light of *CD*. In what follows I will focus on how Barth depicts the coming resurrection as the manifestation of our fleshly histories in Christ.

First and foremost, Barth states that the resurrection will be a manifestation of *this* life: “Eternal life is not another and second life, beyond the present one.” Here we might revisit the actualistic ontology described in the previous chapter: one’s life is the total history of temporal moments, a collection ultimately possible only by couching time in eternal duration. Eternal life fulfills human nature, for one’s earthly life from conception to death is the “material” that is raised. Because the resurrection of the dead has its template in a person’s collected history, it is not as if a different subject comes out of the nothingness of the grave. Nevertheless, the resurrection will spell out the hidden truth about that collected life, for on the Last Day “the veil will be taken away and everything that ever was and is and will be will be set in the light of God, divested of its dubiety and frailty and therefore redeemed” (IV/3, 916). Eternal life “is this life” – life manifested. At first glance it appears that Barth has not commented on the future of the body, but discriminating readers will hear in this statement his affirmation of the corporeal mode of this life. “This life” is irreducibly physical, body with soul, and if we have been physical here, our coming resurrection will be physical. Just as the risen person of Christ appeared with real historicity and tangibility, with all the human predicates of His earlier existence, so each individual will appear in the full truth of

⁴⁵ Karl Barth, letter to Werner Rüegg, 6 July 1961, in Karl Barth, *Letters, 1961-1968*, ed. Jürgen Fangmeier, Hinrich Stoevesandt and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 9.

oneself, a truth that has inextricably corporeal dimensions. As Barth puts it, “[W]hen we confess *credo resurrectionem carnis* we cannot overlook the real and whole man who is a soul and yet also a body, we cannot overlook his hope as though the resurrection was not also promised to him” (IV/1, 653). The glory of salvation shall “one day be unveiled and revealed . . . as embracing the whole man, including his bodily nature” (II/1, 642). Something akin to the patristic sentiment is at work here: all of that which is assumed is saved; the whole human is assumed by Christ; thus the whole person is saved; the flesh is part of the person; therefore, the flesh too is saved. Barth’s actualism prevents the earthly medium from being discarded – though whether it does more than that is open to question.

Second, there is in the above letter an orientation to the manifestation of one’s life *in Christ*. The Pauline *en Christō* is the fundamental pole for Barth, and it means for the resurrection that we are to be raised not simply as who we were but in the fullness of “this life in its relation to what He has done for the whole world.” His glory, even the glory communicated to the human nature, is to be revealed in others in an unsullied manner. Not simply what we are but what He is – *that* will be the substance of our risen life. His righteousness, beauty, love and power will shine through us. That is our identity even now, but only at the resurrection-manifestation will we appear as such. His ontic comes with a noetic, and the awakening power of His divine noetic reaches us with the force of a divine ontic. To say that God becomes one with humankind is to affirm the salvation of the whole man, including “man’s physical nature and hope, the resurrection of the flesh” (I/2, 128). The open claim of the incarnate God on our bodies is resurrection. I want to make clear that Barth does not want us to think that the general resurrection transpires as a second thing apart from Jesus’ own resurrection. Rather, there is but one resurrection, Jesus’, and His own manifestation in the forty days

awaits only a greater scope, namely, when the rest of humankind is revealed with Him in glory. This idea requires further unpacking, to be done momentarily.

Third, the resurrection will mean a *purifying judgment*. Our manifestation with Christ necessarily reveals “the judgment but also the grace of God” upon our lives. How could it be otherwise, since we have sought for ourselves a rival identity, a pact with nothingness? As noted earlier, humanity has its one true identity secured in Christ’s atonement, but this reconciliation is obfuscated in the present age. Only the final resurrection takes away this ambiguity. Behind the impossible paradoxes of human lives lies the one truth, that we belong to God. In the penultimate age the chosen of God find themselves living in a half-light, caught between two kingdoms and two identities. But “when the saints will be revealed as such, the contradiction will be ended between what they still are and what they are already, and they will enter into the eternal life, the light, to which as the people of God they are now moving with the whole cosmos” (IV/2, 598). Barth does not have a distinct doctrine of the last judgment. In his mind, the separation of the goats from the sheep has been so radically conditioned by Jesus Christ’s own damnation and predestination so as to relegate any future Great White Throne event to the realm of barely-thinkable speculation. He has, however, built the idea into his doctrine of the resurrection by speaking of the removal of the contradiction of human lives. God’s grace is also the judgment of purification. All along (but especially at the end of life) humans must encounter His terrifying, transfiguring power, to walk “into the fire of a radical and incalculable testing” (IV/3, 922), purged of sin so as to find “pardon in the strict and final sense” (IV/3, 931). God’s enlightening gift exposes every deed and misdeed. Certain excrescences and abscesses will be consumed, though one’s life will hardly be fragmented or piecemeal, Barth seems to think. For those Christians who had tripped and plodded through the

penultimate age, “their concluded existence, though it be only a torso or the fragment of a torso, will be seen as a ripe fruit of His atoning work, as the perfect manifestation of the will of God fulfilled in Him, being thus illuminated, having and maintaining its own light, and bearing witness to God in this renewed form in which it is conformed to the image of the Son of God” (IV/3, 928). Perhaps the leftovers of the recension count as the special reward given to the righteous, though Barth does not develop the idea. What truly matters is that our manifestation in Christ will be a judgment of grace – and therefore the evocation of our joyful thanks and praise.

Lastly, Barth drives home the point that the resurrection means *the vision of God*. When Barth writes in the letter to Rüegg that resurrection life “is this life, but the reverse side which God sees,” he is certainly alluding to a beatific vision in which the cosmos no longer obstructs “the direct vision of God” (III/1, 141). In his earliest venture into eschatology proper, Barth describes it in partial agreement with the larger mystical tradition,

The *visio Dei*, *visio immediata*, *intuitiva*, *facialis*, *visio essentiae divinae*, the unbroken awareness of God in the totality of His personality and aseity. That’s the thing which even now the angels do not see, and what the prophets have not yet seen. But the redeemed, enlightened by the *lumen gloriae*, shall see and comprehend it (UCR III, 485-6).⁴⁶

But the Barth of the *Church Dogmatics* prefers to emphasize a different aspect of the *visio Dei*, viz., the ability, in God’s presence, to see things from God’s perspective. And so the aforementioned letter says, “The new thing will be that the cover of tears, death, suffering, crying, and pain that now lies over our present life will be lifted, that the decree of God fulfilled in Jesus Christ will stand before our eyes.” We will see ourselves whole, entire, and simple. Far from being ashamed or disappointed, this kind of deific

⁴⁶ Cf. *ER*, 308; II/1, 630.

perspective will wipe away every tear. We will understand the beauty of the whole as our lives are wholly unveiled.

Again, the resurrection of the flesh is the manifestation of this life in Christ as a purifying judgment that allows direct vision of God and ourselves. Barth's eschatology stands on its strongest leg when he highlights manifestation, in large measure because he can appeal to strong biblical precedent. For instance, the glories of salvation will be brought to the elect "at the revelation of Christ" (1 Pet 1:5, 13); when Christ appears they also "will appear with Him in glory" (Col 3:4), the "revealing of the sons of God" will be their adoption, *tēn apolutrōsin tou sōmatos hēmōn* (Rom 8:18, 23); at His appearance "we shall be like him [*homoioi*], for we shall see Him as He is" (1 Jn 3:2). Barth's reading of the scriptures makes these verses the interpretive center of other eschatological concepts, so much so that full self-comprehension in Christ *is* what it means to be saved in the End. Christ's final appearance in glory triggers the lifting of the cover of darkness over our lives. In this way, Barth's *theologia crucis* bears fruit for the human too: the veil of dereliction is no more when the hidden glory of the children of God is raised to the surface. At the resurrection we will behold "one continuous demonstration of the being of Jesus Christ and our being in Him," an age when God proves His love by "a steady, all-embracing and all-pervasive light," and in which we exist in "a complete and unbroken perception of His being and our being in Him, and therefore in a full and perennial response to His love" (IV/2, 286).

At this juncture I think it imperative to meld the lines of this chapter into the larger concept of *presence*.⁴⁷ The Son's integrity (and, by grace, ours) has to do with

⁴⁷ For various reasons (not least because of his criticism of Christian experience and his own late-breaking change in terminology) Barth scholars have missed the harvest around this key to his work, though on the doctrine of revelation see Kurt Anders Richardson, "Christus Praesens: Barth's Radically Realist Christology and Its Necessity for Theological Method," in *Karl Barth and Evangelical Theology: Convergences and Divergences*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 136-48.

relational proximity, a proximity of identity. God and humanity are wholly proximal in Jesus Christ in His own personal history, allowing His two natures to be fully communicative. This transfer in the Son opens up a corresponding transfer of predicates between humans and God, who have been reconciled (that is, brought together) in Christ. The disclosure of this divine-human proximity is resurrection. The manifestation of the one Mediator leads to sub-manifestations as others have their own reality disclosed. Earlier I observed the importance of strains of thought in Barth's life, including Romantic Idealism (from Schleiermacher through Herrmann), which anchored thought in the irreducible primal knowledge of God in immediacy, and Pietism (especially the Württemberg strain), which grounded Christianity in the personal encounter with God.⁴⁸ More might be said about Kierkegaard, who helped Barth to articulate the moment of revelation as a co-existence with the risen Lord, becoming contemporary to Him by faith.⁴⁹ Likewise, in chapter three we discovered how Barth could speak of the resurrection as a pan-temporality in the divine presence. Through his entire career he crafts a sense of glorification dictated by the rubric of proximity.

Let us briefly consider how Barth restructures the conception of *parousia*. By it Barth means not just the final return of Christ, but "the effective presence of Jesus Christ" (IV/3, 292). In New Testament usage the term denotes the "coming" of Christ at the end of time, that is, His glorious return to earth. In Barth's hands, however, there is a *threefold* parousia: resurrection, revelation in the present age, and the final return.

⁴⁸ "Real revelation puts man in God's presence. . . . Pietism is quite right. We speak of real revelation only when we speak of the revelation which is real for us" (I/2, 237). For all the vulnerability of the mindset, Pietism recognized the closeness of God to humanity, the powerful and constant presence of God to the Christian. "Blumhardt always begins right away with God's presence, might, and purpose. He starts out from God; he does not begin by climbing upwards to Him by means of contemplation and deliberation. God is the end, and because we already know Him as the beginning, we may await his consummating acts" (Barth, "Afterword," 219).

⁴⁹ See Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia*, 222ff.

The triple expression of Christ's presence with humanity becomes a key structure to Barth's eschatology, coming through explicitly only at the end of *CD* IV/3 and the beginning of IV/4 (his part-volume on the ethics of reconciliation), although some foreshadowing can be detected in earlier works.⁵⁰ The manifestation of Christ is an event breaking through in three forms. These three have a certain order and bear certain distinctives, though they are really the one great act of revelation in something like perichoretic unity.⁵¹ Easter, Pentecost and the Day – commencement, continuation and consummation – the Risen Christ who was and is and is to come: however it is phrased, the effective presence of Christ is triple, and those three stem from the single transcendence of Christ. The contemporaneity of Jesus with all times makes the three quintessentially related. And in each of its three expressions, Christ's presence does more than bring salvation; it *is* salvation.

Lest all eschatological distinction become lost, Barth (a little anxiously?) tries to delineate the threeness of Christ's effective presence. The first Eastertide was "the primal and basic form of His glory" (IV/3, 281), being "definitive" for all future revelation of Him (IV/3, 305). Easter was also a direct kind of manifestation in that the

⁵⁰ Barth long considered the forty days of appearance and the return of Christ the same event (e.g., *WGW*, 90; III/2, 490; IV/1, 333). Even before starting volume IV Barth speaks of resurrection, the outpouring of the Spirit and the final appearance of Christ "to be understood as a unity, as a single fulfilment of this last predication of His future destiny" (III/2, 504). Note, however, how Barth is inconsistent along the way, at one point calling the parousia "the *immediate visible* presence and action of the living Jesus Christ Himself" (IV/1, 725, emphasis added), which would disqualify the Spirit's outpouring as a form. Sauter is probably right to call Barth's formulation of the three-fold parousia a "variation of a dominant theme 'discovered' *ad hoc*" (Gerhard Sauter, "Why Is Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* Not a 'Theology of Hope'? Some Observations on Barth's Understanding of Eschatology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 52:4 [1999], 421).

⁵¹ IV/3, 296. Barth implements various Latin phrases to capture the triple immediacy of Christ, such as *a parte posteriori* (that each form of Christ's presence has the force of the whole) or *in parte pro toto* (that each form of Christ's presence points towards the whole). The unity of the threefold form of the parousia overwrites Barth's earlier claim that the threefold form of the Word of God (written, preached, revealed) is the only analogy of the Trinity (I/1, 121). Sauter asks if Barth here has not mistaken a triad for the divine triune ("Why Is Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* Not a 'Theology of Hope'?" 421).

disciples could perceive Jesus face to face, interacting with Him in every concrete way. Yet Jesus was manifested “particularly and provisionally” (IV/2, 107) in this time, with limited scope and duration, His patent revelation being confined to the small band of disciples for forty days.

As for the second manifestation of the parousia, Christ continues to be available to the community in the age of Pentecost through a “middle” (*mittler*) form.⁵² Barth is impelled by the (oft-quoted) verse, “Verily, I will be with you unto the end of the age” (Mt 28:20), a promise he interprets in the plain sense, that the Spirit *is* the Son’s presence.⁵³ In this in-between time God patiently awaits others to respond to the covenant and reflect His grace, calling and edifying and sending others through the indwelling Holy Spirit of Christ. “This time is not, therefore, a vacuum between the other two,” says Barth (IV/3, 794), though he admits that the middle form of the parousia lacks perfect, universal scope. More disorienting is Barth’s claim that Christ’s proximity in the pneumatic age is characterized by paradox, immediacy in distance. In this penultimate state, Christians can get only “a look [*Blick*] at the risen and living Jesus Christ” (IV/4, 158), waiting for something utterly complete.

Therefore, while the presence of Christ has been and is being manifest, Barth tries to carve out room for one more form. The return of Christ – which Barth understands to be coincident and coterminous with the general resurrection – is the goal and end-point of the previous forms. Jesus “moves from the one Easter Day to the day of all days, to the last day, to the day of His final and conclusive return” (IV/3, 327).

⁵² IV/3, 350-1, 360, 481, 794. It is the “middle period and situation” (IV/3, 363). What, I wonder, would Barth make of the ten days between ascension and Pentecost if pressed?

⁵³ For Christians, “the Holy Spirit, i.e., Jesus Christ Himself in the power of His resurrection, sets them on their way in this world which is not yet redeemed and perfected, and accompanies them on this way with His promise of the eternal kingdom and their eternal life” (IV/3, 352-3). In the next chapter I address the serious consequences of this conflation of the Spirit into the risen Son.

Nothing needs to be added to Jesus' presence – it simply needs to be made ultimate. This third and final form of the parousia is “the last definitive and universal revelation of Jesus Christ” (IV/4, 89). The distance between Jesus and ourselves, between Him in fulfilled time and us in the imperfect, between Him in the new world and us in the old, will end. His consummate presence casts out any ambiguity about His identity or our own. Christ's immanence will be supreme, and knowledge of Him will have no impediment. He will speak to men and women immediately, “in such a way that even those who are awakened by Him to faith and love can hear His voice in perfect purity and to the exclusion of every conceivable contradiction and opposition and above all participation in human falsehood” (IV/3, 903). What is more, every knee will bow and every tongue confess on that day, expressing an unlimited scope of revelation to the whole created world: “What will finally be at issue in the coming of Jesus Christ to the last judgment of the quick and the dead, in the resurrection of the flesh and the manifestation of the life everlasting, will be not merely the consummation but the universality of the renewal which has come to [humanity] here and now” (IV/3, 675). The future, of course, is constantly breaking upon us, even now. But once the penultimate becomes *schlechthinige Zukunft*, “utter future” (IV/4, 40 = *KD*, 44), reconciliation will be one with redemption. The dead will be raised immortal, never to waver again.

In fine, humans have already acquired integrity through the reconciling work of Him who knit them to Him, and being thus conjoined to His deity, they await only His coming, at which they will be manifested with Him. On that Day they will they gain a final, direct, universal and undialectical awareness of Christ, and with it, comprehension of their own selfsame histories. For the human too the noetic proceeds from the ontic, and that noetic comes with the force of an ontic. Jesus Christ's presence becomes

effective presence. Our proximity to Him is made manifest. With His appearance our hidden glory rises to the surface.

As mentioned before, the strength of Barth's project here is the way it draws attention to the finality of Christ. Nothing can be added to the objective, saving reality that is His work and being. Whether during the forty days, the pentecostal age or the consummation, Jesus Christ's movement toward others can only be a manifestation of their already-acquired exaltation. More technically, this redemptive revelation makes the exalting-presence of the divine to the human nature truly effective through Christ's manifest-presence to others. In certain senses, Barth's "in Christ alone" makes him more Reformed than the Reformers, and his solution to the problem of the objective and subjective elements of salvation is an important voice for modern theologians, especially for those who are reengaging a soteriology based on the mystical union with Christ.

Having tried to show the key advantages of Barth's view of Christ's resurrection and our own as manifestation, I now want to hone in on two troubling consequences. A lesser critique involves the point that Barth does not (or cannot) attribute the same range of meaning to our manifestation that he does to Jesus'. My more fundamental criticism is that Barth risks spiritualizing the Christian hope with his noetic thrust because, at its root, he compromises human creatureliness by trading in the currency of divine presence.

First to the lesser critique. Barth does not spell out our manifestation with the same, full character of Jesus'. Our manifestation is a vindication, he says. But before whom? It is a publicizing, he says. But to whom? Human manifestation is a showing forth of our true identity to God, certainly, and also to ourselves; we are freed from the ambiguity of carnal existence and come to a state of true comprehension of God and

self so that, radiating the covenantal glory, we participate in the divine life and therefore no longer suffer from indignity and pain. But our coming manifestation lacks an important meaning of revelation, for at the center of Barth's description of Jesus Christ's own manifestation is the notion that He reveals Himself *to others*. He moves toward the saints, awakening and enlightening them. To be fully consistent, then, Barth would have to make more explicit provision for the way in which the general resurrection manifests our life to our fellow humans, the mutual display and fellowship of those who enter eternal life. Are we not raised together (Heb 11:40)? Do we not commune together in the promised land, in the New Jerusalem? Will we not be – and are we not now, provisionally speaking – raised to one another?⁵⁴ Manifestation is at its heart a communication between self and other selves. In Barth's defense, much of this could have been slated for *CD V*.

My more serious critique, however, has to do the inherent compromise of creatureliness when one bases glorification strictly in terms of divine presence. To spell out my critique, let me first make a classification. Barth's concern for the manifestation of integrated being, the disclosure of our union with God in Christ, leads me to conclude something that at first seems impossible in *CD*: that Barth teaches something like a doctrine of deification, a saving *theōsis* at the heart of reconciliation and redemption. Like Origen, Athanasius, the Cappadocian fathers, Cyril and the later Alexandrian tradition, Barth orients his soteriology to the exchange of predicates effected by human closeness to God. Humans are glorified as they partake of the *divine* nature:

What God is, He wills to be for man also. What belongs to Him He wills to communicate to man also. What He can do is meant to benefit man also. No one and nothing is to be so close to man as He. No one and nothing is to

⁵⁴ Douglas Knight, "Time and Persons in the Economy of God," in *The Providence of God: Deus Habet Consilium*, ed. Francesca Aran Murphy and Philip G. Ziegler (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 134-6.

separate him from Him. And in fellowship with Him every need of man is to be met; he is to be refreshed, exalted and glorified far beyond all need. This, indeed, is what is allotted to him in the promise fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (II/2, 238).

Only gradually have scholars begun to acknowledge deification as a real theme in Barth's works. In 1976 Eberhard Jüngel described Barth's doctrine of salvation as "the taking up of humanity into the event of the being of God," though he flinched at the word *theōsis*.⁵⁵ More recently, the kind of saving mystery inherent in the Word of God has led George Hunsinger to say that Barth's notion of divine encounter "comes within a hair of the traditional Eastern Orthodox understanding."⁵⁶ Most significantly, Adam Neder argues that Barth's participatory soteriology, for all its Reformational and Reformed distinctives, meets all the basic standards of a doctrine of deification.⁵⁷

We should tread carefully here out of respect for Barth's own analysis. After all, he issued strident disavowals of the term "deification."⁵⁸ He identified and fought against the apotheosis of nature endemic in Romantic and Idealistic Neo-Protestantism, Roman Catholic thought, and in the myriad theologies reliant upon natural theology.⁵⁹ Yet if he believes that humans are supposed to participate in the divine nature, if he maintains that humans acquire the perfections of God's manner of life through

⁵⁵ Eberhard Jüngel, *God's Being Is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth. A Paraphrase*, rev. ed, trans. John Webster (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 75.

⁵⁶ George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 175.

⁵⁷ Adam Neder, *Participation in Christ: An Entry into Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 91f.

⁵⁸ E.g. I/1, 238ff; II/1, 531; II/2, 577; III/4, 474; IV/2, 81-2, 106, 377. Barth's microscopically precise parsing regularly fails to impress, e.g., "As He adopts [the human essence], making it His own existence in His divine nature, He does not deify it, but He exalts it into the *consortium divinitatis*, into an inward and indestructible fellowship with His Godhead . . ." (IV/2, 100).

⁵⁹ *Pace* Duncan Reid (*Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997], 97), who understands Barth's ardor to be directed solely against western Romanticism. Barth's critique of apotheosis cannot be separated from his critique of romantic immanence, certainly, but it is also brought against the *analogia entis* and the various substantialist interpretations of the image of God of which both west and east have been guilty.

proximity to Him, can we understand Barth in any other way than to have something of a doctrine of deification? If we permit this much, then we also note three stern qualifications Barth would certainly pose. First, deification is entirely God's gift. In this unilateral relationship no room remains for synergism.⁶⁰ If there is a communion, it is a *communio gratiarum*, a definite giver and a definite recipient. God establishes a union with the creature only by His own initiative and grace, and only in a way that sustains a marked priority (or asymmetry) within the fellowship. Two, in deification the human reflects God's image, not by extending His substance but by relating to Him in faithful, covenantal relationship. Human beings live out their image-bearing privilege by participating in all that God shares with them, by trusting God. They do it as well by exercising reliance on one another, prototypically as man and woman.⁶¹ At no point can the human be confused or mixed with God, moving up a divine hierarchy into the Godhead.⁶² Instead, by faith, they are exalted in their response to the Word in the power of the Spirit. They are revealed as children of God in whom the reflection appears, participants in the eternal life of God: "In their existence they do not themselves become gods, but creaturely reflections of the divine glory and therefore of the divine being" (II/1, 673).⁶³ Barth struggles to explain how the human imaging of

⁶⁰ E.g., I/2, 768; II/1, 670; IV/2, 88ff. This is a serious divergence from Orthodoxy, stemming from Barth's eschatological presentation of the doctrine, which makes salvation a coming glory given in hope rather than a progressive path (Neder, *Participation in Christ*, 89).

⁶¹ E.g. III/1, 183ff. To summarize, "[I]here can be no question of an analogy of being, but of relationship. God is in relationship, and so too is the man created by Him. This is his divine likeness" (III/2, 324).

⁶² Barth protests an elevation of human nature to equality with God – but so do Eastern Orthodox theologians. Is this not the thrust of the Palamite distinction of essence and glory? Moreover, as Louth clarifies about Pseudo-Dionysius, "[O]ne 'ascends' into the hierarchy rather than up it" (Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, new ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 171).

⁶³ Barth rejects the standard Eastern Orthodox distinction of essence and energies (e.g. II/1, 331-2), replacing it with a "historically oriented" solution (McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern*, 237).

God's being never encroaches on either one's basic definition, but he is diligent in upholding the "correspondence" which never violates the "infinite qualitative distinction" (II/2, 577). Three, this reflection happens only because of the pre-established work of Christ.⁶⁴ The illumination of the person transpires only because of the finished work and active mediation of the incarnate One, who alone among humans is God. One's *theōsis* is not direct but indirect and secondary, a derivation from Him who possesses these things directly. Only through Jesus' humanity (which is the humanity directly united to God) does one enter into the divine benefits.⁶⁵ We are not so much deified as "Christified." In sum, Barth's three qualifications channel deification through a Reformational lens: humans participate in God *sola gratia, sola fidei, soli Christo*. Only under these terms does Barth tread the Alexandrian route toward deification.

All well and good – but do these provisos guarantee a distinctly *human* fulfillment? Here lies my criticism. It seems to me that Barth's filters, though helpful, do not vouchsafe the basic platform of human life that is corporeality, for deification seeks to fulfill human life not through the restoration of its natural identity but through the impartation of a supernatural quality. Supposedly the human person reaches his or her goal when suffused by God and translated into the divine mode. Supposedly the aim of human life is to obtain God's eternity (i.e., His "omnipresence") and His powers of comprehension (i.e., His "omniscience"). In both cases, *the creature as such is meant to exceed itself* through divine participation. By Barth's definition, the human is supposed

⁶⁴ See above for how reconciliation precedes redemption. Or, to state it otherwise, the Word became flesh, and this proposition "is a theological statement and only thereafter an anthropological one" (Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 200).

⁶⁵ E.g. IV/2, 100. Torrance echoes Barth's position well, saying, "The hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Jesus preserves the human and creaturely being he took from us, and it is in and through our sharing in that human and creaturely being, sanctified and blessed with him, that we share in the life of God while remaining what we are made to be, humans and not gods" (Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 136).

achieve its true identity by surpassing its native modus. And this surpassingness is the very problem. I contend that Barth is looking in the wrong place for the glorification of our human nature. God's metaphysical perfections are not intended to mark the creature. They are not to be shared; they are incommunicable properties. Were eternity or omniscience shared, either immediately or mediately, such qualities would wrench the human out of his or her definition as human.

Posing as the resurrection of the flesh, Barthian deification has the character of a sleight of hand: The human fulfils creatureliness – by becoming divinized! The quotidian becomes perfectly normal – by operating according to the divine qualities! The flesh is raised – by being raised into the spiritual mode! Like other Alexandrian-leaning Christologies, Barth maneuvers through a doctrine of Christ that would define humanity through divinity, i.e., humanity submerged in divinity. Unsurprisingly, at the primary Christological level Barth's doctrine of election defines humanity as “the humanity of God.” Jesus' humanity has its being and fulfillment only to the extent that it derives from and conforms to His being as the divine Subject. The Son of God “gives to the human essence of Jesus of Nazareth a part in His own divine essence as the eternal Son” (IV/2, 62). Therefore, all other humans enter into their full humanity by being engrafted into Christ, in whom is deity. Like most versions of deification, Barth's description of the human entry into a divine mode (however much mediated) fulfills the creaturely definition precisely by taking the creature *beyond* that definition. In gaining eternity the human loses time – but obtains it in a supreme sense. In gaining contemporaneity the human loses fleshly space and process – but obtains it on a higher level. Through a kind of Christ-alchemy, Barth plunges humans into the humanity of God, in order that human existence might cohere to its divine basis and be carried about in the fellowship of deity, glowing like gold.

Barth's reliance upon the idea of exaltation in God's presence comes through in his overly noetic language about the resurrection. As we have seen already, "manifestation" looks back to the already-established reality of participation rather than pressing forward to the as yet unfulfilled glorification. God's presence to us simply needs to become "present." But in this paradigm the resurrection, an event concerning knowledge and consciousness, conveys a spiritualization of the Christian hope. In a roundabout way Barth equates resurrection with the beatific contemplation of God and ourselves, concentrating too much on *visio Dei* (vision of God) and *fruitio Dei* (desire for God)⁶⁶ – but not nearly enough *vita corporis* and *fruitio terrae*. Nothing new comes to the human in this resurrection. The human simply sees God and others. In chapter one we noticed how Augustine and others noeticized the afterlife by making vision (vision of God, vision of self, vision of the world) the primary objective. The body may tag along in this task, but it is an auxiliary component of the all-seeing self. In like manner, Barth's celestial future is a matter of *viewing* at the expense of *being* and *doing*.

It comes as no surprise that various commentators have described Barth's anthropological shortcomings in Christological terms. An ally as close as T.F. Torrance has a hard time shaking off "a suspicion of docetism" in response to *CD IV*,⁶⁷ and Oliver O'Donovan, for all his praise of Barth's epistemology, distances himself from an ontology which begets "disturbing results in a series of frankly Apollinarian Christological conceptions."⁶⁸ Most precise in his evaluation, I think, is Douglas Farrow, who finds Barth's actualizing of the two natures of Jesus Christ to have "a

⁶⁶ *UCR* III, 485-6; II/1, 653ff.

⁶⁷ Thomas F. Torrance, "My Interaction with Karl Barth," in *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 62.

⁶⁸ Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 87.

worrying Eutychian tendency.”⁶⁹ That is, rather than being preserved or expunged, the human nature tends to be absorbed into the divine nature. A sad irony lingers in this, for Barth opens up communication between Christ’s deity and humanity for the very reason of *avoiding* docetic tendencies in the first place, in order to avoid episodic interpretations of the incarnation or the worship of a *Deus absconditus* behind the *Deus revelatus*.⁷⁰ God’s own being (His eternal being) is defined by His free act to become human. He was and is and ever will be the incarnate God, Barth demands. But by equating the deity of Jesus Christ fully with His finished human history (what Farrow calls “the Chalcedonian clamp”⁷¹), a distinction of natures becomes impossible. The human essence, construed as a history of the encounter with the divine rather than properties and powers, exists as a sub-relation within the Son’s Godness rather than a concrete otherness.⁷² More specifically, now *the slippage of Christ’s humanity into deity happens eternally*, at every point, not just at Christ’s conception or baptism or resurrection or ascension, as older Eutychianizing accounts might have it. All that prevents the man Jesus from existing wholly in the “mode of God” is His willingness to be temporarily given to the suffering flesh in the incarnation. Once that “veil” is lifted at the resurrection, Jesus’ domineering divinity takes over functionally. Barth claims that this elevation does not expunge the human, for by the strength of the incarnation the flesh is dissolved and established. But where do we find the establishment in this dissolution? In an ethereal fashion, Jesus’ fleshy humanity colors His deity at all times, as we might expect from any solute liquidated into a solvent.

⁶⁹ Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia*, 295.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁷² Edwin Chr. van Driel, *Incarnation Anyway: Arguments for Supralapsarian Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 104-5.

The Eutychian trend in its anthropological application is my concern. The re-predication involved in the general resurrection calls into question whether the subject continues to exist in a creaturely mode once one's "true identity" has been "manifested." Time and space no longer exist as the medium for the unfolding of earthly phenomena. How much of it has been pared away in the lifting of the cosmic "veil"? In any case, the flesh is only the basis of the self in a nominal, honorary sense, as something from the past held onto as a celestial keepsake, not as the ongoing mode of creaturely flourishing. As with Christ's resurrection, Barth's general resurrection demotes the flesh to the level of a colorant, a lingering but faded quality. Or is it rather that the flesh is a pliable, neutral plastic, ready to be suffused and overtaken?

The logicalising and rationalising, and therefore the formation and ordering, which come on the flesh when the Logos becomes flesh and the Spirit rests upon this man, is and creates something quite new in and out of the flesh. The new subject which flesh now becomes suspends its old predicates and demands and supplies new predicates. And this is just the formation and ordering, of the soul and the body of the man Jesus accomplished by and of itself, the passing of the old and the coming into being of a new form in the flesh (III/2, 336).

The new, divine predicates overrule and dominate the creaturely boundaries. The flesh, once the creaturely mode, is now, as they say, along for the ride.

I do not accuse Barth of stripping away the flesh entirely through the human proximity to the divine. That would be hurling at Barth far too severe an accusation. It is not too much to say, however, that his eschatological revelation of human existence disperses the body as far and wide as God. The dead are raised, but not as flesh so much as something flesh-*like*. With the human broadcast something is lost in translation.

CHAPTER 5

The Resurrection of the Flesh as Incorporation

“He is risen!” – and we are risen in Him. The scriptures have a passive (“He was raised”) and an active (“He arose”) expression of Easter, and they also sing the fullness of that mystery in harmony: the great pronouncement that Jesus Christ is the Living One, that He is life itself. In this third, loftiest sense, Barth teaches that salvation is no more and no less than participation in God through the mediation of Jesus Christ. As Adam Neder has proposed, the theme of communion “belongs to the fundamental core of Barth’s theology.”¹ Since humans have no life in themselves and because they are creatures, they need to enter the flow of the divine wellspring in order to have genuine life. Without involvement in God’s life they are doomed to perish, for ontological isolation is perdition and a plunge into nothingness, while participation in God is true life. And such participation in its full, transparent sense is what Barth means by the coming resurrection. It has grown clear in this study that Barth has little interest in a discrete doctrine of the general resurrection. Rather, his purpose is to

¹ Neder, *Participation in Christ*, xii. Cf. Daniel L. Migliore, “*Participatio Christi*: The Central Theme of Barth’s Doctrine of Sanctification,” *Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie* 18:3 (2002): 287-307.

demonstrate how Jesus Christ's incorporative being *is* resurrection, and how all those who are connected to Him are beneficiaries of His life, i.e., they are resurrected. In short, Barth measures resurrection in terms of the sharing of predicates through relational transfer rather than transformation of substance through remediation.

We remind ourselves of where we have been. In chapter three we observed how the resurrection, conceived as duration, "raises" time into eternity, preserving delimited human time through divine contemporaneousness. Yet, problematically, such an omnitemporal span appeared to depreciate time as such, since the continuum of spatial-earthly history is terminated and transcended in the eschaton. In chapter four we heard from Barth how the coming manifestation of the resurrection "raises" to the surface the secret of sanctified human history, bringing the hiddenness of the grace-given, divine predicates to awareness. However, to say that the human arrives at total perception of one's deific onto-relations, that he or she joins in the divine omniscience, is to diffuse human identity. With resurrection-as-manifestation it was hard for us to conceive of the way in which the resurrection affirms corporeality except as a footnote, as an accident, as some lingering texture. While not unappreciative of the advances of Barth's dogmatic efforts, this critical study has demanded of him something more concrete in the eschaton, a body in the resurrection no less dense than flesh itself.

In a third and final approach we focus on how Barth ranges the resurrection with incorporation, the way in which men and women are included in Jesus' body, are vivified in Him, and therefore correspond to His glorified life by being taken into that life. In this chapter I begin with the communion of the Holy Spirit. As God who has and is perfect communion, He orchestrates fellowship with Himself and with others. Barth speaks of Jesus Christ's own resurrection as an incorporative movement, implementing spiritual communion in His outgoing event of revelation. To wring more

from Barth's doctrine of the end, I exploit some parallels between the doctrine of election and the resurrection of Christ, noting how each pneumatic opening of God's grace in time collapses in a great recapitulation. From there I touch on how for Barth anastasia onto-relations answer the problem of human isolation. The resurrection answers the problem of human autonomy by glorifying men and women through participation in Christ, by incorporation into His own body. This chapter gets to the heart of the matter, since eternalization and manifestation are expressions of a more central mystery: the human's mystical positioning within God. Incorporation is the conceptual umbrella for eternalization and manifestation – or perhaps it is better to say that incorporation is the load bearing column of Barth's soteriology.

With the heart of the matter lies the heart of my critique. Barth's "relational" paradigm endangers particularity itself, threatening absorption on multiple fronts: of the resurrection into the Spirit, of the Spirit into the Son, and ultimately of every human into Christ. So central is this concept of participatory incorporation for Barth that the very idea of the resurrection blends into the Holy Spirit, who is the power of this participation. But the logic of inclusion into Christ in God threatens the Holy Spirit Himself, who figures as little more than the emanated Christ in His connective presence. Moreover, as his lingering universalism suggests, I will claim that Barth's push for incorporation leads him in the direction of panentheism. This is the case, at least, eschatologically: all things are moving in the Son, and with no more time or space or flesh as such, only the Christ-monad will remain. The idea of the resurrection as a final unity with God, rather than picturing a plurality of bodies, calls into question whether there will be any significant distinction between God and humanity in the end. To be resurrected is to be spiritually incorporated into Christ's eternal corpus. Without time,

creaturely process or hard corporeal distinction in the final state, human identity teeters on the brink of absorption into God.

The Communion of the Spirit

God reveals Himself a third time, this time as the Redeemer who dwells in us, as the God who sets us free, who makes us into children of God just as antecedently in Himself He is also “the Spirit of the love of God the Father and the Son” (I/1, 448). In this way of being God comes to establish communion between an earthly people with their Lord. The Father is free to give eternal life to His created people. The Son is free to give His integrity to His reconciled bride. But each of these things happen because the Holy Spirit is able to work communion between the separated parties. Fellowship is the Spirit’s business: “Barth’s theology of the Holy Spirit is a theology of *koinonia*, and *koinonia* is the essence of the Spirit’s work.”²

It is not my intention to elaborate on Barth’s pneumatology, in part because it has been treated at length elsewhere,³ in part because Barth himself makes little effort to isolate such a doctrine. But I suggest something that clarifies his pneumatology even as it muddies it: the interchangeability of the terms *Holy Spirit* and *resurrection*. They share the exact revelatory function and languish in a common nebulosity in Barth’s dogmatics. In what follows I name four parallel functions in Barth’s dogmatics, then go on to show how the ministrations of the Holy Spirit tend to eclipse the resurrection, and

² Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 185.

³ Ibid., 148-85; Philip J. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981); Daniel L. Migliore, “*Vinculum Pacis*: Karl Barths Theologie des Heiligen Geistes,” *Evangelische Theologie* 60:2 (2000): 131-51; John Thompson, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1991).

how Jesus' resurrection-presence in turn overtakes the Holy Spirit. In each case, particularity is at stake.

First for the equivalence of the resurrection and the Spirit. In chapter two I pointed out the extent to which resurrection and revelation were interchangeable terms. Moving to Barth's mature work, the same can be said of the resurrection of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit. Roughly following the part-volumes of *CD IV*, I detect four common functions: replication, nourishment, expansion, and communicative presence.

In *IV/1* we find that each orchestrates a *replication*. In this part-volume Barth picks up the theme that Jesus Christ is the Son of God because He is the repetition of God.⁴ The pneumatic/eschatological repetition, however, is one in which Jesus Christ surpasses Himself in order to reach others in a subjective appropriation of salvation. That the world might come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ in His finished work, He is given (or from another perspective, takes up) a glorious ministry after the cross of Calvary. A transcendent echo of Jesus' finished life commences at Easter, described either as a product of the resurrection or the product of the Holy Spirit. The raising of Jesus "repeats" His life – a "repetition" in the Holy Spirit. More than a mere vocalization, the resurrection is the going-forth of Christ Himself, the glorious transcendence of His death. He repeats Himself and so sends the Spirit. He repeats Himself, and so goes forth in resurrection power. His replicated being beyond death "is the form of His action in which this action continues, in which it is made present to the man to whom He gives Himself," wherein the person is made a participant and contemporary of Jesus Christ (*IV/1*, 468). Jesus' awakening leads to a consequent

⁴ E.g. *IV/1*, 205, 209; *IV/2*, 341. I am, of course, drawing a line back to Barth's earlier trinitarian language (see §9 in *I/1*).

bestowal of faith, gathering the community, for His *Jenseits* opens up an aperture through which others may find spiritual communion. And Christ's own excess results in an analogous echo on the part of His followers: the apostles can "reproduce" the gospel message (IV/1, 726) by preaching "in the power of His resurrection," which is "the force and authority of the verdict of the Holy Spirit" (IV/1, 320). Barth talks about the replication-movement either pneumatically or eschatologically. In each case Christians are caught up in the reverberations of Jesus' own overflowing history.

In IV/2, the resurrection and the Holy Spirit alike fulfill the ministry of *nourishment*. The Son upbuilds the community in His own exaltation, reorienting people in the royal way of love. Christians are swept up in their determination toward eternal life. Barth's shift between resurrection and Spirit is shockingly seamless in this part-volume, most dramatically in the middle of §64.4 "The Direction of the Son." There Barth is busy spelling out the many benefits of Christ's communicated power in *the resurrection* when, very abruptly, he changes subjects and announces, "The power whose operation is presupposed in the New Testament is the outgoing and receiving and presence and action of *the Holy Spirit*" (IV/2, 319, emphasis added) – and goes on to speak entirely in pneumatological discourse. The name changes but the functions remain the same. By the Spirit of God we are sanctified, edified, set on a course of holiness because He is the ligament by which we are bonded to Christ. The Spirit identifies us, warns us and instructs us in the path of peace. Yet all of this could just as well be said to have been accomplished by Jesus' resurrection: Christians may move forward (and theologians may move to other doctrines) "by the direction which is given us by the existence of Jesus Christ, in and with His resurrection, in and with the witness and work of the Holy Spirit" (IV/2, 381). The two equivalent forces accomplish the same process of nourishment by attaching the branches to the vine.

Each also empowers for *mission* in IV/3. The “promise” of the resurrection is God’s gift of vocation to the reconciled ones, the sending of the community in the Spirit.⁵ The glory of Jesus Christ cannot be restricted to any circle, but becomes great and greater and exceedingly great. Jesus Christ has His own special, dignified position, yet He launches out from that place “to embrace ours too, to comprehend us men” (IV/3, 281). Touched by the resurrection power of the Victor, Christians live the present time in confidence and look forward to the future in hope. Moreover, they are plugged into the energy of Christ’s outgoing motion. Easter takes on a missional significance when Barth says, “The particular event of [Christ’s] resurrection is thus the primal and basic form of His glory, of the outgoing and shining of His light . . . and therefore of His outgoing and penetration and entry into the world around and ourselves, of His prophetic work” (IV/3, 281). But this prophetic work, the force therein, can also be attributed to the Holy Spirit, who facilitates the shining of Christ, reaching people with the Light of Life. Again, the life given by the Spirit and the life from the resurrection are different “forms” of the same energy. “As the Resurrected from the dead Jesus Christ is virtually engaged already in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,” says Barth, bracing his terminological merger; “and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit He is engaged in the resurrection of all the dead and the execution of the last judgment” (IV/3, 296). Irrespective of its eschatological or pneumatological phrasing, the movement of Christ to others concerns the mission of Jesus in the incorporative magnification of His glory. This is the world’s future.

⁵ Though I appreciate Barth’s use of Lukan language (Lk 24:49; Ac 2:33-39), I would suggest to him that he re-title §69.4 as “The Promise of the Resurrection” so as to repair the break in format. And why not, since there in content he keeps within the language of the resurrection, leaving the bulk of the pneumatic discourse to §72?

Replication, nourishment and expansion can be said to culminate in a fourth and comprehensive parallel between the resurrection of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit, *communicative presence*. We have already noted Barth's classification of Christ's manifestation in a three-fold parousia (Christ's resurrection/pneumatic presence/consummation). In IV/4 Barth uses this syntax to openly identify the resurrection and the Holy Spirit: "These are the two factors, or, as one may and should finally say, the two forms of the one factor, in whose power and on a divine basis men become faithful to God instead of unfaithful to Him, and the foundation of the Christian life takes place" (IV/4, 30). As Jesus Christ is present to them in the power of the parousia, women and men respond and become available to Him as His genuine partners. Jesus' resurrection powers the Church – which is the Spirit's power. In Jesus' resurrection the community dies and is raised – by the baptism of the Spirit. By the resurrection humans are included into the divine *koinonia* – which is the community of the Spirit. The resurrection liberates human ethics – as does the Spirit. The Holy Spirit has more than just "an eschatological form."⁶ He is the living eschaton of Jesus with others, and that living eschaton is the Spirit.

But what consequences follow if the two are one? For all of the ways it is filled out by the pneumatic equation, the resurrection as its own event is diminished. For one, the role of the Holy Spirit as witness (Jn 14-16, Ac 1-2, etc.) seems to me much more straightforward than the divine *horisthentos* (Rom 1:4) of Jesus through the resurrection. Likewise, resurrection carries the sense of incorporative connectedness in Barth's schema, but, in scripture as well as tradition, connectivity can be situated far more easily within the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. As a rebuttal, Barth would no doubt point out that Jesus' resurrection was worked by the Spirit, and that there are good reasons to file

⁶ Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 173-9.

the general resurrection under the third article (Apostles Creed and Nicene Creed). This I do not contest. But making the resurrection the work of the Holy Spirit is not the same as the wider claim, that the resurrection fulfills all the same functions as the Spirit so as to make them virtually indistinguishable.

Indeed, Barth's eschatology as a discrete locus risks being eclipsed altogether. Barth retains resurrection as a kind of *Donnerwort* that moves theological conversations into awareness of the eschatological tension inherent in revelation. By the end of *CD*, however, one wonders if resurrection, especially the general resurrection, deserves any systematic attention. If the future of humanity has to do with achieving divine duration, why not appeal directly to the essence of things – to life in the Spirit? If being present to God by the Spirit of God is what it means to be manifested in Christ, then why make a cumbersome appeal to the body of Easter and the bodies of the eschaton? If the pneumatic, subjective event is the real thing, why underscore the objective event of Jesus' resurrection, whose quasi-historical claims make it sound so much like a mythical fixture?⁷ And if the point is the *corpus in Christo*, lifted up in the Spirit, why bother homing in on the *corpus ex terrae* element at all?

⁷ If indeed the resurrection becomes a subset of pneumatological presence, then it is little wonder that Barth struggled over so much of his career to affirm the empty tomb and the bodily vivification of Jesus. These "facts" are not earthly data at all; they belong to the life of the Spirit. They are moments projected and concentrated through the lens of the Spirit, henceforth to be discerned spiritually. That so many evangelical theologians in America were at loggerheads with Barth over the historical aspects had to do with Barth's subsuming of the resurrection into terms of the pneumatic moment of revelation: in a Spirit-ualized rubric the concrete elements of the Easter narrative dissipate into something subjective and ethereal. (For representative examples of the resistance to Barth's account of the resurrection, see Barth, *Karl Barth Letters, 1961-1968*, 7-8, 42-3; Cornelius Van Til, *Christianity and Barthianism* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962], 90-113; Stanley R. Obitts, "Historical Explanation and Barth on Christ's Resurrection," in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 365-77). And is not Barth's struggle against Bultmann to maintain objectivity and a semblance of bodiliness in Christ's resurrection a product of the fact that both of them understand eschatology within the bureau of pneumatology? Most commentators acknowledge this when they categorize the Barth and Bultmann dispute within the parameters of the "existential" category of faith (e.g. H.A. Nielsen, "History and Happening: Notes on a Barth-Bultmann Dispute," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 16:1/2 [1970]: 68f.).

It may be that Barth effectively eclipsed the resurrection by his doctrine of the Spirit. Despite the ubiquity of the concept of resurrection throughout his writings, until R. Dale Dawson's treatment in *The Resurrection in Karl Barth* no one claimed that resurrection was the linchpin of Barth's work. A number of people, however, have filed resurrection under pneumatology and made the latter the key to his system. Consider how Philip Rosato glosses over eschatology to describe the Holy Spirit as Barth's *Vermittlungsprinzip*, his mediating principle.⁸ Similarly, Daniel Migliore passes over the resurrection of Jesus to concentrate on the Holy Spirit as Barth's "pneumatological counterpart [*pneumatologische Gegenbegriff*]" to his regulative Chalcedonian Christology, a complement which grows in importance as *CD* develops.⁹ Thomas Freyer can place the entire organization of Barth's mature work under the Spirit.¹⁰ Indeed, so prominent is the *Spirit*-movement of God into the world in Barth's work that some have charged him, however mistakenly, with the error of modalism.¹¹

If the resurrection-movement of Jesus is fundamentally equivalent to the movement of the Holy Spirit, then it is entirely appropriate to conclude that Barth does not have a freestanding doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh. What he has instead is a doctrine of participation in Christ through the Holy Spirit, under which the Church affirms its creed: "I believe in the Holy Spirit . . . the resurrection of the flesh, and the life everlasting." The third article of the creed collects the different expressions of the

⁸ Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 18. The resurrection and return of Christ play secondary roles to the middle term, "the legitimate theological center of his ecclesiology" (p.120). It should be noted, however, that Rosato concludes that Barth's pneumatic pole does not hold up (outside of the doctrine of creation at least), making Barth guilty of interpreting everything "pan-christologically" (p.183).

⁹ See Migliore, "*Vinculum Pacis*," 150ff.

¹⁰ Thomas Freyer, *Pneumatologie als Strukturprinzip der Dogmatik: Überlegungen in Anschluß an die Lehre von der "Geisttaufe" bei Karl Barth* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1982).

¹¹ For a summary of these charges and a defense, see Dennis W. Jowers, "The Reproach of Modalism: A Difficulty for Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Trinity," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56:2 (2003): 231-46.

one core truth, that humans may join with Christ through His Spirit and so become the Church, and through their holy communion know the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the flesh and the life everlasting. But these subsidiary expressions do nothing more than bring out the accidental characteristics of participation in Christ through the Spirit. When Barth says *resurrectio carnis*, he means to say that the fundamental union we have with Christ has something of a resurrective quality. That is to say, *human life retains a certain fleshiness* in the relation-miracle that is pneumatic communion with God and humanity.

Yet the disappearance of resurrection into the Spirit movement is not all. A double penumbra is in effect. If the resurrection vanishes into the Spirit, it can also be said that the Spirit sometimes vanishes into the enormity of the risen Christ. He in His prophetic ministry is the real arbiter of revelation to the subjective sphere, overflowing all boundaries in the power of His resurrected being, so much so that the Third Person Himself feels redundant.

In increasing measure, the Holy Spirit appears in Barth's dogmatics as an appendage to the Son. The Spirit is the Spirit *of Christ*. Christ sends Him; Christ directs Him; Christ operates through Him; Christ redounds in Him. "He is the Holy Spirit in this supreme sense," says Barth, "because He is no other than the presence and action of Jesus Christ Himself: His stretched out arm; He Himself in the power of His resurrection, i.e., in the power of His revelation as it begins in and with the power of His resurrection and continues its work from this point" (IV/2, 322-3). The Holy Spirit is described as "the Spirit of the Word itself" (I/2, 239), "the self-expression of the man Jesus" (IV/2, 331), and "the living Lord Jesus Christ Himself in the work of the sanctification of His particular people" (IV/2, 552). For all His purported agency, the

Holy Spirit begins to sound more like a function of the resurrected Christ than co-equal with Him.

Barth could and did tap into the biblical basis for a Christological pneumatology. The Spirit is the baptism administered by Christ (Mk 1:8), is sent and spirated by Christ (Jn 16:26, 20:22), seeks to glorify Christ (Jn 16:14), is called the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9; 1 Pet 1:11), and, in a passage often quoted by Barth, may even be named equivocally with Christ (2 Cor 3:17-18). It is with good reason that he latched onto passages where Christ and the Holy Spirit are mentioned together: Barth feared theological programs that would invoke the Spirit as human property, as the power of world-process or personal development. Had not pneumatology been the door to theological abstraction, to natural theology, and therein to the host of errors, both ancient and modern? For Barth, then, the traditional belief that the ascended Christ sends the promised Spirit was not enough. An invulnerable identity of the Spirit as the Spirit *of Christ* had to be forged so as to slam the door on unchristian metaphysics and mysticism.

In my mind, Barth links Easter (an event obviously pertaining to Jesus) to Pentecost (an event obviously pertaining to the Spirit) to remedy the situation. Every outpouring of the Spirit upon humans must have its source in a movement directly associated with the risen Son. The advantage of such a theological marriage is that the Spirit never leads away from Christ or presents God without Him. It also – let us not forget Barth’s roots! – solves the epistemological quandaries of religious knowledge by supplying an immediacy to Christ. Christ Himself comes to us in the moment of revelation. He Himself calls and encounters and communes with us. The promise of Jesus that he would be with the Church always (Mt 28:20) has a supreme fulfillment, for

the continuity between Jesus' life, appearances in the forty days, and His ongoing pneumatic presence all figure as part of His "extensive" story.¹²

The price for such Jesus-immediacy is high, however. Now any talk of the Spirit tends to slip into talk about the living ministry of Jesus Christ in the power of His resurrection. At best the Spirit and the Risen Christ work indistinguishably and in full communion. At worst the Spirit begins to look like a commodity or even subset of the Son, virtually indistinguishable from Him in the Easter light. Robert Jenson raises this criticism when he says that Barth, instead of trusting that the Spirit can remain Himself as He breaks into others' spheres, employs "tortuous dialectic . . . in order to locate the proclamation's objectivity in the Resurrection of the Son."¹³ While I do not care to comment on Barth's Augustinianism, the validity of the *filioque* or the limitations of the Protestant tradition, I want to underscore Jenson's point that the resurrection (as Barth construes it) lubricates the slippage of the Spirit into the Son. In the reduplicative economy of the resurrection the Spirit gets cast as God's revealedness; in the transcendent space-time of the Son the Spirit becomes Christ's risenness; in the *ephapax* of Christ's opus the Spirit's music is always a rehearsal; in the eschatological twilight the Spirit looks very much like a limb of the moving Son. And once the arm works resurrection and brings in the children of God, what then is its use? When the End comes, is He to be retracted, becoming an inner relation of Christ?

¹² Cf. Freyer, *Pneumatologie als Strukturprinzip der Dogmatik*, 298.

¹³ Robert W. Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," *Pro Ecclesia* 2:3 (1993): 298.

The Incorporation of the Risen Christ

What is clear in Barth's work is the sense of the *movement* of the Risen One to bring others with, alongside, and into Him. Already we have seen how the resurrection (or the outpouring of the Holy Spirit) is the event in which Jesus communicates His objective, *de jure* work to the subjective, *de facto* realm of other individuals. He is the Word, and through the resurrection He speaks Himself to us. Certainly this is true for justification and sanctification, being dynamically enacted in us as He makes Himself present in our sphere. And there is a third, comprehensive sense in which Jesus communicates His gifts to us: by making us part of His own, dynamic identity. He welcomes us into Himself as He Himself conducts the mission of redemption. In this missional event Christ goes out as the Light of Life, illuminating others so that they might be light-bearers with and in Him. This inclusive event is His resurrection, the incorporation of other humans into His own being.

Here I do not want to duplicate Dawson's able exposition of Barth's answer to the "evangelical problem."¹⁴ Rather, I wish to map out the way Barth speaks of the resurrection in terms of an incorporative project, i.e., an expansion and contraction of Christ's body. To draw out the nature of this dynamic, I will look at election as a model of this kind of expanding and contracting circle. Because Jesus Christ stands as the encapsulating archetype and teleotype of all of God's ways, and because all things are ultimately incorporated into the representative Christ-monad from which they came, we are forced to enquire about what manner of recapitulation is at work in Barth, and what we are to make of the resultant panenchrism when all things are drawn into Christ at

¹⁴ Dawson, *The Resurrection in Karl Barth*, 83ff.

the completion of His resurrection-mission. This discussion prepares us for the bottom-line question, Is there room for individual identities in the absolute eschaton?

Let us start by remembering that Barth speaks of “resurrection” in many ways, and often fails to clarify the exact sense with which he employs it.¹⁵ In general he uses it in three ways: 1) the *awakening* of Jesus Christ, which is an eternal decision apart from any manifestation, 2) the *appearances* of Jesus Christ in the forty days which establish the Church, and 3) the *pneumatic widening* of Jesus Christ from Pentecost forward in which He wins many by His prophetic power. This concentric pattern (typical in Barth’s work) addresses the divine, the communal and the individual levels. As the resurrection movement, these circles describe an *expansion* of Christ’s outgoing glory. Yet one more expression of the resurrection is at work, a final *contraction*, 4) the *consummation* of Jesus Christ in His definitive enclosure of all space and time at His return. The circle expands, then closes.¹⁶

This concept deserves some unpacking. As for the epicenter of the circle, the resurrection narrative begins not on Friday evening or Holy Saturday or Sunday morning for Barth, but in non-temporal eternity. Christ’s resurrection happens in this suprahistorical realm, for “the event of Easter has to be understood primarily as the raising which happens to Jesus Christ,” an occurrence “first and foremost in God Himself” (IV/1, 303).¹⁷ In this sovereign, irrevocable act within the Godhead, the

¹⁵ I concur with Bertold Klappert and R. Dale Dawson that Barth, some inconsistency notwithstanding, made a theoretical distinction between the *Auferweckung* and the *Auferstehung*, the resurrection-awakening of the passive Jesus Christ and the resurrection-revelation of the active Jesus Christ, respectively. But even *Auferstehung* has its variegation.

¹⁶ This is not to be confused with the three-fold parousia described in IV/3 and IV/4. Barth does not include the *Auferweckung* as a form of Christ’s manifestation.

¹⁷ Barth’s important *extra nos* is on one side a guard against subjectivizing readings of the resurrection (including Herrmann’s and Bultmann’s) in which Jesus Christ’s history is dissolved in our own; on the other side is a protection against historicization (whether Schleiermacher’s or Cornelius Van

Father acted (note the naïve past tense) upon the Son, and the Son gladly submitted to this action. This divine moment in eternity involved a real choice. Would God decide to reveal the Reconciler to the world? The finished action of the Messiah could have been “shut up in Him” (IV/3, 282), but God, freely and joyfully, apart from any human agency, executed His verdict. He appointed His Son to go out to the world to have others share in His glory. In the beginning Jesus Christ awoke. As the Head and Representative of all humankind He stretches out and embraces all people in His lordly power: “In the event of His resurrection from the dead, His being and action as very God and very man emerged from the concealment of His particular existence as an inclusive being and action enfolding the world, the humanity distinct from Himself and us all” (IV/3, 283). Jesus Christ’s being is an inclusive being; His action is an including action. While Barth retains the aseity of God in the resurrection, the decision *extra nos* is still the radical designation of Jesus Christ as the some-body who embodies others in His own eternal, original “body.”

In the second ring Jesus Christ goes forth to establish the proto-community. Now awakened, commissioned with the sharing of His glory, Christ brings to Himself a body of believers. He “elects the tomb in the garden as the scene of His being the living God” (II/2, 165), and so appears to His disciples over the course of forty days, assembling the first community between Easter morning and the ascension. He illuminates them and delivers from their ignorance by showing Himself to be alive, to be the Lord of Life. Barth is not concerned to grant these forty days too much of a historical character or to ground apostolic authority in these appearances.¹⁸ Rather, he

Til’s) of those who would make Jesus’ resurrection into a simple resuscitation and thus a mere instance of world-process.

¹⁸ He grants to this stage a *terminus a quo* and a *terminus ad quem*, even a historical margin, though Barth interprets the resurrection accounts “typically,” in the genre of “saga” (III/2, 452).

understands them as the prototypical time of revelation to the community, the founding of the Church, the forming of a nucleus among those who knew Him in the flesh before that fateful Sunday. There were some who doubted, of course (Mt 28:17), and Jesus did not appear to all (Ac 10:40-42), but this does not concern Barth, who understands this second moment of the resurrection as an effective launching of the Christian community, as an actual movement of incorporation, as something seminally and officially made visible and audible and therefore made known to all.¹⁹

Expanding to the third ring, Jesus Christ incorporates individuals within His spacious body, a move enacted with Pentecost and the age of the Spirit. “It is not enough that the history of Jesus Christ should be objectively revealed to all men,” says Barth. “What God wills in this history and with its manifestation is that all men should be saved, that they should be brought subjectively to the truth” (IV/4, 29). These added individuals are already objectively appointed for the community, and by virtue of belonging to Christ from the beginning they are already, secretly this. Nevertheless, fulfilling His prophetic office in the regenerative power of the resurrection, Jesus Christ brings His people historically into the community by bringing them alongside Himself, taking them up in His pneumatic “forward.”²⁰ His members are spiritually animated, illuminated and made witnesses of the risen Christ. They undergo a process “in proximity and analogy to what befell Jesus Christ in His resurrection” (IV/3, 511). I emphasize that in describing the animation of humans Barth has not stepped outside the

¹⁹ Even this ring of revelation has a certain representative nature (e.g. II/2, 256; IV/3, 371).

²⁰ “The Holy Spirit is the *forward* which majestically awakens, enlightens, leads, pushes, and impels, which God has spoken in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, which he has spoken and still speaks to the world of humanity: *forward* to the new coming of Jesus and the kingdom. . . . [The Spirit] is God himself in the same act in which in the Easter event he confessed his completed work in the history of Jesus Christ with the promise that he will confess it again universally and definitively” (Karl Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV,4 Lecture Fragments*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981], 256)

circle of Christology. Jesus Christ simply moves into the “remaining sphere” of individuals (IV/3, 276) and individuals “come into the sphere of this incomparable power of His” (IV/3, 185). Humans become participants in His life as He takes them under His care. They know Him because the Living One comprehends them. That is what the incorporating Son of God does: He *comprehends* others.

At this point, having taken into account the three rings, it appears that Jesus Christ’s resurrection is extroversive, enabling and multiplicative in nature. “For Barth, [Jesus’] reality is the condition for the possibility of real possibility,” says Adam Neder, and this is certainly true of the resurrection inertia.²¹ The resurrection winds blow to every corner of the cosmos, from the christological sphere *in atomo* to the anthropological sphere *in globo*, a pneumatic opening of the Christ event.

But we must ensure that we do not gloss over the sense in which for Barth the resurrection has also an introversive, assimilating and monistic character. Jesus Christ does more than go out to liberate others and place them in orbit around Him. He also collects them. A fourth, reverse, sublative moment comes with the divine, communal and individual moments. It is not a ring, but a sealing and hardening of the rings, an end to their expansion. Barth teaches that the final expression of the resurrection will mean an end to all time, space, process and continuation. Christ’s incorporative resurrection will conclude with an eschatological collapse in which everything is collected. Granted, in the remainder of this age the risen Christ moves out in the Holy Spirit to awaken and edify and send others out in joyful agency. But with the end comes

²¹ Neder, *Participation in Christ*, 46. Barth’s Platonistic language is intended to open up being and action; under the wing of Christ’s resurrection humans exist “in this secondary, derived, indirect history, but a history which takes place *realissime* in its relation to that primal history” (III/2, 162).

an end to time, whether by bodily death or by the rapture at Christ's return.²² The life that was lived by the human, knit to Christ, recedes into the eternal God. Like a terribly aged star, a spent red giant, the whole of creation collapses back to its core: "We wait for our inclusion in this . . . one indivisible, divine, sovereign act which comprehends [*umsassenden*] at once both the living and the dead."²³ The resurrection of the dead will reveal "His particular existence as an inclusive being and action enfolding the world" (IV/3, 283), which has its final collective expression at His return, when all creation manifests its "evident subjection by His judgment" (IV/3, 319). The collapse of the cosmos need not be seen with dread but with joy, for it means positively that our non-being can be "a return to the same God who called us out of non-being" (III/2, 595).

The consummation is a con-summation. In chapter three we saw how one's temporal history is to be summed up in eternity. But for Barth the coming summation addresses more than a reintegration of an individual's fragmented time; it is to be Christ's own Self-summation with those who belong to His community, even Christ with His own cosmos. Toward this final reality, Barth prefers the language of the *totus Christus*, the total Christ. Christ has an identity apart from others, no doubt, a *solus Christus* in His own flesh (a flesh willed in eternity by the electing God), and others have their own histories as they receive being from God. Yet Jesus Christ's resurrection-movement is all along a mission to bring *together* a community in His encompassing humanity, aimed to include the many into the one *totus Christus*. In post-temporal existence this totality exhibits unity of the highest degree, a simple expression of the Christ-act, the living fellowship of Christ and His people in a singular, eternal form. In

²² Reluctantly, Barth finally confesses that there is no functional difference between personal death and the cosmic end (IV/3, 924-8). How would we expect anything but equivalence, if the eternalization of one's earthly life between the termini of conception and death has already been secured through identification with Christ?

²³ Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 117 (= Ger., 115).

the dregs of this age the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit knits together the rebellious parts of the ecclesia to its Head. But all of this simply presages the final consummation in which bodies are contained wholly and incontestably within Christ.

The collective life of Christ's people is sealed (or revealed) with a perimeter:

Does not His resurrection usher in the last day, when even the believer in Jesus can only live a life hidden with God in Christ? Do not His coming again in glory and the consequent revelation of this hidden life mark the end of this last day and time, the handing over of the kingdom of the Son to the Father? . . . Our past and limited life, which did not begin before time and does not continue beyond it, our real but only life, will then fully, definitively and manifestly participate in that *kainotēs zōēs* (Rom. 6⁴). It will then be eternal life in God and in fellowship with Him (III/2, 624).

This eschatological incorporation is not another production in time or something superadded to time. Rather, the Jesus' final resurrection moment places a limit on time, withdrawing all into "eternal life in God," "a life hidden with God in Christ." The summation of time, the final participation, will be a participation with an event horizon: God will be all in all.

A reader of Barth might be surprised at how little he speaks of Christ's final, incorporating move, the crystallization in which total assimilation into the One takes place. Several reasons might be given for this. Barth died before writing his doctrine of redemption (volume V of the *Church Dogmatics*), so one cannot expect to hear too much about recapitulation. Or it could be that saying too much about the final, sagic moment (at least in distinction from the first and second moments of the parousia) would involve too much speculation. But I suspect something more. Barth's reluctance to clarify the nature of the return of Christ had to do with the looming disappearance of human particularity in that ultimate moment. The gravity of Jesus Christ in the final incorporation gathers the *totus Christus* in such a way as to suggest a certain compression, immobilization, and assimilation of human identities resistant to ontological

differentiation. Barth's demurrer regarding details about the resurrected life stems from the haunting sense that human details seem to vanish in the eternal light. Does this "total body" leave breathing room for peoples' flesh and bones?

One way of pressing the question is for me to bring in for comparison the similar closure inherent in Barth's doctrine of election. First, to summarize some important aspects of II/2,²⁴ Barth structures his doctrine of election in terms of three extroversive, concentric circles: divine, communal, individual. At the center is Jesus Christ, the subject and object of election. In the divine moment, God elects Himself to be the Representative and Savior of humanity without human agency, strictly within the Godhead (§33). From "before" any act of creation, God made Himself the archetype, the One in whom all were elected and included. Jesus Christ is there in the beginning as the electing God and the elected man, so no other will of God for humanity exists outside of Him. From all eternity He is the supralapsarianistic *decretum absolutum* of God; the Father wills Him to represent the whole of humanity. This single divine election includes within it a dual image in the communal election (*CD*, §34). Humanity has within it the non-elect and the elect, or Israel and the Church. Israel is appointed for judgment, hearing and representing the "passing man." The Church is appointed to mercy, belief, and the "coming man." While there is a tangible Israel and tangible Church, Barth sees all of humankind encountered by the Word as a combination of both. The communal aspect expands to the third ring, individual election (*CD*, §35). Particular men and women are the true target of the election of grace. Their reconciliation with God and their activation as agents freed for righteousness are the aim of God's eternal election. Nevertheless, their own personal expression as elect or

²⁴ For more about the comprehensive impact of *CD* II/2, see the early standout study, Setsuro Osaki, *Die Prädestinationslehre Karl Barths* (Ph.D. diss., Göttingen University, 1966). For a more recent and provocative interpretation, see McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern*, 183-233.

non-elect is overshadowed by the communal participation, which in turn is overshadowed by election in Jesus Christ. The full range of God's electing purposes crashes in upon on one man, and one man only: "His election is the original and all-inclusive election; the election which is absolutely unique, but which in this very uniqueness is universally meaningful and efficacious, because it is the election of Him who Himself elects. Of none other of the elect can it be said that his election carries in it and with it the election of the rest" (II/2, 117).

This election plays out historically: Jesus Christ, the Representative, stands alone. He alone is the elect Representative – on behalf of reprobate humanity. He lives as the unique Head of humanity – by dying on the cross. He alone is anointed – for abandonment. He alone stands before God – to be judged. All stand against Him; none is with Him. But precisely at Golgotha all are *in* Him:

"In Him" does not simply mean with Him, together with Him, in His company. Nor does it mean only through Him, by means of that which He as elected man can be and do for them. "In Him" means in His person, in His will, in His own divine choice, in the basic decision of God which He fulfils over against every man (II/2, 116-7).

Christ takes the largest circle of individuals, all who make up the elect and the rejected communities, and withdraws them into Himself, sealing them in Himself by His atoning death. In Christ's substitutionary death "He is quite alone amongst us, the only One who is judged and condemned and rejected, just as He is the only One who has come and acts amongst us as the Judge" (IV/1, 237-8). The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is His drawing the perimeter of reconciliation around all, thus collapsing all into His pierced Body.

From here we may proceed with a comparison between election and resurrection. Indeed, I think there are good reasons to make the bold claim that the election of Jesus Christ and His resurrection are really just different aspects of the one

decision wrought by the eternal God. Are not both from eternity and, in an important sense, happenings in eternity?²⁵ (Linking election and resurrection helps situate Barth's otherwise awkward discourse about the non-historical event of Jesus' awakening by the Father in IV/1.²⁶) Moreover, cannot each be spoken of as the ground of the authority of Jesus Christ's incarnate life?²⁷ Though Barth does not articulate it this way, election and resurrection could be conceived of as an eternally coincidental occurrence, and therefore a double-axiom of the gospel, situated on either side of eternity with Christ's determinative history as their content.

More to the point in this study, the parallel between election and resurrection holds true in terms of the *pattern* in which each plays out: both election and resurrection are *incorporative* decision-events in which humans are included into Christ. In their outer movement, each expands from (or develops within) the divine choosing of Jesus Christ, which has its resulting communal and individual inclusions. Election's set of concentric

²⁵ Cf. Adam Eitel, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: Karl Barth and the Historicization of God's Being," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10:1 (Jan 2008): 38-40, 43ff. Eitel goes on to do with resurrection as McCormack does with election: God's redemptive movement *is* His actualistic, triune being. The expansion of the divine decision into time corresponds to (and is the "historicization" of) the eternal awakening.

²⁶ I am specifically thinking about how this equation clarifies the difficulty with R. Dale Dawson's interesting reconstructive work. He would have Barth forge a stronger link between the resurrection and the reconciling work of Jesus Christ in order to secure the ontic nature of the resurrection (and with it, a better sense of the trinitarian action on the cross). To accomplish this, Dawson suggests that the *Auferweckung* (the intra-divine awakening, as distinguished from the ensuing revelatory movement, *Auferstehung*) be classified as a moment of ontic reconciliation rather than as part and parcel of the noetic, prophetic ministry (*The Resurrection in Karl Barth*, 211-5). Dawson's reclassification would be successful were it not for the fundamental identity of awakening with the eternal *election*, not the history of *reconciliation* worked by Christ on earth. If he desires to append Jesus' awakening to the reconciling work of the cross, it can only be done indirectly, secondarily, mediated through the eternal fiat, not as part of the historical reconciling work of God as such.

²⁷ "That which God as [the world's] Creator wills and willed from all eternity . . . is what is event and revelation in the history of Jesus Christ. *Its direct origin in God's eternal election, decision and act* is what gives its voice authority. This is its distinctive feature. This is what gives it the contours which mark it off from other facts. *This is the mystery of the awakening of Jesus Christ from the dead*, and therefore of His unconquerable and indestructible life, and therefore of the newness and originality with which He confronts the world and primarily and supremely Christians, and therefore of the beginning of the history of light shining in the darkness" (IV/3, 227, emphasis added).

circles plays out the drama of reconciliation²⁸: the eternal decree in Jesus fructified from the One to the many through the creation of Adam, the population of the earth through Noah, then on to the manifold blessing given to Abraham. However, a thinning of the visibly elect community occurs through Moses and David, the kings and prophets, leading ultimately to a convergence back to the One in His single history of reconciliation. Of the millions who lived before Him, only a handful represented the elect Israel, and even these actors in the history of salvation narrowed until, the disciples scattering from the Garden of Gethsemane, only Jesus remained. Upon this one crucified Representative rested the whole task of reconciliation. The circles of election contracted back to the single point on Golgotha, the telos of the divine election, thus enacting God's gracious election. As for the resurrection of Jesus, the same elective expansion occurs, this time from the divine, single point in the *Auferweckung* to the second, communal ring during the forty days of appearance to the inclusion of all sorts of individuals at the outpouring of the Spirit. The now-established Church expands into all the world with Christ in His prophetic mission. But for how long? When will the resurrection of Jesus cease to be an inclusive opening, and become an inclusive convergence back to the singular? When will, like election, the many converge to the One?

As long as time continues, it makes sense to speak of a dynamic going-out. But once time ends, will not all of Christ's people be drawn back into their Representative? Will it not be Him and Him alone? The return of Christ will be the re-turning of humanity into Christ. Every individual will be compressed into the One, the single point. Election has its systole and diastole; resurrection has its systole and diastole. Everything – *everything* – converges back upon and into Christ.

²⁸ See II/2, 54ff.

The punctiliar nature of the concluding resurrection I find to be a haunting prospect. It is one thing for Jesus Christ alone to be the first and last subject of all God's works in the objective work of reconciliation, the one body in election and the one body on the cross. It is quite another thing to say that Jesus Christ is the first and last subject of all God's work in redemption, and so the one risen body. It is one thing to have the elect Reconciler dying alone on the cross, surrounded by those for whom He dies. It is quite another matter to fulfill the resurrection-decision of Jesus with a Beyond that terminates everything and comprehends everything in Him. If Barth's doctrine of redemption follows the pattern of reconciliation, then there is no human remainder in the Beyond, no being outside of Jesus' representative being, no bodies outside of Jesus' representative body. Humans' brains and bones, personalities and processes fuse into Jesus Christ's singular, teleological representation. And in this respect is not Barth skirting the same predicament as Origen, whose matching of post-existence with pre-existence tended to reduce individual humans into divine accessories?

Let us be clear about the bone of contention. Barth has not come out and taught a total absorption into a simple Christ-monad. He prefers the (ecclesiastical) concept of the *totus Christus*, which has a corresponding incarnational logic of unity, distinction and priority.²⁹ But I am pressing his logic to show that all of his lines of thought, when drawn out to the omega point, lead to a singularity. And in this eschatological singularity Barth seems satisfied to speak of a lingering *differentiation within Christ's body*. In contrast, I am insisting upon a *plurality of bodies*. I question whether this spectrum of persons within the person of Christ can actually be said to exist if time, process and flesh have ended. It is not enough to describe a macro-body in differentiation. The resurrection is to be *our* subjective appropriation of salvation. *We*

²⁹ Cf. Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 202-5.

are to have our mortal flesh raised immortal. *Our own flesh* is reanimated. There are to be *living bodies* upon the New Earth. Our affiliation with Christ in the End will be a standing side by side and a gazing face to face, just as a stricken Job prophesied: “Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another” (Job 19:26-27, NAS). If Barth’s monism is the case, then I have a hard time seeing how the compressed differentiation of the One permits the statement “I myself” in a comparable or fuller way than is presently possible.

Barth was not a pantheist. Though he was trained in the schools of Schleiermacher, Eichendorff and Novalis, and though he could call himself a romantic of sorts,³⁰ he never considered the “Immediate” to be a reality accessible from this side. If the creature is to be, as Schleiermacher contended, one with the infinite in the midst of the finite, eternal in a moment, for Barth such unity with the eternal is given only *in hope*. It is not yet apparent how all things are in God and are being folded into Him; they are not presently interchangeable with the One. Unity between God and humanity is a *coming* reality. The eschatological character of revelation destroys any alliance between it and the *deus sive natura* of Spinoza and the young Schelling. More decisively, Barth speaks of a radical distinction all along between the Creator and the creature, between the unconditioned and the conditioned. The movement from the former to the latter is always a matter of grace: “We have always to remember that God’s glory really consists in His self-giving, and that this has its centre and meaning in God’s Son, Jesus Christ, and that the name of Jesus Christ stands for the event in which man, and in man the whole of creation, is awakened and called and enabled to participate in the being of God” (II/1, 670). If participation, then not pantheism.

³⁰ See Busch, *Karl Barth*, 40.

But is Barth a panentheist? Does he hold the belief that God “includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part exists in Him, but His Being is more than, and not exhausted by, the universe”?³¹ Here we must walk the theoretical tightrope with Barth. All things come from God and are sustained in God. All things are related to their Primal Origin and apart from Him have no subsistence. But God’s *Wesen* is at no point identical with the creature’s, and any communication between the Creator and creature happens through the strictly calibrated exchange of properties in Jesus Christ. Thus Barth purports to reject panentheism from the outset: “God does not form a whole with any other being either in identity with it or as compounding or merging with it to constitute a synthesis – the object of that master-concept, so often sought and found, which comprehends both God and what is not God” (II/1, 312). Void and bankrupt are all theological attempts to equate world-process with the eternal, even if that be panentheism’s finest exponent, Hegel, who in identifying history and Spirit loses the identity of each.³² All along the way Barth claims to follow a path that posits the hard demarcation of Creator and creature, couching it in the mediating union of Jesus Christ.

Not everyone agrees with Barth’s self-assessment. According to Richard Roberts, Barth’s attempts to escape Idealism in the 1920s failed. The author of *Der Römerbrief* pries himself from the clutches of Schleiermacher only to fall into the synthetic ontology of the Idealists. “Just as with Hegel the danger of reduction constantly threatened such a synthesis on the level of pure thought, so with Barth there is the threat of reduction of the diverse totality of being into the realm of the divine being in us,” claims Roberts, who sees in Barth “the inevitable suppression of the real

³¹ Cooper, *Panentheism*, 27.

³² Tsutomu Haga, *Theodizee und Geschichtstheologie: Ein Versuch der Überwindung der Problematik des Deutschen Idealismus bei Karl Barth* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 234.

distinction of immanence and transcendence in the name of a higher reality.”³³ To give a measure of honor to the created world, Barth posits an ontology in which historical action gives definition to eternity. But even here actualism has a Platonic recoil back into the Idea, for time itself has its *plenum* only in eternity. Plurality contracts into the monad. Sensing this threat, Barth attempts to prop open the closing aperture with Christ’s own indestructible historical narrative (including the resurrection appearances), so that the concretions of life in ongoing time are “not merely the supra-philosophical expression of the divine being and the resolution of antitheses.”³⁴ But the transfer of monism to the Second Person fails to mitigate the collapse, says Roberts. Time and particularity eventually succumb to eternity. While I do not share Robert’s cynicism about Barth’s overall project, I think he accurately gauges the monistic pull of Barth’s ontology when speaking of the End. If all things are determined by God’s own being and finally incorporated within His own being, i.e., if all things exist in God as their *archē* and come to rest in God as their *telos*, then an indecipherable unity melds the creature and the Creator at the omega-point, irregardless of how much partitioning and expansion transpired in the penultimate epoch.

Bruce McCormack’s prediction, that Barth’s doctrine of election will be his most enduring contribution to theology, is likely true.³⁵ Through such a pivotal move creation (and therefore anthropology) can be spoken of as radically defined by God’s own decision in the Son. But it seems to me that there are different ways to speak of Jesus Christ as the archetype and teleotype of creation. Just how does this Elected One represent others? By what qualification is He the stand-in for every human? To what

³³ Roberts, *A Theology on Its Way?*, 7.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁵ McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern*, 183.

kind of being is He elected? And here is the difficulty: Barth's doctrine of election has a panentheistic thrust because he makes Jesus Christ the One *elected to assume human essence*. For instance, he says, "[W]hat the eternal Word made His own . . . was not a man, but man's nature, man's being, and so not a second existence but a second possibility of existence, to wit, that of a man" (I/2, 163). Again, human essence is the "sum of . . . relationships" to grace and sin as defined in Christ (III/2, 40). Of course, Barth steers away from classical approaches to metaphysics and drives toward history and ethics. Nevertheless, he is consistent in making Jesus Christ the archetype of humanity: "What God the Son assumed into unity with Himself and His divine being was and is – in a specific individual form elected and prepared for this purpose – not merely 'a man' but the *humanum* [*das Menschliche*], the being and essence [*Sein und Wesen*], the nature and kind, which is that of all men, which characterizes them all as men, and distinguishes them from other creatures" (IV/2, 48 = *KD*, 51). That is how Barth solves the universal-particular problem, by making Jesus Christ the universal which defines all the particulars by making them participate in the being of the universal form. Therefore his ontology is at its roots a kind of pan*christ*ism. All things move from Him and through Him and to Him, since He is elected as the ontological archetype, the realest level of being from which all other things derive their reality. Other humans are humans not because they are *like* Him, but because they are *in* Him, because they participate in His human essence. Once time and the veil of death are taken away, Christ the Head will exert His manifest reign over His body, and God will be all in all. That is the result of the combination of a Christological doctrine of election and a strong sense of the assumption of the human nature.

My concern is not Barth's conception of election as such, then, but the seeming consequences of interpreting Christ's representative being in so totalizing a way. I will

not deny for a second that Barth's panenchristism generates human existence and freedom and correspondence in creaturely time, since all things are enabled to happen within the historical opening. Many things are permitted to unfold in the extent of the Christ-event. The resurrection of Jesus Christ opens up His lively and empowering History, facilitating enumeration within Christ. As one Barth commentator puts it, humans have their being along the lines of a kind of enhypostatic ethical dynamic.³⁶ This I concede and celebrate. But I am not at all clear as to how Barth sees human flourishing to continue in any real way at the return of Christ. At the final closure of time, Jesus culminates and seals and ends all activity. His history is no longer history-begetting but history-collecting. The circles retreat into a point. Edwin Chr. van Driel voices a similar worry, that ontological encapsulation in Jesus Christ poses a threat to human agency as soon as the parousia takes place in its final form.³⁷ In the End, all flesh is concluded and made subsidiary to the one ascended being of Jesus.

Barth's panentheistic features are not unusual within the Christian tradition, which has been heavily reliant upon Neo-Platonic categories. Like so many of the Church fathers, Barth distances himself from Neo-Platonism even as he moves toward it. Barth steps away from Plotinus's theory of emanations – yet he categorizes all being in terms of participation in the divine through Christ. Barth rejects a metaphysical hierarchy of being with his rejection of the *analogia entis* – even as he draws up an *analogia*

³⁶ John Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 89ff.

³⁷ "Included in [Christ], every human nature is assumed, elevated, and exalted. But what about the human agents who are the subjects of these human natures? They did not exist yet when their histories started. Presumably, they were not objects of assumption. And indeed, they are not preserved in the eschaton. Their histories are; they are not. In this proposal, human agents seem to fall outside the reach of salvation" (van Driel, *Incarnation Anyway*, 141).

eventus.³⁸ He affirms the material body far more than Neo-Platonic philosophers, who saw the material world as the boundary of perception and the edge of evil – only to give time this ambiguous moral standing. Most importantly, Barth is on guard against a panentheistic absorption of the human nature – yet his *Allinchristlebre* concludes with a recapitulation, the sublation of space-time into eternity, the return of humans into Christ at His return to them. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is His incorporative mission as He goes out to unify the world into the reality of the *totus Christus*. In this elective-resurrective sense, God will be all in all.

From those to whom He wills to be all in all, he strips everything else. This is what we must experience in death, under the sign of His judgment. We do not know what and how we shall be when we are no more and have no more time for being in virtue of our death. . . . We can make no dispositions concerning our future when we shall have no more future. We can only cling to the fact, but we can really do so, that even in our death and as its Lord He will be our gracious God, the God who is for us, and that this is the ineffable sum of all goodness, so that everything that happens to us in death will in some way necessarily work together for good. . . . Is He not the God who has elected Himself for us and us for Him? Is He not the God who has entered into solidarity with us and made Himself responsible for us? (III/2, 609-10)

In this way Barth hopes to neuter death with the greater truth that we will be (just as we have been) in God, and that His solidarity with us, our divine in-ness, is “the ineffable sum of goodness” once our lives have been stripped away. At the very least let us conclude that Barth’s eschato-logic makes him cousin to the family of panentheists.³⁹

Since my critique is clearly moving beyond Barth’s Christology to his anthropology, let me simply reiterate that for him Jesus Christ’s resurrection is

³⁸ “Indeed, I remember that Barth enthusiastically welcomed a remark of the late Dorothy Sayers, in her broadcast plays, that we are dealing here [in the act of God in Jesus] with ‘the only thing that ever really happened.’ Although Barth rejected the *analogia entis*, he has had his own doctrine of event-hood!” (D.M. MacKinnon, “Further Reflections,” in *The Resurrection: A Dialogue Arising from Broadcasts by G.W.H. Lampe and D.M. MacKinnon*, ed. William Purcell [London: A.R. Mowbray and Co., 1966], 110).

³⁹ Should it surprise us if a good number of Barth’s own theological descendents – I think of Moltmann, Pannenberg and Jenson – have developed more openly panentheistic models of salvation – and done so through the doctrine of the resurrection?

incorporation. On one level (corresponding to my chapter three), Christ is incorporated. He is claimed by the Holy Spirit and made eternal in body and soul. But the greater meaning for Barth (closer to the content of chapter four) is that Jesus Christ goes forth in His resurrection power to incorporate others into His saving work. Through His Holy Spirit He labors to expand the scope of His own earthly-historical body, which is a collection into His own body, a collection that will someday conclude with a final recapitulation. Jesus Christ's resurrection is His inclusive power which binds others to Him, carries them with Him, and holds them in Him.

The Isolation of the Human

More remains to be said about the disappearing differentiation in the general resurrection, but let us first consider Barth's portrayal of the predicament of human beings. Hitherto we have noted how humans are impaired in their pure creaturely state by temporal limitation and ambiguity. A third aspect of impairment is the threat of isolation, a threat inherent within creaturely selfhood. When humans attempt to assert their flimsy independence from God, making their created state autonomous and therefore sinful, they are plunged into a terrifying spiral of destructive loneliness.

Humans need divine communion. What the being of Jesus Christ teaches us is that humanity exists and has its righteousness through dependence upon God. In fact, His existence as a human is wholly contingent on Him being the God who takes this human existence to Himself. According to Barth, what Christ reveals is that we are appointed for the same kind of dependence to sustain our human calling, and that He Himself provides the avenue to fulfilling our humanity. Through Him is the possibility of covenantal fellowship with God, and, through God, with others.

One of the more difficult aspects of Barth's thought involves his affirmation of creation's being made good, yet a rejection of its *inherent* goodness. Its moral status depends not on its thing-ness but on its connection with God, who is its Primal Origin and continual source of life.

Creation is a benefit inasmuch as it is based upon and attains its end in the divine covenant with man. Thus even the creature does not merely exist, but does so as the sphere and object of the covenant, as the being to whom God has devoted His good-will and whom He has destined to share in the overflowing of His own fulness of life and love. To be a creature means to be determined to this end, to be affirmed, elected and accepted by God" (III/1, 363-4).

Humanity epitomizes dependence on God, for the dignity of humanity is its intimate fellowship with God. Only by being with God can the human be truly human.

If it is forgotten, if we think of man in isolation from and independent of God, we are no longer thinking about real man. Man exists only in his relation with God. And this relation is not peripheral but central, not incidental but essential to that which makes him a real man, himself. He is to the extent that not he himself but God is His sovereign Lord, and his own sovereignty flows from God (III/2, 123).

The human is the creature ordained specially to be from God, with God, and to God. He or she is appointed as the target of the Word of God, chosen to hear the Word and respond in gratitude. In the mystical communion of the event of the Word of God, a human is fully humanized, empowered, and radiant. The human receives *doxa* in this relationship and reciprocates to God a creaturely *doxa*.

In the modern world independence has often been held out as the highest virtue. This is clearly not the case with Barth: independence (by which he means a disregard for spiritual communion with God) is fatal. If the creature ignores its neediness and tries to strike out on its own, it brings death upon itself. It wanders into the wilderness of nothingness. It leaves the bond of participation and chooses suicide. One might object that we, unlike Christ, do not by nature have His inherent divine communion. But Eberhard Jüngel gives a good Barthian response:

All other human beings certainly exist independently without needing to be divine. Yes, but look at how they exist! An “independent” human existence is an existence as a prisoner of sin. When we exist independently, we lose our humanity and ensure our own death.⁴⁰

Humans attain their dignity through fellowship, not isolation.

Barth lived to see a fresh outbreak of the cult of autonomous individualism.

The absolutistic spirit of the age of reason had begotten offspring such as the self-sufficient pragmatism of Benjamin Franklin and the egoistic idealism of J.G. Fichte before yielding to a nationalism which reached its most debased climax in the First and Second World Wars.⁴¹ Thereafter, most of the modernized nations undertook a program of secularization, and, in the West at least, societies began to look to “democratic” individualism as the new absolute. With it came ethical minimalism, a susceptibility to consumerism and a fragmentation of communities. In this paradigm one was doomed to be in a constant state of loneliness if only because each attempt to link into a community could never be reconciled with the canon of self-allegiance. The external world seemed to become a threat or a device for personal torment, a sentiment heard in the Jean-Paul Sartre’s sigh, “Hell is other people.”⁴²

Hell is isolation, retorts Barth. We may speak of the human predicament only because we know of human fulfillment as revealed in Jesus Christ. The Word of God informs us of our wholly interrelational destiny. Again Barth adopts the form of triple concentric rings: divine, communal, individual. Pivotal, the divine calling of persons

⁴⁰ Eberhard Jüngel, *Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy*, trans. Garrett E. Paul (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 134.

⁴¹ Barth makes the charge that eighteenth and nineteenth century moralistic individualism was entirely consistent with the absolutistic society (*PTNC*, 112-7). Later he names Friedrich Nietzsche the prophet of humanity-less individualism (III/2, 231-42).

⁴² If Sartre could affirm a certain place for other people, as an otherness which serves as an opportunity for human freedom rather than a conduit of our self-loathing, it does not sanctify his baseline attitude, the instrumentalization of human society. The self-reflexive function of the existentialist “other” does with community what the Hellenic-Christian tradition has typically done with the body.

(§44 “Man as the Creature of God”) starts with the connection and differentiation of God and humans. The truth of humanity, fully true only in the elect Jesus Christ, is that

Deriving from God, man is in God, and therefore for God. We are not speaking of a predicate which he might have but perhaps might not have. Man is essentially for God because he is essentially from God and in God (III/2, 71).

The divine calling in Jesus Christ sets the “ontological undertone” (III/2, 134) for the next ring of relatedness (§45 “Man and His Determination as the Covenant-Partner of God”). The second basic form of humanity is to have fellowship with one another, just as Jesus Christ was and is the man for others. People share in His likeness by echoing His for-ness toward the community. Through God our encounter is also with those who belong to God. Moreover, creation itself bears out this pattern in the dyadic relationship of male and female, man and woman.⁴³ Barth’s treatment of the third ring, the individual (§46 “Man as Soul and Body), though arguably the weakest section of the *Church Dogmatics*, is impressed with a similar pattern of interrelation. By God’s life-giving Spirit a person is the soul of one’s body. Animated by God, inner and outer facets are unified, even as the differentiation and priority of soul over body is retained. Each of these circles – divine, communal and individual – depends on the relationality granted in the being of Jesus Christ.⁴⁴ So if humanity’s definition as humanity has at its base a communion with the Almighty through election in Jesus Christ, if human society is the *analogia relationis* which is also the *imago Dei*, if human constitution relies upon the

⁴³ If Barth has any constitutional aspect of the *imago Dei*, it can be found in dimorphic sexuality: “Man would not be man if he were no longer male and female, if his humanity did not consist in this concrete fellow-humanity, in this distinction and connexion. He has lived in no other way in time, and he can live in no other way in eternity. This is something which he cannot lose. For by it there stands or falls his creatureliness” (III/2, 296). Barth’s departure from contemporary gender complementarianism involves his unwillingness to elaborate this thought into the positing of two different, sex-specific images of God. But his departure from contemporary gender egalitarianism stems from his unwillingness to conceive of relations without a sense of priority.

⁴⁴ Barth’s enthusiasm for this point obviously guides his Christological structuring (unity, differentiation, priority) of all forms of sexual and intra-personal human relation – though he concedes (blushingly?), “We refrain from any detailed account of the more distant analogies, some more and some less exact, which might be discerned on this basis” (III/2, 343).

gift of spirit in order to be the soul of one's body, then human beings cannot stand alone.

They cannot. To choose autonomy is to choose the way of death which leads to eternal death. It is sin – understood by Barth as *das Nichtige*, nothingness, the void. This is precisely the predicament of human beings. They jeopardize themselves at every turn through wanton self-seeking. They would be gods, feeding their own appetites for immortal idiocy. They would make their fellow humans into slaves of their own solipsistic imaginations. They would stray in order to pursue their illusions, and so make themselves utterly contradictory.⁴⁵ Rather than gaining oneself, the self-making person dislocates from the presence of the Lord (and His community) and so loses self. Wrenched from proper Christo-relations, that person plunges into an egotistical nightmare.

However, the good news announces that the crucified Jesus Christ was the *only* isolated one.⁴⁶ He bore the ignominy of the world at Golgotha. He alone suffered Godforsakenness, and in this Godforsakenness He died alone. But for such service to God and humanity, God declared Him to be the Son of God through the resurrection of the dead *according to the Spirit of holiness* (Rom 1:4). Jesus Christ rose with the full glory of a man in the communion of the Holy Spirit. In Barth's mind the resurrection is much more than a statement about the fate of the fallen Jesus. It is a public appointment of Jesus Christ to be the mediator of all things in their restoration to God through the power of His Holy Spirit. The resurrection is the transmission of life

⁴⁵ In fact, isolation makes people anomalous rather than inhuman (for taking on the status of an animal is not even a hypothetical option for the covenanted human). To sin is to make oneself impossible, to enter a category that does not exist. As such, sin is death.

⁴⁶ Barth follows Calvin and the Reformed tradition in understanding Christ's descent into hell as part of His cry of dereliction on the cross (David Lauber, *Barth on the Descent into Hell: God, Atonement, and the Christian Life* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004], 10-2).

through Him who is resurrected, indeed, who *is* the resurrection. Any other person would overcome their isolation (that is, be raised from the dead) must achieve it by abiding in His life.

One of the more counterintuitive aspects of Barth's work has to do with his sense that covenantal relations are the full basis for human constitution. That is, if Barth has a philosophy of reality, it is a *relational* metaphysics, not a *substance* metaphysics. Relations not only precede substance, they *constitute* substance. Barth veers this way by force of his supralapsarian Christology. Christ is not elected within the framework of the human order; His election erects the framework of that order. God does not covenant with a preexistent creation; He makes the creation for the sake of the covenant. At face value Barth appears to read creation and covenant together as reciprocal sides. In *CD* III/1 he describes creation as the *äusserer Grund* ("the external basis") of the covenant and the covenant the *innerer Grund* ("the internal basis") of creation. But appearances can be misleading. In his explanation, Barth says that creation is merely the geographic presupposition of covenant, the non-descript stuff with which to work, but covenant (that is, relation) is "the material presupposition" of creation. Therefore, "If creation takes precedence historically, the covenant does so in substance" (III/1, 232). It is not that Barth rejects all talk of human substance; after all, he discusses human spirituality, male and female, soul and body. But all of these concretions are fixed atop an immovable foundation and built according to a Christological blueprint. Their subsidiary relationship to and in Christ is what allows them to be real. The great scope of being derives from its primal relations. This is particularly and especially true for humans. Election leads to the *imago*. Christ's incarnation defines our fleshly lives. Participation in the Logos produces rationality. Union with His Spirit produces spirituality. In short, relations precede substance.

The seminal power of relation (whether described as covenant, participation or dependence) allows Barth to design his doctrine of humanity in a rather different way than earlier generations. This has genuine advantages over other models. Onto-relations prevent the growth of natural theology, for no generic anthropology can be posited if humanity acquires its definition through a bond to Christ. More specifically, substance metaphysics (in the form of personal immortality, rationality, creativity or spirituality as bases of human identity), with its inevitable slant toward secularism, falls by the wayside.⁴⁷ My judgment is that Barth's approach is significantly healthier than other anthropologies.

But it is not without problems. Relational metaphysics attempts to relate things, but Barth does not make clear what kind of things are being related. The relational bond is supposed to supply the predication for things, but this begs the question: What is a thing is if it has no predicates before entering into relation with something else? This is a difficulty for Barth, who, in an attempt to set up a blockade against substantialist readings, seems to assume that the covenant is a *sufficient* condition for creation. The bond somehow posits that to which it is bound. Creation becomes a subsidiary function of covenant. What should not be lost on us here is Barth's Platonic structure, where the archetype (in this case, the covenant, the "material presupposition" and true "substance") overflows into the shadowy sub-realities of creation and sustains these inferior expressions by sharing an archetypal similitude. Like all Platonic systems, the physical world suffers – not because it is excluded *per se*, but because it becomes an appendage, an accessory, a derivation which in the end may or may not be needed by

⁴⁷ Substantialist accounts "fail either to perceive or to take seriously the fact that humanity derives exclusively from election, has no independent existence apart from Jesus Christ, and is actualized in faith and obedience" (Neder, *Participation in Christ*, 39).

the higher stratum governing it in the first place.⁴⁸ It seems to me that, lest metaphysics become excessively referent-less, and lest the created order be understood as a lesser component of a divine tautology, Christians must reserve *some* room for asking about the contours of creational substance alongside divine relation.

Here Edwin Chr. van Driel's critique is helpful. Because essentially dependent upon the Creator, Barth holds that the creature as such is always characterized by dis-integration. For

all of what is not God necessarily lapses into evil unless God incorporates it into God's own being. Only one form of existence, divine existence, is equivalent to the good. No other form of being is good or will obtain the good, unless it comes to participate in divine being. Not even God can create such a being – all God can do is safeguard the being God created by giving it a share in the divine life. Creational life is governed by entropy.⁴⁹

By ontological necessity creation is subject to death and decay, van Driel concludes. By their essential lack of divine status, created things move toward nothingness. There is no way to eradicate death without eradicating the creaturely order. The only way to stop “creational entropy” is to halt nature and have it “safely embedded in the divine life.”⁵⁰

If Barth tends to overstate relations, it is to pound in a key point: “The created world dissociated from its transcendent Creator loses its natural axis” (III/2, 11). I concur – but *association* does not have to be *in-sociation*. Life “in Christ” can mean something other than wholesale sublation of the creature by non-creaturely transcendence. By my thinking, God has permitted difference within Himself through Jesus Christ, even the radical difference of Creator and creature, and *that difference is*

⁴⁸ More precisely, Barth's approach has many of the structural features of Neo-Platonism, which, lest we be forget and be too harsh, has been among the most generous philosophical systems to corporeality (cf. Anne-Marie Bowery, “Body,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 105).

⁴⁹ Van Driel, *Incarnation Anyway*, 122.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

unresolved. God eternally decides and is the heavenly Father with the earthly Son in the bond of the Holy Spirit. On that basis God permits humanity its difference, its substantive contours which constitute the thing with which God is in relation. God relates to some other-body. Can Barth hold on to that distinctive otherness when speaking of humanity's future?

The Incorporation of the Risen Human

The answer to human sinfulness is communion. Jesus Christ objectively reconciles humans to God, to each other, to themselves. The Holy Spirit (i.e., Jesus in the power of His resurrection) makes that objective reality altogether great by expressing it subjectively. For Barth the entire way of life for humans may be summed up as participation in Christ,⁵¹ as *relation* to Christ as it plays itself out in the *event* of life “in Him.” Through the event of the Word of God the bodies of many are made part of Christ's one body. This is certainly true on a figurative, ecclesiastical level (1 Cor 12; Eph 4). But, I wonder, what does Barth's emphasis on “incorporation into Christ's body” look like on the final eschatological level? Does it have the same meaning as the scriptures' sense of re-corporealization in the resurrection of the dead? In this final section I prod Barth's doctrine of the end times to clarify its talk about bodies and Christ's one body.

Body – Christ's body – is a category for Barth. Bodies can exist as particulars because they are linked to the Head of the Body. Speaking most fundamentally, *sōma* belongs to Jesus Christ, who, as the Head, is the bodily archetype. Jesus Christ is body;

⁵¹ Cf. Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 114, though see the complaint about the participatory limitations of Barth's “revelation model” in Alan Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (London: T&T Clark, 1996), 307ff.

He defines what body is. He is *the* body, the all-inclusive body, “the archetypal man whom all threatened and enslaved men and creatures must follow. He alone is the promise for these many, the Head of a whole body” (III/2, 144). Moreover, *in* His archetypal body He supplies bodiliness. Barth feels no need to deny the use of the plain meaning of *sōma*. Nevertheless, he treats it as a subordinate expression enabled by the archetypal body of Jesus Christ. An individual’s physical body is real, but not as real as Jesus’ body, which has a sense of being “the body which throws a shadow,” “the one in many” (IV/1, 663).

Even late in his career Barth speaks with a kind of ambiguity about the resurrection body of Christ. He has and is a body like ours, yet, unlike any other, His body is also the prototypical macro-body. Easter in its extended meaning, then, is the em-bodying of other bodies into Christ’s body:

The content of Easter Day and the Easter season consisted in this, not in an “attesting miracle,” not merely in a parthenogenesis of the Christian faith, but in the appearance of the body of Jesus Christ, which embraced their death in its death, their life in its life, their past and their future in itself, thus including them all in itself. As He encountered them in this corporeity, the disciples heard addressed to themselves as such, to the *ekklesia* which arose in virtue of it, the call which is the disclosure of the secret of His earthly-historical existence: “Ye are the body of Christ” (IV/1, 664).

Christ’s body is magnified, extending from His own to the Church. The mission of the Holy Spirit is to facilitate this resurrective wave of Christ, calling a community “as His body, i.e., as His own earthly-historical form of existence” (IV/3, 681). Christ’s resurrection, we might say, is the outgoing power of His body to include other bodies in His.

I think the more forthcoming way of expressing this is to say that there is but one resurrection. Technically speaking, Barth has no discrete eschatological doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. We will never be raised as Jesus Christ was raised. His was

and will be the only resurrection. However, we may *participate* in that one resurrection by participating in Him. We may and must be related to Him, enlivened by His animating energy. In a rather flagrant distortion of Heidelberg Catechism question 49, Barth says, “In Jesus Christ I am no longer at the point at which I can die; in Him our body is already in heaven” (*DO*, 155). That is, we have no resurrection awaiting us vis-à-vis Christ, only a future *in* the One who is resurrection.⁵² Our resurrection is the showing forth of the God-relation in Christ that is the one resurrection.

As I explained earlier, Barth wants to speak of resurrection as an extroversive event, by which he means a movement of Christ moving outward and oriented toward others. From Easter through the forty days and then through the age of the outpouring of the Spirit, Jesus Christ calls others to be His body. In *CD IV/3* especially, Barth’s perception of the Church is that it is always a community called on a mission, to shine outward with the Light of Life. But Barth generally skirts the topic of the ultimate, when there is no more going-out, only a coming-in. §73 “The Holy Spirit and Christian Hope” is a discussion of how the Christian, as a member of Christ’s community, may “*move* towards his final and yet also his immediate future in hope in Him,” though Barth has little to say about how Christ will “*consummate* the revelation of the will of God fulfilled in Him” (*IV/3*, 902, emphasis added). At the return of Christ, time and space are closed (*IV/3*, 916), and Christ is revealed “universally” and “immediately” (*IV/3*, 903).

It seems abundantly clear to me that Barth cannot speak of the final form of the resurrection of the dead in outgoing terms. Then and there Christ’s mission will be complete. Then and there His body, instead of going forward in action, will revert to Him in rest. The only truth at that time will be that all things exist in Christ, that God is

⁵² Cf. Thompson, *Christ in Perspective*, 132.

all in all. What then can the return of Christ be but a recapitulation, a gathering into the One? What more can the resurrection be but the final manifestation of the fact that the ecclesiastical body is indeed the *plerōma* of Christ's *sōma* (IV/2, 659)?

And here the question of the flesh is acutely important. So long as humans are alive in the flesh, in time and space, no question exists of their corporeal identity even as they are incorporated into the risen Body of Jesus Christ. But when the end comes, when all things "return" to Christ at His "return," what is the place of individual identity? How is the consummate constitution of the single Christ-body also a resurrection of the flesh, of *our* flesh?

In fairness to Barth, we must acknowledge that he did not see the all-encompassing nature of Christ in the end to be a threat to particularity. Though his indignant response to Tjarko Stadland is directed toward those who would want to re-establish a "principle of hope," I think Barth's 1967 letter is relevant here.

[I]f I do indeed insist that the Eschatos is no other than the Protos, that he who "is to come" is identical with him who "was and is," and that the meaning, novum, and proprium of his coming is – fortunately – very definitely determined and already characterized by the fact that he has come and is, I fail to see to what extent this rules out a futurist eschatology and does not even now invite us to hope zealously and expectantly for this coming of his. And if I also especially emphasize that his coming makes manifest with him the extent to which God has been and continues to be, not for nothing or in vain, the God of loving-kindness who has bound himself to man, so that no creature has escaped or evaded his love – if I emphasize this, I cannot really understand how people can say that this event is not something new but only something noetic. They say that as though *this* future did not include everything that one may and can only expect, as though anything more in this respect would not really be something less!⁵³

In our present context, it is important to hear Barth in his belief that the world's future in Christ, even its absolute resolution into Christ, does not exclude any of the glorious

⁵³ Barth, *Karl Barth Letters, 1961-1968*, 236.

particulars of our lives. Life in His eschatological Body will not *compress* but *express* the fullness of the earthly human life.

I maintain, however, that one of the burdens upon Barth in *CD V* would have been to spell out how the eschatological unity-in-difference of Christ's ecclesial-cosmic body. Unity-in-difference is certainly penultimately true for the Church in that the relationship between her and her Lord is "irreversible, asymmetrical, and based upon an anhypostatic-enhypostatic logic," as Kimlyn Bender puts it.⁵⁴ Our earthly flesh living in time assures us of that difference. But why sustain those terms of difference at the *final* resurrection? For an explanation I propose that it is valuable to return to Barth's fusion of revelation and resurrection. This equivocation enables him to make statements about the end: 1. The moment of revelation in this life teaches us that we are utterly distinct from God, differentiated from Him even as He unites us to Himself. 2. Revelation in the midst of this life (the second form of the parousia) has the same character as the consummation (the final form of the parousia). Therefore, in the final resurrection of the dead, for all the intensity of the unification of humans with God, we will still be differentiated. I have called into question the second premise, since Barth refuses to admit the possibility of human beings at the consummation living out any more time, process and or revived corporeality. In this age time and creaturely limits and embodiment constitute the mode of human existence, but in the end this mode has been outmoded. Or, in other words, the second and third forms of the parousia are not identical, and only remotely analogous. Barth's straightforward argument for corporeality fails.

⁵⁴ Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 202. For the Church and Christ the *unio cum Christo* "does not mean the dissolution or disappearance of the one in the other, nor does it mean identification," rather, "each has his own independence, uniqueness and activity" (IV/3, 540).

My judgment is that Barth can profess the *resurrectionem carnis* so vociferously because he believes that the recapitulation of all things into Christ is the best and only means to human preservation. Like any panentheistic account worth its salt, Barth's final sublation of history into eternity does not eliminate the fact that eternity has been serialized by time. But – and this is the crux of the matter – from the standpoint of the eschatological Omega such differentiation can be no more than *the preserved distinction of former histories in God*. Time has been archived in God. If there remains a differentiation between God and humanity, even Christ and humanity, the differentiation operates on a much thinner level than before. In this temporal age a certain *spacing* from Christ is permitted, but in the Day to come the differentiation relies solely on the *spacing that once was*.⁵⁵ For Barth, such differentiation is enough.

I am unconvinced. The highly relational terms of Barth's doctrine of the resurrection cast shadows of doubt upon its standing as a resurrection of the flesh. Though not nearly so overt about Christ-monism as in his early work,⁵⁶ Barth's mature output also points to a final, monistic convergence. Once time and process and bodies pass, we are held solely in the human nature of the Logos; any distinctions are internal,

⁵⁵ Gerhard Sauter explains that "one of the most serious interpretive problems" in the *Church Dogmatics* has to do with the foreclosure of human lives in the Christological perfect, not because of a problem of overrealized eschatology in the reconciling work of Jesus, but because Barth permits himself to speak of the future from God's perspective ("Why Is Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* Not a 'Theology of Hope'?: 425). Claiming such knowledge, and thus moving by imperceptible but triumphant degrees from the finite to the infinite, is "the characteristic move of ontotheology," says Lowe, a move that reveals that one is not so interested in concreteness and contingency after all (Walter Lowe, *Theology and Difference: The Wound of Reason* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993], 121-2). Perhaps Barth has not taken into account just how paradoxical is the relation between God's will and God's rule in the rest of history (Robert W. Jenson, *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth* [New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1963], 151-7).

⁵⁶ I am thinking of such passages as when Barth confesses that "Jesus Christ is the Redeemer, the individual standing existentially before God. In Him duality has become unity [*aus zweien eins gewordene Individuum*], for in Him rejection has been overcome and swallowed up in election" (ER, 417 = 2Rö, 402), or his comment, "That God is all in all, *is* not true, but must *become* true. Christian monism is not a knowledge that is presently possible, but a *coming* knowledge. If it is to be genuine, it must only be comprehended now as Christian dualism, as the tension between promise and fulfilment, between 'not yet' and 'one day' . . ." (RD, 170).

intra-christic, and therefore nominal; the histories of the flesh, mummified in eternity, are – and are not – flesh. Our bodies do not receive our *own* names written on white stones (Rev 2:17). The name of Jesus Christ is trumpeted so loudly that all other names and voices, however much denominated in this life, are in the resurrection inaudible.⁵⁷

My interpretation of *CD* has had its predecessors in those who have flagged Barth's eschatology as universalist. If Jesus Christ has absolutized salvation in His own election, work, and resurrection, will not all be saved? The inclusive force of the victorious Elect One hardly seems to permit a distinction of futures for individuals, leading a range of commentators to label Barth's position as hopelessly contradictory.⁵⁸ Yet Barth rejects the doctrine of *apokatastasis* in its strong sense. Any theology that speaks of an assured universalism, he says, risks impinging upon God's freedom, speculating about the future, and confusing Christ and world-process.⁵⁹ But Barth does not deny the possibility of universal salvation either, and so risks the smoothing away of particular futures.

As for a noteworthy defense of Barth on this point, Tom Greggs understands Barth's universalistic trajectory to preserve human particularity on the ground that Jesus Christ Himself is a particular. This is to be discerned in Barth's rejoinder to Berkouwer in which he says that *CD* is not centered around the triumph of grace (that is, a Christ-principle) but around the victorious, living person, Jesus Christ (IV/3, 174ff.). Greggs

⁵⁷ Cf. Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia*, 243; McDowell, *Hope in Barth's Eschatology*, 224.

⁵⁸ E.g. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 116; John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1976), 260f.; Oliver D. Crisp, "On Barth's Denial of Universalism," *Themelios* 29:1 (Fall 2003): 18-29.

⁵⁹ E.g. II/2, 417-8; IV/3, 477-8, 489, 713. Acts 3:21 speaks ambiguously about the time "of the restoration of all things [*apokatastaseōs pantōn*]," commencing after heaven has received Jesus for a time, though the Christian tradition since Origen has generally understood the term *apokatastasis* as a claim about the scope of salvation. For a genesis of the doctrine see Edward Moore, "Origen of Alexandria and Apokatastasis: Some Notes on the Development of a Noble Notion," *Quodlibet Journal* 5:1 (Jan 2003), accessed June 2010 at <http://www.quodlibet.net/articles/moore-origen.shtml>.

extrapolated from Barth's point by saying, "Since election is the election of a *person*, it is the determination of a person, and therefore the question arises of human self-determination which corresponds to this determination. Election in the person of Jesus allows the space for human freedom which a principle never can."⁶⁰ The sheer force of the objective content of this one individual Representative assures universal salvation even as it assures agency.⁶¹

I have granted the success of Barth's ability to speak of a movement from simplicity to plurality in the Son, but a certain inability to sustain plurality in the movement back to simplicity. The difficulty with Greggs' rejoinder stems from a certain underdevelopment of his own argument. First, for Barth at least, Jesus' own particularity has as much dissimilitude as similitude with our own. We are mere particulars, where He is archetypal, trans-particular in His particularity. Second, but more importantly, neither Barth nor Greggs has explained how other individual agencies retain their fullness *after* the terminal sublation into Jesus' eschatological simplicity. If the final parousia (post-temporal eternity) is ultimately equivalent to the predestinating decree (pre-temporal eternity), as Barth insinuates throughout his writing, then people at that point exist "in Christ" in a more minimal, representative sense.⁶² What is lacking is an account of how the particularity of Jesus Christ props open enough space in His final, totalizing body to accommodate whole, living persons.

⁶⁰ Tom Greggs, "Jesus Is Victor?: Passing the Impasse of Barth on Universalism," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60:2 (2007): 206. What Myk Habets says about T.F. Torrance could just as easily be applied to Barth, that participation in Christ is "the 'personalising' of the human being in *the* Person of the incarnate Son" (*Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance: Not Yet in the Now* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009], 39).

⁶¹ Tom Greggs, *Barth, Origin, and Universal Salvation: Restoring Particularity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 49-53.

⁶² In the end God will not be alone again as He was before creation, if only because "God will not cease to be the One who *has done* this first thing," viz., create (III/1, 43, emphasis added). But with the perichoresis of pre-temporal and post-temporal eternity (II/1, 640), how does the perfect tense really make the end less lonely than the beginning?

Barth's confidence about the preservation of individual identity hinges so much on the allowances of participation in Christ. Particulars abide in the archetype of Christ's humanity. Personhood remains as it is embedded in the life of the incarnate Person. The event of an individual's salvation takes place in the revelatory Event. Barth uses this concept of participation effectively with his ethics, showing how human freedom is lodged in God's freedom, but I am unconvinced that his use of Neoplatonic/Augustinian syntax translates into eschatological ontology. At the omega moment at least, it is difficult to see how God's final being-in-action regenerates our own living, distinctive beings-in-action. Rather, God circumscribes them, sums them up and puts them to an end.

I have insisted all along that we not skirt the apparent meaning of the Church's creed: that Christ's redemptive work in the resurrection of the dead involves a raising of *specific* bodies and placing them in *specific* relations to God and to one another in a *specific*, earthly world. However much the scriptural witness may speak of a newness in this coming way of life, it never speaks of redemption at a loss to the concrete dimensions which make up human individuality. Barth's human identifiers feel dangerously flimsy when he exchanges bodies for "differentiation" within Christ's Body, or when he trades fleshly plurality for a "distinction" of persons in Christ's person, or when he thinks that onto-relational "priority" suffices to establish the existence of identifiable human persons in eternity. Historical human bodies, absorbed into Christ representative history, become asymptotic.

In this chapter I have recognized the importance of the communion of the Spirit, and how Barth applies divine communion to the resurrection-movement of the Son to reach those in isolation and perdition. Barth again reaps a harvest of theological insight by overlapping key concepts into the doctrine of resurrection. But this overlap

comes with a multi-leveled problem of absorption. The resurrection disappears into the Spirit, the Spirit disappears into the risen Son, and, ultimately, all of humanity is subsumed into His eschatological corpus. I have not been concerned with Barth's incorporative paradigm in the present age. In the throes of the dialectic of this world God and human agents are distinguished *temporarily* (in the double sense of that word). Though belonging to the kingdom of God in the moment of revelation, humans trudge along brokenly in space and time, i.e., in the flesh. They live in their fleshly limitations while God lives in the freedom of Spirit. Even having been touched by revelation and born again into fellowship with God, they are still distinguished by their genuine otherness before God. In space and time and flesh the reconciled are *simul peccator et iustus* – or in this case – *simul fractus et aeternus*. But once they reach the final goal and have no other future except a future in the reticulated body of Christ, difference is severely relativized. Individual identities become nominal in Barth's panenchrism, for little can be said of delineation when human lives are subaltern to the one Christ-subject.

Our histories in our respective bodies will be preserved in Christ's body, Barth promises us. But is this preservation the same as the living flesh of the resurrection? Where is the genetic high fidelity in this vision? We will be fully alive, Barth assures us. But *how* will we be alive? How will *we* be alive? Again there seems something indiscernible about the Barthian future: not the enigma of the resurrection, but the puzzle of billions of bodies pressed together to infinite density.

CHAPTER 6

A Future in the Flesh

With special ardor Karl Barth sought to uphold human corporeality in the eschaton. In an age when it would have been easy to defer to a more generic Christian hope (the resurrection of the person, the resurrection of a body, the survival of the self, etc.), he professed the resurrection *of the flesh*. With increasing frequency and adamancy over the course of his career he affirmed the particular, physical, historical nature of Jesus' identity in His resurrection, and with it, the particular, physical, historical nature of our own identities in the coming resurrection. Against traditional reliance upon a concept of the immortality of an immaterial soul, Barth upheld the bodily constitution of the human in his or her future with God. Against the widespread demythologizing programs of twentieth century theologians,¹ Barth found creative ways to defend the corporeal dimensions of the Church's historic beliefs.

My great sympathy for his efforts notwithstanding, I have picked at the Gordian knot that is Barth's doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh. As the layers of his theology are peeled back, I have registered various concerns, all centered around the

¹ Here I am thinking of Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr, not to mention the more moderate "bad business" of Emil Brunner. For the "word and faith" position of Bultmann and John Knox, see Lorenzen, *Resurrection and Discipleship*, 36-63.

looming feeling that “the Beyond” he speaks of abrogates rather than fulfills human identity. Barth’s intense conviction about the penetrating presence of the living Jesus Christ in revelation leads him to speak of a *translation* of Jesus’ flesh into eternity. On a secondary level, through participation in the Risen One, other humans have their flesh go through a *translation* into the eternal idiom. And there lies my concern: something is lost in translation. Barth’s delineation of the resurrection of the dead yields a redeemed human being with a flesh-like quality – but only flesh-*like*.

Summary of Critiques

The questions I have posed to Barth in this study boil down to three specific related concerns about the disappearance of the human. Against the concept of eternalization I posed *the problem of continuity*, since Barth’s version of the resurrection abolishes the temporal mode of life native to human beings, and instead raises delimited human histories to pan-temporal stasis. Second, against the concept of manifestation I pressed *the problem of creatureliness*, since Barth construes glorification so much in terms of a publication and knowledge of our deific qualities through fellowship with God rather than a restoration of human attributes. Third, against Barth’s concept of incorporation I posed *the problem of particularity*, in which distinct human bodies, once their outgoing participative histories terminate, converge into the one body of Christ. That is, Barth’s doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh triply threatens humanity’s basic constitution by memorialization, by deification, and by recapitulation.

As for the problem of continuity, I observed in chapter three how Barth believes that the consummation will curtail all time, all process, all flesh as such. The process of creaturely life ceases with the final state; no further creational development is

granted by God. Barth's actualistic account is interested in taking a limited but concrete existence, a human's history between birth and death, and imparting to it a Beyond. Instead of supplying new time, the resurrection gathers up all that happened in a person's concrete existence grants it the omnitemporal accessibility of the Risen One. Caught up in the simultaneity of Christ's own presence, persons transcend the flux of the world. For Barth, the resurrection of the flesh does not denote a resumption of human development, but a leap into the divine experience of all reality happening at once.

In contrast, I have contended that Barth's quest for historical resolution does not match the biblical imagination's picture of a future both kinetic and sempiternal. Barth's concept of eternalization gropes after the elusive Platonic ideal of resolution but does not attain it, for the risen, collected history of a person would seem to repeat the horrors of suffering rather than overcome them. And even if these past horrors are edited from one's actual existence, Barth has not made a convincing case for the possibility of fresh historical action; not on Jesus' part in the forty days of His appearances, and certainly not for those of us who are raised when there is no more chronological time in which to act. More seriously, I demonstrated how Barth's speculation on limitation and eternalization requires one to see death as a natural phenomenon. *Thanatos* becomes an ally who resolves one's life and escorts one to the eternal mode of life. Even if God alone grants immortality, death has become His chief servant. In Barth's schema, the Christian hope for life is barely distinguishable from a longing for death.

Barth does not hypothesize about an immortal, immutable human soul. He speaks of human identity as a transient journey in both body and soul, a being-in-act. Nonetheless, Barth understands this life as the template which becomes immutable at

the resurrection. One's earlier kinetic identity is supposedly preserved by raising it beyond diachronic process. But let us not be blind to the fact that immutability – even if it characterizes a once-living history – is still immutability. Therefore, despite all of their reclaimed past actions, Barth's resurrected ones have a certain plastic quality to them; they are high fidelity recordings, fantastic holographic trophies; they are lives memorialized. In the end, human identities in the flesh are transcended – and thus bowdlerized. Translation into an eternal mode adds an impressive dimension, no doubt, something almost angelic, but the change also subtracts the basic temporal mode of creational existence.² It seems more accurate to say that Barth has cast the resurrection as a kind of cryogenic pantomime. The flesh is in stasis, and heaven is its reliquary. The dead do not come back to life for Barth. No, their histories rise.

As for the problem of creatureliness, I observed in chapter four that Barth conceived of the coming resurrection as a manifestation of our true identities in Christ. Our isolation from God has been remedied in the integrated being of Jesus, who brings the divine nature to the human nature, healing the latter through the former. Christ's covenantal integrity was sealed with His death, but is now revealed by His resurrection power, penultimately in this age, fully at His consummate return. At the close of time we will be manifested with Him in glory, a glorification which Barth interprets as a disclosure of our already-exalted identity in Christ. On the final Day the whole truth will be made public. That is, we will perceive God as He is, and thus perceive ourselves caught up in His own dignity.

In contrast, I have argued that Barth's depiction of manifestation, for all his provisos, is a noetic unveiling at the expense of ontic transformation. Human flesh is

² Barth's "angelic time" would have a ring of liberation to it through its ability to straddle heaven and earth (Ford, *Barth and God's Story*, 145), were it not for the sense that the blessed dead, made denizens of heaven, do not seem to have real access to time. What is more, any entry into chronological time will become an obsolete possibility after Christ's return stops all process.

not restored so much as its secret is revealed. Glorification becomes a matter of perception of God and self rather than a restoration of the life of the body. In fact, bodily glorification has become a rather obsolete dimension of salvation since the real matter for Barth is the exalted human nature already “raised” by Christ’s incarnation, by the proximity of the human nature to the divine nature. All that needs to transpire is the final expression of Christ’s parousia, His ultimate “manifest presence,” His definitive and universal coming, at which point the saints will show forth their hidden, deimorphic glory. I have explored beneath the surface of Barth’s presentation to get at its inner logic of proximity, i.e., his sense that salvation is, by definition, closeness to God and the sharing of His perfections. So far as his Christology and soteriology turn on the communication of predicates in the divine-human union, Barth writes in the Alexandrian or Lutheran mindset. Accordingly, I have raised the red flags of the Antiochene and Reformed schools. That is, Barth has a hard time explaining the divine and human natures in their differentiation, especially the human nature in its consummate state. When we are manifested with Christ and obtain His divine omniscience (among other things), how will we be fully human? What of our earthly dimensions once they have been subsumed in the divine life?

Barth’s grammar of proximity and manifestation tampers with creaturely boundaries. It makes human fullness dependent upon an elevation out of the earthly mode and a raising up of the consciousness to a divine plane of cognition. Barth’s sense of the resurrection, then, is not unlike Plato’s vision in the *Republic*: When the “real” world calls us from the darkened phenomenal world, we will see the truth behind the appearances, and understand ourselves as sharers of the great Reality. To accept Barth’s proposal about the coming resurrection is to expect that God will call us from a cave (so

to speak), not a tomb. That Barth insists that we will stumble forth in soul *and* body is immaterial: what really matters for him is that we will *see*, and that we will see *divinely*.

To the problem of particularity, in chapter five I investigated Barth's understanding of resurrection as incorporation. His mature work conceives of the resurrection as a movement of Christ outward, awakening others, edifying and enabling them to join Christ in His mission to the world. Jesus' resurrection seizes others in divine communion, uniting humans to Himself (and therefore to each other) in His earthly-historical body. I noted how Barth, when it comes to the resurrection-movement, has a difficult time demarcating the action of the risen Christ from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Christo-pneumatic power of the resurrection of the dead delivers the human being from isolation into fellowship with God. Bearing a panentheistic (better, panenchristic) pattern, Barth's anthropological ontology looks to relational categories (that is, participation in God's own being) to establish identity and reality.

Since he seemed tentative to spell out the incorporative line of thought all the way, I pressed Barth's eschatological patterns in *CD* to see what might come of human beings in the absolute future. I reasoned that if the expansion-contraction model of the event of election repeats itself in the event of resurrection (and I gave good reasons to think it does), then the outgoing movement of the risen Christ convenes with a great closure at His return. The differentiation of bodies within His ecclesial body seems to hold up in this age, since our spatio-temporal flesh marches along vis-à-vis dialectically with Christ's inclusive being. But once space and time end, once the dialectic is resolved, nothing can remain except the single, inclusive, representative body of Christ.

If there is any sense in which Barth can speak of individuated bodies in the eschaton, it is that once upon a time there were fleshly histories identifiable apart from

Christ. In the end, only the integrated monad remains. That is, Barth has substituted differentiation within Christ's body for the raising of many bodies. Where the biblical imagination casts a specific future for specific individuals, Barth's writings allow for little more than nominal, recapitulated and intra-Christic identities. In this troubling paradigm, the quandary is not just whether all will be saved in the end, but to what extent there will be identities to save in the first place.

If Barth's eschatology has careened off the tracks somewhere along the way, the derailment started with his equation of resurrection and revelation. This merger can be detected quite directly, of course, when he speaks of the Christian hope in terms of manifestation. But I find his resurrection-revelation equation to be decisive in a much greater sense. Very early in his theological career Barth latched onto the resurrection of the dead as a way of talking about the dialectical event of God and humanity in the moment of encounter. God sublates humanity – that is, He “dissolves and establishes” every human condition in the act of communicating Himself. Every dimension of the earthly mode must be completely abolished and reconfigured in divine categories. That pattern, amazingly enough, appears throughout Barth's mature doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh: in the end, human life is wholly stripped down and re-fabricated in God. Every articulation of life in the flesh is deconstructed and reconstituted with eternal syntax.

Is not the same sublation at work in Barth's concepts of eternalization, manifestation and incorporation? Human time is dissolved – but somehow transfiguration into eternity accounts for real time. Creaturehood as such is dissolved – but somehow the deified and manifested identity accounts for earthly parameters. Even specific humans bodies are dissolved in the end – but somehow the single incorporative Christ reconstitutes the outline of their own bodies. The dialectic, dramatically at work

in the present age, comes full bore in the coming age. As a way of underscoring the sense of peace and resolution, Barth calls the final resurrection “an end to the dialectic” or “a completion of the dialectic” – but this is the most dangerous theological move possible. Since Barth has conceived of revelation-resurrection as a sublation into God, will not the resolution implicit in the resurrection of the flesh mean a full conclusion of humanity into God? To complete the dialectical movement is to resolve human being too much in God’s own being. In other words, Barth’s fusion of the revelatory dialectic with the resurrection of the dead cannot produce an end that is not monistic. At best, time, space and body belong to the coming age only as paraphernalia, as colorants, as textures of the eternal state. Human nature is translated with the Word of God into an inscrutable heavenly language, irregardless of Barth’s desire to pronounce it with an earthly inflection. The flesh is hardly flesh anymore.

Barth and the Four Types

For all his fantastic, modern creativity, Barth’s doctrine of the general resurrection can be situated among the four historic views I outlined in chapter one. Indeed, there is something profoundly ecumenical about the results of his dogmatic project. Barth’s model shares certain programmatic features with the substituting-the-flesh type, the collecting-the-flesh type, the endowing-the-flesh type, and the deifying-the-flesh type. And, as I will argue, his model suffers from the same deficiency all of theirs do.

First of all, one may observe that Barth starts with themes of discontinuity with the resurrection of the dead and only then moves to themes of continuity. He understands the sublation of time into eternity to be complete in the resurrection. The existence of the creature in God in the Beyond constitutes a radical change, a full-scale

novum. Newness is Barth's primary move, which aligns him more closely with the substituting and deifying views. Like them, only after discussing the divine life does he go on to discuss dimensions of bodily continuity, the preserved human elements.

Nevertheless, Barth is absolutely committed to the continuity of the whole person in the sense of a total gathering of the human. Not an atom or instant of the past life is omitted in the resurrection body for Barth, since through his actualistic ontology he postulates a gathering together and eternalization of a person's entire history in the flesh. This pulling together of all the bits of human existence is even more total than what Jerome or Augustine or any representative of the collecting-the-flesh view ever imagined. Every state of the body throughout time perdures, for time itself is collected.³ Very much in contrast to the substituting view, the body that will be is *exactly* the same stuff as its earthly make-up. This perspective puts Barth in concert with the west.

A little surprisingly, however, Barth's eschatological vision turns out to be most compatible with the (rather eastern) deifying-the-flesh view. According to Barth, the whole person, body and soul, is caught up in an ascent to the triune God. Through the Holy Spirit the believer participates in Christ and so expresses the mystery of humanity's union with God. Communion with the risen Christ propels the believer heavenward, quietly deifying the human in this life and doing so overtly in the age to come. That is how the flesh is saved: the whole person participates in the divine nature. There are important differences between Barth and other deificationists, of course, most notably that sanctification is not a synergistic process for Barth. Yet his understanding of the

³ On this front, at least, Barth's solution eradicates the philosophical problem of identity at the resurrection. Human identity is the sum of everything done in one's historical existence, and its continuity assured only by the eternal perception of God. It also supplies a boggling response to the theological question about the age and bodily configuration of the risen dead. Answer: At all ages, and with all bodily configurations throughout one's life.

resurrection compares favorably with this type, since for both glorification is ultimately a matter of human ascension into the life of God.

If Barth deviates from the mainstream Christian tradition at any one point, it is his dismissal of a doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul. For him to have conceded this point would have been for him to concede that human beings have an inborn parity with God. Therefore, the substituting view and the endowing view, each of which leans heavily on the innate capacities of the soul, are most distant from Barth's own perspective. Again, however, the deifying view, which relies on the notion of the immortality of the soul the least, is most kindred.

Yet Barth still affirms the importance of heavenly *vision*, a feature common to all the historic views about the resurrection. For him, the resurrection of the flesh involves a revelation of God to the human in which the human sees and knows God. Even more, the resurrection is a revelation of the self, a perception of the fullness of one's own identity. In short, we will see God, and see with God's sight. For all its glorious reality, the end time is largely a matter of knowing, a perceiving of God as one rests "in His presence." Barth's dominating sense of the *visio Dei* accords with each of the four types – which in this case helps to identify a cancerous aspect of the Christian tradition.

Remembered in Heaven or Resurrected on Earth?

If Barth's doctrine of the general resurrection fails in the likeness of Christian theology's past failures, it certainly has to do with the sad fact that a hope centered around the vision of God makes the redemption of the body inconsequential. Of course, each of the four types is eager to cover its bases, superadding corporeality to the human once having secured the spiritual dimension of human beatification. But that is the very flaw

with each approach: superadded corporeality is ornamental. Once the soul (or Christified human) has been said to perceive God, the restoration of the body can be no more than an afterthought, a footnote about anthropic completion. In these traditional paradigms are we not coaxed to gaze past the redeemed bodily crust to the real salvation, that is, to the beatification of the human consciousness? If “eternal life in the presence of God” is what matters, will not resurrected flesh be an auxiliary appendage to the glorified person, an adjunct at best? Should it be any surprise that to this day such a widespread belief in “going to heaven” has supplanted the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead?

I have observed on several occasions that Barth successfully distances himself from the crasser conceptions of going-to-heaven-when-I-die. He counters escapist tendencies with his actualistic ontology and an abiding sense of responsibility for the world. Likewise, throughout his theological career, Barth softens the dualism between soul and body so as to make a purely spiritual future impossible.

Nevertheless, I reiterate that Barth has pursued a more eastern tack in describing the whole person as being drawn up into the divine nature through the presence of God in the event of revelation, a drawing up that is absolute at death (or Christ’s return). Perfection occurs as humans are elevated and manifested as participants in the perfections of God. Glorification occurs as humans are caught up in the heavenly mode of life, living as God lives and seeing as He sees. That is to say, *Barth has given us a doctrine of personal ascension, not bodily resurrection*. He has taught that at the final trumpet a human will be eternalized, viz., “raised” to full participation in God’s heavenly time. He has taught that a human will be manifested, viz., “raised” to full participation in God’s heavenly, perceptive powers. And Barth has taught that in all this a human will be incorporated, viz., “raised” into participation with God through Christ’s one exalted

body. To my mind, that kind of translation is oriented very little toward the idea of “the resurrection from the dead” and very much toward the idea of being “in Christ.” The latter, a Pauline watchword, could be said to encapsulate Barth’s dogmatic sensibility. Now, the bodily dimension has its share in a human’s in-Christness. Barth states that regularly enough. But the physical body as such means little, for glorification concerns the more general, upward movement of a human’s sublated history.⁴ With Barth’s dogmatics, the resurrection languishes as a subset of the ascension.

One might suppose that my criticisms about Barth’s less-than-fleshly picture of the future leads to a dismissal of his eschatological project. Not necessarily. Barth’s talk about the eschaton is actually quite useful, I think, if one sees it as a doctrine of the *intermediate* state. Is there not a sense in which in-Christness contravenes death? When the Jesus of the fourth gospel speaks of an extended power of resurrection in which “everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (Jn 11:26), or when Paul, wasting away, pines to “be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8), there is demonstrated a belief in the God who sustains one even in death. The victory of Jesus is too complete to take death seriously at any point. Even earthly annihilation cannot thwart the power of God to preserve humanity. Christians have already been baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection; they have already been, one might say, dissolved and established, remembered (re-membered) by the covenanting God.

Barth’s passing comments about immediate glorification at death betray the fact that he has conflated the intermediate and final states. Consider how towards the end

⁴The theme of glorification-by-relationship, the ascended and ascending life, has been picked up by various modern theologians. Among Lutheran scholars, Robert W. Jenson affirms that “being in the kingdom and being perfectly in Christ will be the same thing” (“The Great Transformation,” in *The Last Things: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Eschatology*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 34). Aiming more generally at trinitarian participation, Ted Peters says, “The total relationality within the divine perichoresis . . . is life untrammled by passage and death. When historicized, it results in victory over death through resurrection” (*God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993], 182).

of his life Barth makes some rather transparent comments about the dead having entered into glory. Goethe may have erred significantly in his Enlightenment theology, but, “We can only say that as far as he himself is concerned he now knows better” (IV/2, 419). Or, mentioning dead friends, Barth opines, “There now shines on them the eternal light in which we, *adhuc peregrinantes*, shall some day need no more dogmatics” (IV/3, xiii). Even though Christ has not returned to earth, they have already been raised from the dead. Therefore, when Barth goes to talk about the final parousia, it is no more than a “direct” translation for all humankind to the divine glory, a translation which will have been hitherto accomplished by death.

Whether we describe it as rapture or change, a direct transition to participation in the glory which comes to the creaturely world in and with the coming of Jesus Christ can be the end of the Christian instead of dying – *the same transition to the same participation in the same glory* which is awaited indirectly, in the passage from life through death to the resurrection, by those already dead, but in this other form by the Christians who will then be alive. . . . [A]longside the many dead who will then be raised, there will also be those who are still alive and who thus reach their end in this way. . . . Those who are already dead, but raised from the dead, will share this [change] with some who are still alive (IV/3, 925, emphasis added).

According to Barth, one is raised instantly at death.⁵ And these risen dead do not look forward to any further glorification. By implication, when Christ returns He will terminate the remainder of humanity and raise them to the same heavenly status as the dead. There is no intermediate state in Barth’s dogmatics, or, rather, Barth has made into the final state that which Christians have referred to historically as the intermediate state.

The serious and abiding flaw of his presentation, however, is not unlike the flaw of the main Christian traditions: Barth secures a heavenly future, and then, once past the celestial gates, smuggles in corporeal dimensions. Was this not the tendency of Origen

⁵ Thus Barth can be spoken of as a major exponent of the “immediate resurrection” view (John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate*, new ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 106).

and Augustine, Maximus and Thomas? Did they not send the saints to heaven and then, almost as an afterthought, ascribe something quasi-fleshly and quasi-earthly to their heavenly identity? But – and here the Church’s manifold spiritualizing tendencies must be repudiated⁶ – the intermediate state is not the final state. Eternal perdurance is not the same as everlasting life. The heavenly vision of God is not the same as the recreation of the world. Having a share in Christ’s body is not the same as receiving from Him one’s own resurrected body. In short, the Christian consolation is not the Christian hope!

The theological fallout from giving primacy to the-future-as-heavenly-vision idea is great. Several loci are damaged by it, though it hits the doctrine of humanity the hardest. If we humans are to hope for an eternal, blessed “presence” with God at death, then one inevitably questions to what extent we are at heart temporal, creaturely, particular entities. Doubt about our terrestrial parameters seeps into our doctrines of God and ecclesiology, not to mention ethics. We try to place humanity so much in God’s heavenly sphere that we degrade our earthly identity. That is why I have militated against Barth’s position, and why I have stressed so relentlessly the patristic *credo in carnis resurrectionem*. Where Barth hopes for resolution of the human through eternalized time, I believe the scriptures affirm time’s *resumption*. Where Barth would have a noetic revelation of our hidden, inner union with Christ, the gospel puts forward the hope of *reidentification*. Where Barth has toyed with the possibilities of pneumatic recapitulation,

⁶ “For many today, living within the assumed long-running war of attrition between secularist denial and obstinate belief, the resurrection validates a ‘supernatural’ view of the world; it means that there really is a ‘life after death,’ that the destiny of Jesus’ followers is ‘to go to heaven when they die,’ and that the true realities in this world are ‘eternal’ or ‘spiritual’ rather than ‘physical’ One might suppose the resurrection [of Jesus] itself, both as event and as story, might challenge the semi-platonic worldview within which such things find easy acceptance. But church history, not to mention hymnody, suggests otherwise” (Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 722).

of embodiment into Christ's risen body, the gospel unapologetically holds out the hope of pneumatic *recorporealization*.

It is not the objective of my project to construct a better doctrine of the general resurrection. That would require another volume. However, it is appropriate to name several things that must be *undone* if such a project is to go forward. First, Barth's fusion of resurrection and revelation must be unbound. There are links between Easter and Pentecost, no doubt, but treating them as two expressions of the same *parousia* cannot bring about the proper doctrinal affirmations, especially about the final state. We must let resurrection be resurrection. Second, the idea of the exchange of properties between the Son's dual natures must be undone, at least so far as that exchange would make humanity operate according to a divine mode. The Word blesses humanity by becoming flesh, but the flesh never attains supra-creational transcendence. That is, we would do well to step back to a more Antiochene or Reformed understanding of the integrity of the human nature and divine nature in the one person of Christ, and the impossibility of their admixture or confusion in Him.⁷ Third, the equation of the Son in His resurrection and the Spirit in His ministry must be undone. The post-mortem history of Jesus must stick very closely to His fleshly resurrection, His ascension, His heavenly session and pending return, where the Holy Spirit must be the one identified as He who, interposing Himself during Jesus' corporeal absence from us, is God in direct interaction with humanity. The relationship between the Son and the Spirit must be more carefully orchestrated, so that the incarnate Son relies on the Holy Spirit at all points, even now as the Son petitions the Father to send the Spirit. By freeing up the interval between the Son and the Spirit, the latter is able to serve more

⁷ Alternatively, along Alexandrian or Lutheran lines, one might deepen Barth's thoughts on the divine kenosis in order to understand the Son of God as wholly – and eternally – given to life in the human mode, so that our own resurrected future remains a future of God-with-us on earth rather than we-with-God in heaven.

convincingly as the definer of humanity in its fleshly character. The *sōma pneumatikos* (1 Cor 15:44) is the transformed – but still human! – body engineered and fueled by Him. From eternity past to eternity future the Spirit sustains the difference between Creator and creature – and is therefore able to coordinate the fellowship of human flesh with God.⁸ If we are to have real purchase on human renewal in the eschaton, it must be done with pneumatological currency.⁹ As each Barthian conflation is pried apart, the possibility of speaking of everlasting life in the flesh reappears.

Karl Barth died on the tenth of December, 1968. The night before, while writing, he had been interrupted mid-sentence by a telephone call from his lifelong friend, Eduard Thurneysen. That sentence would never be finished. In the morning, Nelly Barth slipped into the bedroom to play a record of Mozart, with which she, in vain, attempted to wake her husband. During the night the great theologian had slipped from the flesh into the celestial Beyond. He went to be with the Victor. But little more remains to be said about Barth on that score. What can and may and must be said concerns this earthly side alone: that one day he too will rise and see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living.

⁸ That is to say, one might accept Barth's concept of "the humanity of God" provided the Spirit too, in some significant sense, is understood as the subject and object of election.

⁹ Cf. van Driel, *Incarnation Anyway*, 161.

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