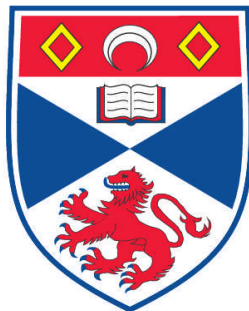


**KARL BARTH'S ACADEMIC LECTURES ON EPHESIANS  
(GÖTTINGEN, 1921-1922) : AN ORIGINAL TRANSLATION,  
ANNOTATION, AND ANALYSIS**

**Ross M. Wright**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
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University of St. Andrews**



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Karl Barth's Academic Lectures on Ephesians

Göttingen, 1921-1922

An Original Translation, Annotation, and Analysis

Ross McGowan Wright

PhD Systematic Theology

Submitted December 30, 2006

# Abstract

This thesis consists of an original translation, annotation, and analysis of Karl Barth's Academic Lectures on Ephesians, delivered in Göttingen, winter semester, 1921-1922. The translation is composed from a typescript of Barth's handwritten manuscript, located in the Karl Barth Archives, Basel, and is annotated for scholarly research, including complete bibliographical information on Barth's sources.

Barth's exposition is a detailed exegesis of the Greek text of Eph. 1:1-23, comprising 13 lectures, with a summary of Ephesians 2-6 in the final chapter. Materially and formally, the exposition strongly resembles *Romans II* and Barth's 1919 sermons on Ephesians, which the study examines. It also exhibits the theological objectivity of the Göttingen period, chiefly because of Barth's explication of *gnosis* in Ephesians and his appropriation of Calvin's theology of the knowledge of God.

Barth made a material discovery in his study of Ephesians that fundamentally shaped his subsequent theology. He observes in Eph. 1:3-14 a train of thought which witnesses to God's action to the creature in Christ and the creature's subsequent movement to God. He concludes that we have come *from* God, who has chosen us in eternal election, and we are moving *toward* the glory of God, our divinely appointed goal. The exposition's central theme is expressed in Barth's claim that "the knowledge of God is the presupposition" and "the goal" of human existence.

The distinguishing mark of Barth's theological exegesis is its concreteness, that is, his ability to speak about the text's contemporary meaning without lapsing into theological abstraction. This concreteness is the consequence of his theological hermeneutic. He describes the interpretive event as a field of action, consisting of the biblical text, the activity of the interpreter, and the divine speech act.

## Declarations:

I, Ross McGowan Wright, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately \_\_\_\_\_ words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of candidate \_\_\_\_\_

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## Contents

<b>Preface</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Thesis Introduction</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Chapter One: The Significance of the Ephesians Lectures in Barth's Early Theology</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. Ephesians in Safenwil and Göttingen</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Barth's Ephesians and <i>Romans</i></b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3. Occasion, Form, and Interpretive Approach</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Appendix: Description of Contents</b>	<b>19</b>

### Translation of the Academic Lectures on Ephesians

<b>I. Preface Eph. 1:1-2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. Doxology Eph. 1:3-14</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>1. Overview</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>2. Blessed with Spiritual Blessings in Christ v. 3</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>3. The Blessings from which we Come: Election vv. 4-6</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>4. The Blessings in which we Stand: Forgiveness vv. 7-10</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>5. The Blessings to which we are Heading: Hope vv. 11-14</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>III. Prayer Eph. 1:15-23</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>IV. Summary of Ephesians 2-6</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Appendix A Barth's Translations of Ephesians 1</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Appendix B Deleted Portion</b>	<b>134</b>

## Analysis

<b>Chapter Two: Humanity in Christ: “von Gott her. . . auf Gott hin”</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	
1. Barth’s Exposition of Ephesians 1:3	25
2. Eternal Election: Ephesians 1:4-6	33
3. The Knowledge of God: Ephesians 1:7-11	40
4. Christian Hope: Ephesians 1:11-14	46
<b>Conclusion</b>	
<b>Chapter Three:</b>	
<b>Hermeneutical Orientation and Exegetical Procedures</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	
1. Barth’s Account of the Interpretive Situation	53
2. The Hermeneutical Orientation of the Exposition	57
3. Exegetical Procedures	62
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Chapter Four: Barth’s Existential Interpretation in the 1919 Sermons</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	
1. Background and Summary of the Sermons’ Contents	82
2. Continuity and Discrepancies with the Lectures	87
3. The Role of Experience in the Knowledge of God	91
4. Interpretive Moves	95
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>Translation of the 1919 Sermons on Ephesians 1</b>	
Eph. 1:1-14	110
Eph. 1:15-23	119
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>147</b>

## Preface

A number of debts were incurred in this work of translation and analysis. The project would not have been possible without the encouragement and support of Dr. Hans-Anton Drewes of the Karl Barth Archives in Basel. Herr Drewes consented to the use of the typescript and provided invaluable guidance along the way, including a warm welcome to the Archives in July, 2004 and the invitation to participate in the Karl Barth *Tagung* in Leuenberg, Switzerland. Dr. Mark Elliott allowed portions of the text to be discussed in a translation study group at the University of St Andrews and made valuable suggestions, which have been incorporated in the translation. Ms. Gisela Kreglinger, a colleague at the University, read several portions of the translation and made valuable suggestions possible only for a native German speaker. Professor Alan Torrance believed in the project from the beginning. Without his encouragement and guidance, the project would never have been completed. Professor John Webster, University of Aberdeen, alerted me the importance of Barth's expository lectures at the Barth-Bonhoeffer Conference in 2000 and provided detailed guidance in the translation and interpretation of Barth's lectures. A grant from the Russell Trust permitted important archival work in Basel. Most importantly, my wife, Lynda, and our sons Ross, Elliott, and Owen have sacrificed much to support me in the project. Their love and support has made it possible, and therefore this theological reflection on the praise of God is dedicated to them.

Ross M. Wright

Ashland, Virginia, December 2006

## ABBREVIATIONS

- BDAG *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, revised and edited by Frederick William Danker. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- BL *Die Bibel oder die ganze Heilige Schrift des Alten und Neuen Testaments nach der deutschen Übersetzung Martin Luthers*. Stuttgart: Deutsch Bibelgesellschaft, 1912.
- B-Th I *Karl Barth-Eduard Thurneysen: Briefwechsel*, 1. 1913-1921. Edited by Eduard Thurneysen. Zurich: TVZ, 1973.
- B-Th II *Karl Barth-Eduard Thurneysen: Briefwechsel*, 2. 1921-1930. Edited by Eduard Thurneysen. Zürich: TVZ, 1987.
- CD Karl Barth. *Church Dogmatics*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-1975.
- CiE John Calvin. "Commentarius in Epistolam ad Ephesios." In *Corpus Reformatorum*. Volume 79. Chapter I, 145-160. Edited by William Baum, etc. C. A. Schwetschke: 1863-1900.
- CoE John Calvin. "Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians." Chapter I, 195-218. In *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*. Translated by William Pringle. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993.
- EE "Erklärung des Epheserbrief." Lectures delivered in Göttingen, winter semester, 1921/1922. Typed manuscript copy in Karl Barth Archives, Basel, Switzerland.
- ER Karl Barth. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Translated by Edwyn Hoskyns from the 6<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1957.
- GD Karl Barth. *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*. Vol. 1. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Edited by Hannelotte Reiffen. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.
- KB Eberhard Busch. *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*. Translated by John Bowden. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.



- KD Karl Barth. *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*. Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1932, and Zurich: EVZ, 1938-65.
- NTG *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Eberhard and Erwin Nestle. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1916.
- R I Karl Barth. *Der Römerbrief (Erste Fassung) 1919*. Edited by Hermann Schmidt. Zurich: TVZ, 1985.
- R II \_\_\_\_\_ . *Der Römerbrief, 1922*. 5th edition. Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1929.
- RT *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925*. Translated by James D. Smart. Richmond: John Knox, 1964.
- SoE John Calvin. *Sermons on The Epistle to the Ephesians*. Translated by Arthur Golding from the French edition of 1562 and revised in 1973. Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1973.
- SsE John Calvin. "Sermons sur L'epitre aux Ephesiens" in *Corpus Reformatorum*, Vol. 79, 245-350. Edited by William Baum, etc. C. A. Schwetschke: 1863-1900.
- RB Karl Barth. *Die Theologie der reformierten Bekenntnisschriften, Vorlesung Göttingen sommersemester 1923*. Edited by Eberhard Busch. Zurich: TVZ, 1998.
- RC \_\_\_\_\_ . *The Theology of the Reformed Confessions*. Translated and annotated by Darrell L. Guder and Judith J. Guder. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- WG \_\_\_\_\_ . *The Word of God and the Word of Man*. Translated by Douglas Horton. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928.
- WW \_\_\_\_\_ . *Witness to the Word: A Commentary on John 1 by Karl Barth, Lectures at Münster in 1925 and at Bonn in 1933*. Edited by Walther Fürst. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.

## Introduction

The plethora of recent theological commentaries and related projects testifies to a renewed interest in theological exegesis. This trend is exemplified in the New Horizons commentary series, which is designed to integrate systematic theology and exegesis in the service of biblical interpretation.<sup>1</sup> However, despite significant scholarly activity across several disciplines, the task of reintegrating dogmatics and exegesis has proven elusive, and fundamental questions remain: What is theological exegesis? How can interpretation of Scripture be properly theological without becoming abstract or losing traction with the text?<sup>2</sup> In light of these questions, Barth's expository lectures on Scripture commend themselves. Between 1921 and 1938, Barth offered 14 semester-length expository courses on the Pauline and general epistles, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Gospel of John.<sup>3</sup> The sheer volume of the material testifies to the importance of biblical exposition in his early academic work. Nevertheless, the exegetical lectures have long been regarded as merely a footnote to more important work.<sup>4</sup> To date, only the

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<sup>1</sup> Joel B Green and Max Turner, eds., *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 2. The current interest in pre-critical exegesis is a distinct but related development. For a good review of the state of play in this area by a theologian, see Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Childs, "Recovering Theological Exegesis," 17.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed description of each course, see the appendix at the conclusion of this chapter.

<sup>4</sup> Studies of Barth's theological development that omit the exegetical lectures in their discussions of the early period include Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, trans., John Drury (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971) and Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to his Early Theology, 1910-1931* (London: SCM Press, 1931). Bruce McCormack notes the lectures but does not discuss them. See *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909—1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 293-94; 377-78; 415-16. Eberhard Busch's otherwise informative and insightful chapter on Barth's early theology of the word does not discuss the exegetical lectures. See "The Wonderful Beginning: The Doctrine of Revelation and of the Knowledge of

courses on 1 Corinthians, Philippians and John's Gospel are published,<sup>5</sup> and these have often been treated rather superficially, "as a quarry for theological themes," or as evidence of Barth's posture towards the historical-critical method, rather than as "straightforward attempts to talk about the contents of the Bible,"<sup>6</sup> as he intended them. The primary reason for this neglect is that Barth's exegesis is considered problematic, even by those who are prepared to learn from his dogmatics. James Wharton summed up the prevailing view not long after Barth's death when he observed that in many places, his "exegesis has proven offensive."<sup>7</sup> More recently, Brevard Childs offered the following assessment:

Barth's exegesis, for all its brilliant insights and massive stimulus, remained a "virtuoso performance" (the term is Paul McGlasson's) which could not be duplicated and which left little lasting impact either on the biblical academy or on

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God," 57-81 in *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley; ed., Darrell L. Guder and Judith J. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> The lectures on 1 Corinthians, delivered in 1923, were published as *Die Auferstehung der Toten. Eine akademische Vorlesung über 1 Kor. 15* (Munich: Kaiser, 1924); ET: *The Resurrection of the Dead*, trans., H. J. Stenning (Hodder and Stoughton, 1933). Stenning's work omits the Greek text. Consequently, the reader cannot distinguish between the translator's rendition of 1 Corinthians and Barth's, a significant liability, since Barth frequently conveys important interpretive decisions through his translation. Barth's sources are not identified. The Philippians lectures, first delivered in 1924 and repeated in Münster, 1927-1928, were published as *Erklärung des Philipperbriefes* (Munich: Kaiser, 1928); ET: *The Epistle to the Philippians*, trans., James W. Leitch (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002). Like Stenning, Leitch omits the Greek text, but manages to convey Barth's idiosyncratic translation and includes the minimal source information from the GT. The lectures on John's Gospel, delivered in Münster and repeated in Bonn, were published in the Barth *Gesamtausgabe* as *Erklärung des Johannes-Evangeliums (Kapitel 1-8) Vorlesung Münster Wintersemester 1925/1926, wiederholt in Bonn, Sommersemester 1933* (Zurich: TVZ, 1976). This edition uses the typescript of the 1933 lectures and incorporates material from the 1925-1926 cycle; ET: [only the introduction and exposition of John 1]: *Witness to the Word: A Commentary on John 1*, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> John Webster, *Word and Church: Essays in Christian Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 89. Two early exceptions to this pattern are Rudolf Bultmann's 1926 review of *Die Auferstehung der Toten* and Ernst Käsemann's brief but penetrating analysis of the Philippians lectures. Both are models of how to read the exegetical lectures in that they address Barth's approach to the text and the theological content of the exposition. Rudolph Bultmann, "Karl Barth, *Die Auferstehung der Toten*," *Theologischer Blätter* V (1926): 1-14; GT: "Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*," in *Faith and Understanding*, ed., Robert F. Funk; trans., Louise Pettibone Smith (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 66-94; Ernst Käsemann, "Kritische Analyse von Phil. 2.5-11," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 47 (1950): 313-360.

<sup>7</sup> James Wharton, "Karl Barth as Exegete and his Influence on Biblical Interpretation," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 28 (1972), 5.

the church. Here the contrast with the enduring biblical contribution of the Reformers is painfully evident.<sup>8</sup>

Frances Watson raises the question of whether Barth's biblical expositions should be regarded as "strong misreading[s]" . . . [which are] hermeneutically interesting but exegetically problematic."<sup>9</sup> Given the largely negative assessment of Barth's exegesis, it is not surprising that the biblical expositions have suffered neglect.

Recently, however, new studies on the exegetical lectures have significantly advanced the research and demonstrated the importance of this material in Barth's early theology. Examples of this new scholarly attention include the reissue of the Philippians lectures with introductory essays on Barth's approach to theological exegesis and the decision to feature the John lectures at the annual Barth conferences in Europe and North America.<sup>10</sup> There are two primary explanations for this shift of attention. First, Barth's early academic work has emerged as a promising new area of research. The publication of his historical and dogmatic lectures from the Göttingen period, part of continuing work on the *Gesamtausgabe*, has led to several important new studies on the early Barth.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Brevard Childs, "Toward Recovering Theological Exegesis," *Pro Ecclesia* 6 (1996): 19.

<sup>9</sup> Francis Watson, "Barth's *Philippians* as Theological Exegesis," in *The Epistle to the Philippians*, xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce McCormack, "The Significance of Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis of Philippians," v-xxv; Francis Watson, "Barth's *Philippians* as Theological Exegesis," xxvi – li, both in *The Epistle to the Philippians* (2001). Both conferences yielded important journal articles: Dick Boer, "'Bedrängnis muß groß sein . . . ' Einführung in Karl Barths Erklärung des Johannes-Evangeliums (1925-1926)" in *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 16 (2000): 8-29. Boer discusses the hermeneutical orientation of the exposition and the central theological motifs. Georg Plasger, "Wort vom Wort," in *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 16 (2000): 43-58. Klaus Wengst, "Der Zeichenbegriff in Barths Kommentar zum Johannesevangelium," in *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 16 (2000): 30-42. Wengst compares Barth's handling of this motif to Bultmann's and discusses the significance of Barth's use of the final form of the text. Katherine A. Grieb, "Last Things First: Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis of 1 Corinthians in *The Resurrection of the Dead*," in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56 (2003): 49-64; David Ferguson, "Barth's *Resurrection of the Dead*: Further Reflections," in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56 (2003): 65-72.

<sup>11</sup> *Die Theologie Calvins, 1922*, ed., Hans Scholl (Zurich: TVZ, 1993); *The Theology of John Calvin*, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); *Die Theologie Schleiermachers: Vorlesung, Göttingen, Wintersemester 1923-1924*, ed., Dietrich Ritschl (Zurich: TVZ, 1978); ET: *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen Winter Semester of 1923/24*, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark: 1982); *Die Theologie der reformierten Bekenntnisschriften*, Vorlesung Göttingen

John Webster's recent monograph, *Barth's Earlier Theology*, includes an important essay on *The Resurrection of the Dead* that introduces a new level of analytical rigor to the study of the exegetical lectures.<sup>12</sup> Second, the current revival of interest in theological exegesis has contributed to a climate more favorable to Barth's approach to *Erklärung*.<sup>13</sup> In light of these developments, it is noteworthy that a critical edition of the expository courses is forthcoming as part of the Barth *Gesamtausgabe*.<sup>14</sup> Soon, a significant body of new material will be available for scholarly research.

The current study is a contribution to this new development in Barth research. It consists of an original translation, annotation, and analysis of Barth's first expository course, the Academic Lectures on Ephesians, Göttingen, winter semester, 1921-1922. The translation is composed from a typescript of Barth's handwritten manuscript, produced under the direction of Hinrich Stoevesandt, former archivist of the Karl Barth Archives, in anticipation of the forthcoming German edition.<sup>15</sup> To my knowledge, it is

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Sommersemester 1923, ed., Eberhard Busch (Zurich: TVZ, 1998); *The Theology of the Reformed Confessions*, trans., annotated by Darrell L. Guder and Judith J. Guder (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2002); *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*. i. *Prolegomena, 1924*, ed., Hannelotte Reiffen (Zurich, TVZ, 1985); ii. *Die Lehre von Gott/Die Lehre vom Menschen, 1924/1925*; ed., Hinrich Stoevesandt (Zurich: TVZ, 1990); ET (Vol. i.) *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*. Vol. 1, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley; ed., Hannelotte Reiffen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991). The best study of the early Barth for understanding the exegetical lectures is John Webster, *Barth's Earlier Theology: Four Studies* (London: T & T Clark, 2005). Webster places the early historical and exegetical lectures in the context of Barth's development as a church theologian and includes a detailed analysis of *The Resurrection of the Dead*. See also Eberhard Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, ed., Darrell L. Guder and Judith J. Guder, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Webster, chapter 4 in *Barth's Earlier Theology*.

<sup>13</sup> In a recent address, R. R. Reno points out the tendency to abstraction in current "theological" commentaries. They draw theological conclusions from the text, with the result that the commentary "arches away" from the text. By contrast, he observes that Barth's theological exegesis creates a web of intratextual allusions which reiterates the theological content of the passage in relation to Jesus Christ, the center of the Bible. "Biblical Theology and Theological Exegesis," an address at Conference on Biblical Hermeneutics, University of St Andrews, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> For a brief discussion of the background to the exegetical lectures and a full discussion of the forthcoming *Gesamtausgabe* edition, see Hans-Anton Drewes, "Die Zukunft der Karl Barth-gesamtausgabe," *Verkündigung und Forschung* 46: (2001).

<sup>15</sup> Thus, we can be confident that it is 99% accurate. Stoevesandt knew Barth's work well and was eminently qualified to decipher Barth's notoriously difficult handwriting.

the first comprehensive analysis of the contents and exegetical approach of Barth's Ephesians course as well as the first complete English translation. Therefore, the thesis is an exercise in the craft of translation and scholarly editing. Accordingly, the translation is designed to stand on its own, enabling readers without knowledge of German or Barth's technical vocabulary to read the lectures. The German text is provided in a note in order to identify signature Barthian expressions and to clarify certain issues in translation. Furthermore, the text is thoroughly annotated according to the standards of the critical editions of the Barth *Gesamtausgabe*. Barth's sources are identified and full bibliographical information provided, including the standard English translation.<sup>16</sup> Where none exists, I provide my own. Where Barth misquotes or takes liberties with the source, the original text is provided and the differences noted. Mindful that Barth's manuscript was prepared for oral delivery, I have adopted a translation strategy designed to enable the reader to "hear" the lectures as his students heard them.<sup>17</sup> For example, Greek and other non-German languages are preserved in the body of the text, in accordance with Barth's delivery of the lectures; the translation is provided in a note.<sup>18</sup> I attempt to preserve Barth's unusual juxtaposition of lively, direct address with long, serpentine sentences which negotiate considerable technical exegetical detail. Barth made large demands on his listeners, and I have resisted the temptation to simplify or improve his style. The Göttingen course was selected, because it is Barth's first attempt

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<sup>16</sup> Barth did not include bibliographical information in the lectures, and this task was made considerably easier because of Jörg-Michael Bohnet's "*Apparat der von Barth verwendeten Literature*," prepared in April, 2000 for the forthcoming German edition and brought to my attention by Hans-Anton Drewes, archivist at the Karl Barth Archives.

<sup>17</sup> This is the approach adopted by Guder in RC. See "Translator's Preface."

<sup>18</sup> The Greek is not translated, although readers without Greek should be able to follow the exposition simply by referring to an English translation, because Barth works through the passage in easily identifiable textual units. Barth provides his own translation from the Nestle text (1912) at the beginning of each major section. A translation of *his* translation is provided, because his rendering of the Greek is a crucial part of his interpretation. This Greek to German to English version should make it easier to follow the exposition.

at a form of discourse which develops considerably during the Göttingen and Münster period. Therefore the project lays the groundwork for future research on the remaining unpublished lectures.

The analytical portion of the thesis examines Barth's exegesis – how he reads Ephesians, what he says about the epistle's central matters, and how he makes his way through the text to arrive at an interpretation. Because there is no widely accepted methodological norm for analyzing exegesis, a word is in order about the approach adopted here.<sup>19</sup> I am chiefly concerned with the theological content of Barth's interpretation and his approach to theological exegesis. Previous studies of Barth on Scripture have tended to emphasize either his hermeneutical principles or his use of the historical-critical method.<sup>20</sup> Although I address both matters, they are of secondary

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<sup>19</sup> Paul McGlasson states the matter clearly in *Jesus and Judas: Biblical Exegesis in Barth* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 2-3. He notes that many so called studies of Barth's exegesis are in fact a form of "systematic hermeneutic," and adds: "A disciplined and widely shared language for the description and analysis of biblical exegesis that is not basically a systematic hermeneutic of one sort of another is not now available."

<sup>20</sup> Recent hermeneutical studies include Richard E Burnett, *Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis: the Hermeneutical Principles of the Römerbrief Period* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck: 2001) and Helmut Kirchstein, *Der souveräne Gott und die Heilige Schrift: Einführung in die Biblische Hermeneutik Karl Barths* (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 1998). The literature on Barth's use of the historical-critical method is vast; some of the notable examples include Walter Lindemann, *Karl Barth und die kritische Schriftauslegung* (Hamburg-Bargstedt: H. Reich, 1973), 33-41, which discusses *The Resurrection of the Dead* as an example of Barth's theologically informed use of critical research. Christina Ann Baxter, "The Movement from Exegesis to Dogmatics in the Theology of Karl Barth, with Special Reference to *Romans*, *Philippians* and *Church Dogmatics*" (PhD diss., University of Durham, 1981) is the most thorough study in English of Barth's use of the historical-critical method. She devotes most of her attention to CD but includes references to the Philippians lectures and correctly distinguishes between Barth's purposes in the exposition and CD. Bruce L. McCormack, "Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis of the New Testament," in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective*, ed., Mark S Burroughs and Paul Rorem (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 332-38. Mary K Cunningham's *What Is Theological Exegesis? Interpretation and Use of Scripture in Barth's Doctrine of Election* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1995) is ostensibly about Barth's interpretation of Eph. 1:3 in CD, but she relies heavily on the John lectures to show how Barth juxtaposes Eph. 1:3 and John 1 in his reconstruction of the doctrine of election. Cunningham's otherwise insightful study fails to distinguish adequately between the exegetical sections of CD and the expository lectures. The reader must look carefully to see when she is quoting from CD and when she begins to cite the John lectures. Since the crux of her argument is that Barth creatively juxtaposes and links biblical texts to arrive at his interpretation, the failure to delineate more clearly between dogmatics and biblical exposition considerably weakens the argument. For studies which include the expositions in thematic studies, see Adriaan Geense, *Auferstehung und Offenbarung*.

importance to the study. While I draw on the recent hermeneutical analyses by Richard Burnett and Helmut Kirchstein, my approach differs from theirs in an important respect. I present a close reading of discrete sections of Barth's exegesis in order to describe how the arrow of exegetical analysis moves to and through the text.<sup>21</sup> I am interested in the hermeneutical orientation of this particular exposition and how it shapes Barth's interpretation of Ephesians rather than in formulating a systematic hermeneutic. This approach honors Barth's emphasis on content over methodological considerations. Likewise, Barth's use of "historical exegesis" (his term) is of secondary importance and is analyzed chiefly for the ways in which it shapes his interpretation of Ephesians.<sup>22</sup> There are two reasons for this approach. First, Barth's use of the historical-critical method has been thoroughly examined elsewhere, and the Ephesians lectures reveal nothing substantially new. More importantly, when historical-critical categories dominate the analysis, Barth's main concerns remain unexamined. By contrast, I emphasize Barth's theological concerns and their effect on his interpretation. In particular, the study examines his understanding of the nature of the biblical text, the activity of the interpreter, the divine speech act, and the relation of the text to the *Sache*, or subject matter of the Bible.

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*Über den Ort der Frage nach der Auferstehung Jesu Christi in der heutigen deutschen evangelischen Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht: 1971), 13-30. Geense is particularly insightful on Barth's understanding of the relation between the text and the *Sache* and on Barth's distinctions between *Inhalt* and *Thema*, p. 14. David L. Mueller, *Foundations of Karl Barth's Doctrine of Reconciliation: Jesus Christ Crucified and Risen* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Meilen Press, 1990), 76-150 has a lengthy discussion of the Corinthians lectures and Bultmann's review but never rises above summary.

<sup>21</sup> John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, "Scriptural Meaning Modern to Ancient," in *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 1.

<sup>22</sup> The phrase, "historical exegesis" is used by Barth to describe a specific range of exegetical resources. The matter is discussed thoroughly in Chapter Three.



The somewhat unusual organization of the thesis also requires a brief explanation. An introductory chapter discusses the background and context of the exposition. The translation of the lectures follows this chapter, and I have assigned separate pagination to Barth's work in order to maintain the integrity of the translation as a distinct entity. Three analytical chapters and a conclusion follow, continuing the pagination from the introduction.

The introduction situates the Ephesians lectures in the context of Barth's theological development. In particular, the chapter explores the exposition's relationship to Barth's 1919 sermons on Ephesians and the *Romans* commentaries.<sup>23</sup> This comparative analysis reveals the exposition's distinctive elements and its significance in Barth's early academic work.

Chapter Two examines Barth's proposal to read the entire epistle on the basis of Eph. 1:3, "Blessed be God, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." On the basis of this verse, Barth determines the exposition's central theme: the knowledge of God is the presupposition of human existence. Accordingly, the chapter analyzes both the exegetical details and Barth's larger theological concern in the lectures, namely, to demonstrate how divine prevenience forms the basis for genuine encounter between God and the creature.<sup>24</sup> The chapter includes a comprehensive survey of the exposition's most important material themes.

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<sup>23</sup> Karl Barth, *Predigten 1919*, ed., Hermann Schmidt (Zürich: TVZ, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> His interpretation is clarified at various points by comparing it to other commentaries on Ephesians, his own sources as well as several modern commentaries, in particular, Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1974, 1986); Rudolph Schnackenburg, *Ephesians: A Commentary*, trans., Helen Heron (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991); Gnllka, *Der Epheserbrief* (Freiburg: Herder, 1971). I am indebted to John Webster for the particular formulation of this theme in Barth's theology. See "Barth's Lectures on John," unpublished manuscript, 21.

Chapter Three examines the exposition's hermeneutical orientation and exegetical procedures. This section is chiefly concerned with the role which dogmatics plays in Barth's interpretation of Scripture, an area of particular controversy in Barth studies and particular relevance for current constructive work in theological exegesis.

Chapter Four examines Barth's 1919 sermons on Ephesians 1, demonstrating areas of continuity and discontinuity with the lectures. I show that in the sermons, Barth accords a significantly greater role to experience as an element in the knowledge of God than he does in the lectures. I argue that this shift toward a more objective reading of the text can be explained by Barth's appropriation of the Calvinist understanding of the knowledge of God.

The Conclusion summarizes the study's chief findings and brings Barth's approach to theological exegesis into conversation with current constructive work. I argue that Barth made a material discovery in his study of Ephesians that fundamentally shaped his subsequent theology, namely, the paradigmatic movement of God to the creature and the creature's subsequent movement to God, a train of thought which he observes in Eph. 1:3. Furthermore, I contend that the specifically *theological* element of Barth's theological exegesis is his dogmatic account of the interpretive situation, or simply, his description of what happens when we read the Bible under the influence of divine revelation. This feature, I argue further, explains the extraordinary concreteness of Barth's exegesis, in contrast to the abstraction and distance from the text that plagues many current attempts at theological exegesis.

Underlying the thesis is a conviction that the exegetical lectures constitute a significant component of Barth's early theology and must be considered if we are to

assess his merits and deficiencies as an expositor of the Bible. The negative assessment of Barth's exegesis is based primarily on studies of *Romans* and the exegetical portions of the *Church Dogmatics*, where exegesis supports his dogmatic argument. By contrast, in the exegetical lectures, dogmatic discourse serves the interpretation of the text. Therefore, the picture of Barth as an expositor Scripture changes considerably when the exegetical courses are considered.

Barth's Ephesians exposition is a theologically rich and subtle interpretation of the biblical text, displaying important features of his early theology. Therefore, they should not be regarded as a mere footnote to more important work. The challenges in biblical interpretation addressed here are just as relevant now as when Barth first delivered the lectures. Despite their limitations, we still have much to learn from Barth about theological exegesis. Describing Calvin's "objective study" of the Bible, Barth noted: "We can learn from Calvin what it means to stay close to the text, to focus with tense attention on what is actually there."<sup>25</sup> Likewise, we can learn from Barth what it means to speak about the contents of the Bible without becoming imprisoned by the historical-critical method or lapsing into theological abstraction.

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<sup>25</sup> *The Theology of John Calvin*. 389.

**Appendix**  
**Barth's Academic Lectures on the New Testament:**  
**Occasion and Contents**

Göttingen

Winter Semester, 1921-1922    Ephesians  
Exposition of chapter 1; summary of chapters 2-6

Winter Semester, 1922-1923    James  
Exposition of chapters 1 and 2

Summer Semester, 1923            1 Corinthians 15<sup>26</sup>  
Survey of chapters 1-14 from the point of view of view of the resurrection

Winter Semester, 1923-1924    1 John  
Exposition of chapters 1 and 2

Summer Semester, 1924    Philippians

Winter Semester, 1924-1925    Colossians  
Exposition of 1:1-3:17; overview of 3:18 – 4:18

Summer Semester, 1925            The Sermon on the Mount  
Exposition of Matthew 5

Münster

Winter Semester, 1925-1926    The Gospel of John  
Introduction: Hermeneutical orientation  
Exposition of chapters 1-8

Winter Semester, 1926-1927    Philippians

Summer Semester 1927 (?)        Colossians<sup>27</sup>  
Introduction; exposition of 1:1-2

Winter Semester, 1928-1929    James  
Exposition of chapters 1 and 2; overview of chapters 3-5

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<sup>26</sup> Full bibliographical information is found in the Introduction. In certain cases, it has not been possible to determine the precise contents of a lecture cycle, e.g., the 1924 Philippians course.

<sup>27</sup> According to Hans-Anton Drewes, archivist at the Barth Archives, there is some question as to the exact date of these lectures, and only a fragment of the typescript has been found.

		Bonn
Summer Semester, 1930	James	
Winter Semester, 1930-1931	Philippians	
Summer Semester, 1933	The Gospel of John <sup>28</sup>	
Winter Semester, 1933-1934	The Sermon on the Mount <sup>29</sup>	

Basel

Summer Semester, 1938	I Peter
Analysis of contents; exposition of chapters 1-2	
Winter Semester, 1937-1938	Colossians
Exposition of 1:1-2:15	

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<sup>28</sup> A repetition of the 1925-1926 lectures with some changes and additions.

<sup>29</sup> A repetition of the 1925 lectures with minor changes and additions.

## **Chapter One**

### **The Significance of the Ephesians Lectures in Barth's Early Theology**

Barth's decision to offer an expository course on Ephesians, Winter Semester, 1921-1922, was partly a matter of expedience. Originally, he planned to make his academic debut with a course entitled, "The Resurrection of the Dead as the Presupposition of Christian Theology, in Connection with 1 Cor. 15."<sup>1</sup> However, in May, 1921, under pressure to complete *Romans* and with no time to prepare courses for the upcoming year, he decided on Ephesians, because he already had extensive material at hand from his previous exegetical work on the epistle, particularly from his 1919 preaching series.<sup>2</sup> These circumstances indicate three important contextual factors for a proper assessment of the exposition: Barth's preaching and exegetical activity on Ephesians in Safenwil; *Romans II*, and his new academic demands in Göttingen.

Chapter One examines these factors in order to situate the Ephesians lectures in Barth's theological development. The first section discusses the relationship between the exposition and his earlier exegetical work on Ephesians, particularly the 1919 sermons, from which the lectures are drawn. The second section examines areas of continuity and divergence between the exposition and *Romans II*. This comparison clarifies the distinctive elements in the exegetical lectures and their significance as Barth moved from Safenwil to Göttingen. The third section examines the occasion of the course and Barth's academic setting. Finally, I examine the exposition's form and structure and on this basis draw some conclusions about Barth's conception of *Erklärung*.

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<sup>1</sup> B-Th I, 469.

<sup>2</sup> B-Th I, 492. In his letter to Thurneysen, he notes that the course is already in outline form.

## I Ephesians in Safenwil and in Göttingen

The Epistle to the Ephesians was at the center of Barth's teaching and preaching in Safenwil between 1918 and 1920. He did a "cursory reading" of the first three chapters as part of his confirmation instruction in 1918.<sup>3</sup> A complete translation and short commentary on the epistle was followed by 18 sermons between May 4 and September 7, 1919, one of his longest series on a single New Testament book.<sup>4</sup> He turned to Ephesians once again for a ten week adult Bible study in the summer of 1921.<sup>5</sup> This engagement with Ephesians occurred during a two year period of exegetical activity that witnessed four important developments in his approach to exegesis.<sup>6</sup>

First, Barth recognized the importance of reading the entire Bible. During this period, he worked his way through a considerable measure of the New Testament, extending his range from Romans, where he had made his mark. After completing *Romans* I in 1918, he embarked on a series of studies of Acts, First and Second Corinthians, the Psalms, Colossians, James, and Hebrews. Serious exegetical work on Ephesians began at this point.<sup>7</sup> As a result of this exegetical work, Barth committed himself to the exposition of the Bible as a whole. A comment to Thurneysen suggests that he was daunted by this challenge. While preparing a sermon on John 1, he asks how they should deal with the Johannine literature, since their theological breakthrough was

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<sup>3</sup> B-Th I, 270.

<sup>4</sup> B-Th I, 353-54; *Predigten 1919*, 173-334.

<sup>5</sup> B-Th I, 386. "Wir haben bereits unsere Bibelbesprechung, wo beharrlich am Epheserbrief weiter widergekäut wird, bis all Nester ausgenommen sind, soweit das geht."

<sup>6</sup> B-Th I, 300.

<sup>7</sup> Although much of Barth's exegetical work was for sermon preparation, the studies mentioned here were undertaken with no particular end in view, apart from discovery of the text. Frequently, an exegetical study later resulted in a preaching series or other teaching event, as the 1919 sermons illustrate.

so closely associated with the Pauline literature.<sup>8</sup> These exegetical soundings coincided with the increasing influence of Calvin's exegesis on his biblical work. Calvin, he later said, was determined to "listen to the whole Bible . . . each word and chapter is taken up and exploited."<sup>9</sup> This observation is expressed formally in the lectures on the Reformed Confessions. The Reformed Scripture principle, he explains, includes the idea that the *whole* Bible should be expounded in preaching, not merely ecclesial pericopes, as was the practice of the unreformed churches, or texts about justification, following Luther.<sup>10</sup> The significance of this development can be seen in the extent of the New Testament which he covered in his expository courses in Göttingen and Münster.<sup>11</sup>

Second, he concluded that 1 Corinthians 15 is the key to the entire epistle and to Pauline theology as a whole.<sup>12</sup> A short commentary written at this time was later expanded into the 1923 lectures, *The Resurrection of the Dead*. The resurrection, as we will see, decisively shapes his interpretation of Ephesians.

Third, during this watershed period, Barth established a regular pattern of exegetical work. This practice included translation of the passage from the Nestle text and application of grammatical-philological analysis. He then consulted a range of modern and pre-critical commentators, including Tertullian, Augustine, J. T. Beck, and particularly Calvin.<sup>13</sup> This pattern reveals the importance of historical-critical tools and

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<sup>8</sup> B-Th I, 304-05.

<sup>9</sup> *The Theology of John Calvin*, 391.

<sup>10</sup> RC, 54.

<sup>11</sup> For example, his next expository course was on James, winter semester, 1922-1923.

<sup>12</sup> B-Th I, 350. The resurrection is a prominent theme in EE, as noted in the appendix at the conclusion of this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> On the matter of translation, see B-Th I, 236. While working on Ephesians 1, Barth notes that he is struck by the value of translating the text word for word. During the writing of the Romans commentaries, his letters to Thurneysen are replete with observations about grammatical-philological details on the Greek text. The number of references and level of detail increases noticeably when he begins work on the second *Romans* commentary. See B-Th I, 461. This pattern of study sheds some light on his claim in the preface



the theological tradition in Barth's approach to biblical interpretation, both of which figure prominently in the Ephesians lectures.

Finally, Barth's letters to Thurneysen during this period radiate the joy and wonder of new discovery. He frequently notes that he did not know what was in a particular text before his exegetical soundings.<sup>14</sup> This observation comes to formal expression later in the hermeneutical principle of "objective study:" the interpreter does not know what is in a biblical text before the step of discovery is taken:

The Bible calls for objective study...we do not yet know what is in the Bible, and, as is unavoidable in time, we have to seek and find this by work. The Bible is thus opened and listened to with a readiness to receive what is not yet known, not for the purpose of finding again what is known already.<sup>15</sup>

For the Reformed, Barth observes, exegesis is always "a *discovery*, a step of knowing."<sup>16</sup>

This "Calvinist step of knowledge" is central to Barth's conception of biblical interpretation.<sup>17</sup>

It would be useful to know why the Epistle to the Ephesians was so central to Barth's exegetical work during this period, but there is no record of his explanation. He offers a hint, however, in the 1920 lecture, "Biblical Questions, Insights, and Vistas."

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of *Romans* II that he has "nothing whatever to say against historical criticism," ER, 6. On Barth's discovery of Tertullian's exegesis, see B-Th I, 334. J. T. Beck is not pre-critical, strictly speaking, but Barth clearly regards him differently than the *Neuetestamentler*. The earliest reference to Beck that I have found in the correspondence is in the frequently quoted letter in which Barth laments that they have come to the Bible too late. In this context, he notes the value of Beck in his study of Acts. See B-Th I, 299. For references to Calvin's commentaries, see B-Th I, 319; 348-49. Barth was reading Calvin's commentaries regularly as early as February, 1919. This answers a question raised by Hans Scholl in the Preface to the Calvin lectures about when "he began to use Calvin's commentaries regularly in sermon preparation." See *The Theology of John Calvin*, xiv.

<sup>14</sup> For examples, see his comments about 1 Corinthians, RT 48. For similar comments on the psalms and 2 Corinthians, see RT 50 and 51-52 respectively.

<sup>15</sup> *The Theology of John Calvin*, 389.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>17</sup> RC, 47.

Apparently, the epistle was particularly important to Barth's discovery of biblical objectivity, that is, the way in which the text constantly refers the reader to God.<sup>18</sup>

I am still taken by the fact that he, Paul, or whoever it was who wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians, for example is eye and ear in a state which expressions such as inspiration, alarm, or stirring or overwhelming emotion, do not satisfactorily describe. I seem to see within so transparent a piece of literature a personality who is actually thrown out of his course and out of every ordinary course by seeing and hearing what I for my part do not see and hear – who is, so to speak, captured, in order to be dragged as a prisoner from land to land for strange, intense, uncertain, and yet mysteriously well-planned service.<sup>19</sup>

This comment is reflected in lectures on Ephesians, in which Barth frequently refers to Paul's "viewpoint," which is "wide enough to encompass time and eternity," and which he and his fellow listeners have scarcely attained and can only anticipate.<sup>20</sup> More important for this study is the epistle's emphasis on "*gnosis*" which leads to one of the central themes in Barth's lectures, the divine objectivity.<sup>21</sup> The concept of knowledge, Barth explains in the lectures, describes God's position *opposite (gegenüber)* the creature as the Other.<sup>22</sup>

It is not entirely clear how Barth used material from the 1919 sermons on Ephesians when preparing the academic lectures. In a circular letter written halfway through the semester, he notes that he is "hiding behind the Ephesians sermons" in order to use every free minute to prepare the Calvin lectures.<sup>23</sup> However, he adds: "How far must I proceed in this ocean in order to grasp the word about it?" This is a good example of the "step of discovery" discussed above. The same text of Scripture must be studied

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<sup>18</sup> WG, 61. Barth states the theme of the lecture as follows: "The special *content* of this human document, the remarkable *something* with which the writers of these stories and those who stood behind them were concerned, the Biblical *object*" is the concern of this lecture.

<sup>19</sup> WG, 62-63.

<sup>20</sup> EE, 18.

<sup>21</sup> The matter is discussed extensively in Chapter Three.

<sup>22</sup> This important aspect of the lectures is explored more fully in Chapter Three.

<sup>23</sup> B-Th II, 21.

and its contents rediscovered in order to speak from it on a subsequent occasion. An examination of the two documents reveals considerable continuity between them – themes in the sermons reappear in the lectures but are expressed in academic language and related to specific theological problems.<sup>24</sup> But it also reveals that Barth did not simply recycle the sermons, as he frequently did with lectures, or simply clothe them in academic dress.<sup>25</sup> Rather, it appears that he returned to the biblical text, listening for God’s word in and under the text on behalf of a new audience.

To sum up: the academic lectures on Ephesians had their origin in Barth’s mature exegetical work and preaching in Safenwil, and particularly, in his discovery of the objectivity of the Bible. Their value lies partly in what they reveal about his theological development and approach to exegesis between the writing of *Romans* II and his early academic work.

## II Barth’s Ephesians and *Romans*

Consideration of the continuity and discontinuity between the lectures on Ephesians and *Romans* II is valuable for two reasons. First, such a comparison reveals the distinctive elements in the Ephesians exposition compared to Barth’s groundbreaking work.

Second, it sheds light on the ongoing debate about whether or not Barth abandoned the dialectical theology of *Romans* II in order to speak positively about the divine-human relationship. Busch, for example, emphasizes significant development

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<sup>24</sup> Chapter Four analyzes the relationship between the sermons and the lectures.

<sup>25</sup> A more thorough comparison of the sermons and the lectures is found in Chapter Four. Barth frequently repeated lecture material, virtually unchanged. For example, his 1925 lecture, “The Desirability and Possibility of a Universal Reformed Creed” is a “precise summary” of the material from the lectures on the Scripture principle in RB. For a discussion, see Busch’s Preface in KB, ix.

between *Romans* and Barth's first dogmatic cycle in 1924.<sup>26</sup> He summarizes this change as the difference between the statement, "God is God," which appears frequently in *Romans*, and the statement, "*Deus dixit*," which appears as a kind of refrain in the *Göttingen Dogmatics*.<sup>27</sup> This new emphasis on the divine speech, Busch claims, "implies three things which capture in a new way the threefold basic insight of the Epistle to the Romans."<sup>28</sup> First, "God is a free subject" rather than the object of speculation, an insight which appears in *Romans* but is stated negatively by his relentless assault on theological subjectivity. Second, God's speech has *present tense* significance." He makes himself known through proclamation. Third, through this proclamation, God simultaneously confronts the creature and establishes a relationship. Jüngel, on the other hand, emphasizes the continuity between *Romans* and the *Göttingen* period, pointing to Barth's frequent positive statements in the commentary about the relationship between God and the creature.<sup>29</sup>

The Ephesians lectures are directly relevant to this question because of Barth's emphasis on the movement of God to the creature in Christ. To what extent does Barth tone down the dialectical theology found in *Romans* II in order to describe this movement? The question is relevant because, on the face of it, dialectical theology would appear to be incompatible with the concept of forward movement which takes place in Christ. Certainly the critics of Barth's dialectical theology see a conflict at this point. In the following, I argue that the Ephesians lectures provide strong evidence for continuity, because they share the dialectical theology and conceptual framework of

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<sup>26</sup> *The Great Passion*, 23-31.

<sup>27</sup> Barth introduces the theme in GD, Chapter 1, "The Word of God as Revelation," 43-68.

<sup>28</sup> *The Great Passion*, 24-25.

<sup>29</sup> *Legacy*, Chapter 2.

*Romans*. However, because he applies dialectical interpretation to materially different biblical themes in the text, the resulting account of the divine-human relationship is noticeably different at points.

The most important area of continuity between the Ephesians exposition and *Romans* is the emphasis on the dialectic of God's veiling and unveiling in revelation. In the exposition, God remains hidden even as he reveals himself. Signature dialectical expressions from the commentary appear frequently in the lectures, including "God is God,"<sup>30</sup> "The *Deus revelatus* is the *Deus absconditus*," and "the impossible possibility."<sup>31</sup> This fundamental dialectic is evident in Barth's interpretation of the phrase, "in Christ," which he regards as the "formal key" to the text:

ἐν Χριστῷ, there is a tearing of the veil which disguises the human creature's true situation and keeps him from seeing that he belongs to God. ἐν Χριστῷ means Immanuel! God with us! ἐν Χριστῷ, God is near, but in his self-revelation as the distant, strange, incomprehensible God, the *Deus absconditus*.<sup>32</sup>

This passage displays significant similarities to *Romans*, both in material content and in its cadences.

A second significant area of continuity is that Barth employs many of the same philosophical concepts as he does in *Romans* to speak about the text. The following sampling indicates the degree of continuity.<sup>33</sup> He uses identical terminology to describe the miracle of revelation – the imperceptible (*unanschaulich*) becomes perceptible

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<sup>30</sup> EE, 31. Barth uses the expression earlier in "The Strange New World of the Bible," WG, 38. In ER, see 342; 346; 361; 364; 411.

<sup>31</sup> EE, 28. Other expressions from ER which appear in EE include the following: "Religion is what splits" a person (ER, 268; EE, 8); "*Hohlraum*," (ER, 36, 65; EE, 6); "Der Geist ist die Wahrheit" (ER, 287; EE, 100-01).

<sup>32</sup> EE, 37.

<sup>33</sup> Comprehensive analysis of the similarities is beyond the scope of this study. Significant continuity is sufficient to establish the point.

(*anschaulich*).<sup>34</sup> Likewise, he appeals to the concept of “the original” or *Ursprung* to describe the creature’s eternal relationship with God.<sup>35</sup> Here as in *Romans*, the concept of *Aufhebung*, or sublation, is deployed to speak about the relation of time and eternity.<sup>36</sup> For example, the act of worship is described as “a movement, an upheaval, a sublation [*Aufhebung*] of time and everything temporal through eternity, in which the human creature regains consciousness and walks before God.”<sup>37</sup> As in *Romans*, Kierkegaard’s influence is evident throughout the exposition, for example, in the strong emphasis on “indirect speech” and Barth’s claim that mediation is impossible on the basis of

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<sup>34</sup> ER, 274; EE, 100. One difference, however, is that in the Ephesians lectures, he uses this terminology to describe the interpretive event, therefore drawing out the implications of divine revelation for the work of interpretation. The matter is discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>35</sup> ER, 92, 127; EE, 32, n. 76. “By [*ursprünglich*] I mean simply . . . that everything made, artificial, untrue must give way to that which is original [*ursprünglich*]. That holy, sunny majestic Being above us which greets us from afar, now as truth, now as beauty, now as love, is itself not made and artificial but rather the most original, the immediate for which we instinctively long. And so the Kingdom of God is simply the restoration of the original, immediate life which we have lost through a thousand dishonest human contrivances. “Religion und Sozialismus,” 1-2. Typescript in Karl Barth Archives, Basel, Switzerland; quoted in McCormack, *Dialectical Theology*, 131; for McCormack’s discussion, see 222-26.

<sup>36</sup> ER, 145; EE, 35. There is debate about the extent to which Barth relies on neo-Platonic and Kantian concepts. Clearly, he uses terminology from Plato or Neo-Platonism (*Ursprung*), Kant (*Anschauung* and cognates), and Hegel (*Aufhebung*). The question is whether he subverts the original meaning to such an extent that they take on a completely different meaning. A case can be made for Platonic elements on the basis of Barth’s references to Plato in “The Christian’s Place in Society:” “We must win again the right sense of reality in which Paul is one with Plato and the prophets,” WG, 186. Further evidence is found in his discussion of Plato’s influence on Reformed theology, and specifically on Calvin, in RC: “This is no mystical Neoplatonism but rather rigorous and critical classic Platonism, with the hard and inexorable lines of his doctrine of distance and relations, which in the Reformed world has entered into an unusual connection with the spirit of the *Old Testament*, which in this regard is oriented similarly . . . . [t]he relation between Scripture and confession is both positively and negatively the same formally as Plato’s relation between the idea and the things. The strictest and most indissoluble *relation* between here and there is simultaneously the impassible polar relation that divides here from there once and for all.” It should be noted, however, that Barth adds the following significant qualification: “It is, of course, completely unplatonic when then in Reformed theology the regulative *idea* is replaced by the regulative *codex* of the Old and New Testaments” which enters the field like a “meteoric rock.” The chasm between God and humanity is overcome not by “the general truth of the relation between time and eternity,” or “the indelible character” of man in God’s image or “the law of nature” but rather as “*God’s thoughts become finite*” in Jesus Christ (RC, 45-46). There is also circumstantial evidence in Barth’s positive comments about the Platonic orientation in Heinrich Barth’s Aarau lecture (1920). His letter to Thurneysen identifies areas where he considered his brother’s interpretation of Plato to be congenial with his own project (B-Th I, 456). A discussion of the alleged Platonic elements in Barth’s theology is found in Jüngel, *Theological Legacy*, 67-68. For an extensive discussion of Kantian and neo-Kantian terminology in Barth’s early theology, see McCormack, *Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 224-26.

<sup>37</sup> EE, 35.

creaturely reality. No “bridge” exists from eternity to the creature.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, Barth’s conception that the objective and the subjective constitute a single reality in Christ is an appropriation of Kierkegaard. He relies heavily on this concept throughout the exposition in order to establish the relationship between divine action and human existence. Overbeck’s influence can be detected in Barth’s description of history as that which is “subject to time” as well as in the strong eschatological and anti-bourgeois orientation of the lectures.<sup>39</sup> Barth insists that any attempt to establish the reality of the resurrection on the basis of historical criteria constitutes a denial of its reality.

What about areas of discontinuity? The theme of veiling and unveiling in revelation, identified above as an indication of continuity, is expressed differently in the Ephesians exposition than in *Romans*, indicating an element of discontinuity as well. Ephesians 1:1-23 includes a number of material themes which are not present in *Romans*, such as the concept of fullness in Christ and the summing of all things under one head (Eph. 1:10). Consequently, when Barth applies dialectical interpretation to this text, the theological content is considerably different. In *Romans*, Barth presents worship under the category of religion – it is an attempt to cloak time in eternity and therefore to mask our true condition.<sup>40</sup> It is only in his exposition of chapter 12 that he makes positive statements about worship. By contrast, in the Ephesians lectures, Barth asserts that the veiling and unveiling of revelation occurs in the act of praise. Doxology is “an act of

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<sup>38</sup> “‘Now, Spirit is the denial of direct immediacy. If Christ be very God, He must be unknown, for to be known directly is the characteristic mark of an idol’ (Kierkegaard)” ER, 38. See also 163. EE, 28.

<sup>39</sup> The eschatological orientation of EE is discussed in Chapter Two. As an example of its anti-bourgeois orientation, Barth claims that Christianity can never make friends with history or settle down into a comfortable bourgeois existence in this world, see EE, 11-12. Barth’s debt to Franz Overbeck is expressed in his essay, “Unsettled Questions for Theology Today,” in *Theology and Church: Shorter Writings 1920-1928*, trans., Louise Pettibone Smith (London: SCM, 1962), 56-73.

<sup>40</sup> ER, 253.

knowledge, of repentance, of transformed thinking,” Barth explains.<sup>41</sup> The act of praise is evoked by the shocked recognition that God is the source of the creature’s blessings. Doxology is possible and necessary, because something totally new has “opened up within the human creature. . . He has found light where human eyes can only detect darkness. He has made the most important discovery of all. He has found *God*; and he has *found* God.”<sup>42</sup> Again, he describes worship as the human activity in which the creature becomes “*sachlich*” before God and stands in God’s presence. In the act of worship the “infinite qualitative distinction” is recognized and sublated. Barth expresses the matter eloquently as follows:

However, the infinite nature of this antithesis is precisely what binds the one indissolubly to the other. God can only bless man as his *creature*, and man can only bless God as his *creator*. Recognizing the necessity of this infinite antithesis is precisely what makes the blessing true and the praising necessary. As the deity of God is recognized, the “*aliter*” is established on both sides; and precisely by being established, it is sublated.<sup>43</sup>

In this description of worship, Barth maintains the antithesis between God and the creature; however, the dialectic is transposed into a different key in accordance with the central themes of Ephesians.

Similarly, a different side of Barth’s exegetical theology emerges when he explicates the themes of God’s blessings in Christ and *gnosis*, which are prominent in Ephesians 1, in contrast to the judgment of the law and the righteousness of God, the central matters in Romans.<sup>44</sup> This divergence is particularly clear in his treatment of the theme of pilgrimage, that is, the creature’s movement toward the divinely appointed goal, and the theme of knowledge. In *Romans*, the themes of pilgrimage and the knowledge of

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<sup>41</sup> EE, 39.

<sup>42</sup> EE, 39.

<sup>43</sup> EE, 36.

<sup>44</sup> For Barth’s discussion of the material and formal differences, see EE, 3-5.



God are presented in his exposition of chapter seven, where the critique of religion is sharpest. Consequently, pilgrimage is described as desert wandering, as “the catastrophe of human impotence . . . the tragic paradox of religion,” and as returning perpetually to “that starting point of that naked humanity which is absolute poverty and utter insecurity.”<sup>45</sup> Likewise, knowledge is described as “a continual grasping for the tree of knowledge.”<sup>46</sup> In Paul’s major epistle, creaturely movement is described as the movement from the conflicted *ἐγώ*, described in chapter seven, to life in the Spirit, described in chapter eight. Consequently, Barth’s positive statements about human existence in Christ, worship and knowledge appear only towards the end of the commentary. By contrast, Barth reads Eph. 1:3 as a description of the divine action which encloses the creature in Christ and reorients him to his true purpose. The divine movement sets the creature in motion. This observation leads to the exposition’s central theme: “The knowledge of God is the goal and the knowledge of God is the presupposition of all human being, having, and doing.”<sup>47</sup> The themes of pilgrimage and of the knowledge of God are in the foreground of this account. To be sure, Barth interprets them dialectically – the knowledge of God is based on the creature’s recognition of his ignorance and need for enlightenment. Likewise, the great “Forward!” is possible only by passing through the gate of critical negation. At these points, the continuity with *Romans* is evident. Nevertheless, his attention is focused on the movement *from* and movement *towards* the goal: “We are created *by* God, from whom we come and *for* God, towards whom we are moving.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> ER, 252-53.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> EE, 36.

<sup>48</sup> EE, 35; my emphasis.

What are we to make of these differences? In the Ephesians lectures, Barth applies dialectical theology to describe the divine movement which encloses the creature in Christ and sets the creature in motion. In other words, dialectic is now incorporated into the creaturely activity of praise and more generally, the *vita christiana*. At certain points this interpretive approach appears rather strained, because certain themes in the text, such as the New Testament *pleroma* and the summing up all things in Christ, do not readily yield to dialectical interpretation. At these points, Barth's attempt to maintain the diastasis between God and the creature creates an inherent tension in his interpretation. The central challenge for Barth, therefore, is to demonstrate how the diastasis between God and the creature also constitutes the basis for the eternal relationship in Christ.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the forgoing analysis. This comparison of the lectures with *Romans* reveals significant continuity in theological and interpretive approach as well as elements of significant discontinuity in Barth's accounts of worship and the creature's movement "Forward!" as he frequently says in Ephesians. These differences should not be exaggerated, however, and represent a difference of emphasis rather than a fundamental shift in Barth's theology. *Romans* contains positive statements about the creature's relationship with God; the Ephesians exposition is replete with dialectical expressions. The crucial point is that the differences in Barth's exegetical theology reflect material differences in the biblical texts which he interprets, and this factor explains the rather different configuration of divine action and human existence in the Ephesians exposition. Does this shift signify development in his theology? If "development" is construed as a toning down of his dialectical interpretation, the answer is No. However, if we define development as his incorporation of new material themes

from Scripture, the answer is an unambiguous Yes. This observation points to one of the defining characteristics of Barth's exegesis. His theology evolves on the basis of the continual interaction with the biblical text

### III Occasion, Form, and Interpretive Approach

The Academic Lectures on Ephesians were delivered between November 10, 1921 and February 23, 1922, a total of 13 lectures.<sup>49</sup> Barth's main course was an historical lecture on the Heidelberg Catechism; each was accompanied by a one hour discussion session.<sup>50</sup> Lecturing on the New Testament was not included in Barth's formal responsibilities as Professor of Reformed Theology. He offered the Ephesians course, like all of his expository courses in Göttingen, on his own initiative.<sup>51</sup> The theology faculty included two recognized *Neuetestamentler*, Walter Bauer and Alfred Rahlfs; Barth's practice of offering expository lectures on the New Testament may have contributed to tensions with his colleagues.<sup>52</sup> His audience consisted largely of students preparing for ordination in the Reformed tradition, a distinct minority in this Lutheran stronghold, and Barth frequently directs his comments to future clergy: "Think about it, you who wish to become pastors!"<sup>53</sup> It also included: "many war veterans, a company commander, a

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<sup>49</sup> The details of Barth's appointment as Honorary Professor of Reformed Theology are discussed thoroughly elsewhere and need not be rehearsed here. Good discussions can be found in Busch, KB, 126-34 and McCormack, *Dialectical Theology*, 291-302. For Barth's description of a typical day, see B-Th II, 39-40.

<sup>50</sup> Busch, KB, 128.

<sup>51</sup> Busch, KB, 127. He later noted that he was free to do so because the terms of his teaching responsibilities for the new chair in Reformed Theology were sufficiently vague.

<sup>52</sup> Busch, KB, 133. The day after a lecture by Bauer on the resurrection, Barth devoted his Ephesians lecture to a rebuttal. B-Th II, 41-54; EE, 109-14.

<sup>53</sup> EE, 11. My information about the academic setting is based on personal remarks from Hans-Anton Drewes, archivist at the Karl Barth Archives, July, 2004. Busch describes the students from the Reformed tradition as "a dwindling and even despised minority," KB, 130.

battery commander (!) and a lieutenant from the Austrian Imperial Guard."<sup>54</sup> Because he was an *extraordinarius* professor, attendance in his classes was not required. He was therefore pleased with the attendance – 60 students in the Ephesians course and from 12 to 15 in the main course.<sup>55</sup> A letter to Thurneysen expresses disappointment in the Heidelberg Catechism and enthusiasm for Ephesians, which he found to be "far richer in content."<sup>56</sup>

Barth explicates the Greek text of Ephesians, using the *lectio continua* format. A two- part reading strategy is evident throughout. First, he forms a picture of the author's meaning, discussing grammatical-philological issues and intertextual relationships. At this point, he consults a range of modern critical commentaries.<sup>57</sup> Second, he uses various forms of "ingenious" paraphrase to re-express the content of the text.<sup>58</sup> In the second stage, he employs dogmatic paraphrase, dialectical expressions, and a range of philosophical concepts in order to explore the text's entailments for present Christian existence. When referring to non-biblical sources, Barth deliberately focuses attention on the biblical text rather than scholarly debate about the text, and bibliographical information is kept to a minimum. However, on disputed matters of interpretation, he refers to a variety of commentators, ancient and modern. At these points, the exposition resembles a lively conversation with members of the theological tradition from all ages

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<sup>54</sup> B-Th II, 9.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. He reported that attendance in his classes compared favorably with the audience present for Emanuel Hirsch, the newly arrived professor of church history.

<sup>56</sup> B-Th II, 9. For a discussion of the expository lectures in relation to Barth's other academic work, see Burnett, *Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis*, 23-25. According to Burnett, numbers in Barth's exegetical courses were consistently greater than in his historical or dogmatic courses in Göttingen and Münster, but he cautions against drawing any conclusions about their relative importance based on the numbers alone. There may have been other contributing factors, such as the fact that the Scripture courses were normally one hour rather than two hour courses. Barth, however, continued to regard them as some of his most satisfying work.

<sup>57</sup> Barth gives little attention to historical background or form criticism.

<sup>58</sup> Bultmann refers to Barth's "ingenious paraphrases" in his review of the Corinthians lectures, "Barth's *Resurrection of the Dead*," 86.

with Barth assuming his position alongside them. He stands at the lectern with the Greek New Testament before him and an array of scholarly resources at his disposal which he brings to bear on the interpretation of the text – New Testament introductions, a spate of modern critical commentaries, J. T. Beck and Calvin’s *Opera Selecta*.<sup>59</sup> The lectures must have been difficult to follow at points. Barth assumes competence in Greek, Latin, and Calvin’s Old French, which he frequently cites without translation. The style, syntax, and length of sentences resemble the exegetical sections of the *Church Dogmatics* more than sermons. For this reason, they are appropriately referred to as “academic lectures.” On the other hand, they resemble preaching, because Barth constantly moves from observation about the text to direct address on the basis of the apostolic *kerygma*. In short, the lectures consist of grammatical-philological exegesis with a concern for human existence and ethics.<sup>60</sup>

Barth developed a form of theological discourse which permitted engagement with issues of New Testament scholarship while honoring the *kerygmatic* nature of the biblical text.<sup>61</sup> The unusual form of the exegetical lectures signals important elements in

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<sup>59</sup> Barth followed the 1916 Nestle text of the New Testament and the 1890 edition of the Luther Bible for Old Testament citations. This information is based on a personal visit to the Karl Barth Archives, July 2004. He provided an original translation at the beginning of each major section.

<sup>60</sup> James Martin refers to the 1925 John lectures as “theological commentary” which “lies at the center of the dynamics of the unceasing movement of *explicatio*, *meditatio*, and *applicatio*,” “The Gospel of John,” in *Karl Barth in Review: Posthumous Works Reviewed and Assessed*, ed., H. Martin Rumscheidt (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1981), 41. He refers to the terms which Barth uses in his description of exegesis in “Freedom under the Word,” *CD I/2*, 722-40. This is an accurate description of the basic movement of the Ephesians exposition. However, the phrase, “theological commentary” gives the impression of discourse somewhat more removed from the text than Barth’s approach in the lectures.

<sup>61</sup> I have not found any references by Barth to indicate that he had a contemporary model in mind in the Swiss or German academy. The form of the lectures evolved during the course of his academic career. For example, the Ephesians lectures bear a closer resemblance to preaching, while the 1925 lectures on John’s Gospel are closer to technical commentary at points, e.g., when Barth discusses the relationship between the Johannine logos and Nicene Christology. See *WW*, 29-34.

Barth's conception of *Erklärung*.<sup>62</sup> His description of Calvin's "objective study" of the Bible reveals a great deal about his own approach. He admires Calvin's *objectivity*, that is, "his energy to track down every detail, his determination to stick with the text and to follow wherever it leads."<sup>63</sup> Barth also notes its "*relevance*." In his exposition, "something is happening... a living dialogue is in fact taking place here across the cleft of the centuries . . . . We hear Paul, and we also hear Calvin. The voices merge into one another so that we can hardly distinguish them, and we get some sense of the truth."<sup>64</sup> Barth's description of the preaching of Calvin, Bullinger, and Zwingli could easily describe his approach to biblical exposition: they "preached serially through entire books and attempted to preach through all the books of the Bible. By exposition, they meant expounding Scripture through Scripture."<sup>65</sup>

## Conclusion

The Academic Lectures on Ephesians are the product of Barth's transition from pastor to academic theologian. The exposition shares the dialectical theology of *Romans II*. At the same time, it displays a shift toward the theological objectivity which distinguishes the Göttingen period.<sup>66</sup> This shift should be understood in light of two factors: Barth's explication of *gnosis* in Ephesians along with his appropriation of Calvin's theology of the knowledge of God. His application of dialectical interpretation to a text which emphasizes the unity of all things in Christ leads to inherent tension:

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<sup>62</sup> Here and throughout the study, I use *Erklärung*, Barth's preferred term when referring to the expositions to distinguish the exposition from formal commentary, on the one hand, and the exegetical sections of CD.

<sup>63</sup> Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 389-90.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> RC, 54.

<sup>66</sup> A discussion of what Barth means by "theological objectivity" must await the analysis which follows. However, to offer a preliminary definition, the concept refers to the knowledge of God as the basis for the divine-human relationship.

Barth seeks to maintain the *diastasis* between God and the creature while describing the *movement of God to the creature*. The precise ways in which he maintains both emphases must await detailed analysis, however, they include an emphasis on divine speech as the basis for the creature's relationship with God and the claim that the objective and the subjective are one in Christ. This observation points to the exposition's central theme: God's being and action constitute the basis for human existence. With the Academic Lectures on Ephesians, Barth began a practice which he continued throughout the Göttingen and Münster period, namely, offering a biblical exposition alongside his major lecture. During the next 14 years, he systematically worked his way through nearly one third of the Pauline epistles, most of the general epistles, and a substantial portion of the gospels. Barth's theology emerged from this continual exegesis of the biblical text. Herein lies the ultimate significance of the Ephesians lectures and all of the early biblical courses. The expository lectures are the foundation for the *Church Dogmatics*.

## **Appendix**

### **Description of Contents**

1. Preface, Eph. 1:1-2 (pp. 1-32). The first lecture is devoted to introductory issues, such as authorship, the occasion of the letter, and its relation to Paul's major epistles.<sup>67</sup> A lengthy discussion of Paul's apostleship leads to a discourse on the service of the word of God and the theology of proclamation. To exposit the phrase, "to the holy ones and believers," Barth explores the Pauline concepts of holiness and faith. In this section, he identifies the phrase, "in Christ" as the key to the doxology and lays the groundwork for his subsequent discussion of this central motif.

2. Doxology, Eph. 1:3-14 (pp. 33-101). Eight of the 13 lectures are devoted to this "compendium. . . of the basic Pauline ideas" found in Ephesians.<sup>68</sup> Barth divides the long sentence which stretches from v. 4 to v. 14 into four shorter sentences, beginning with the phrase, "in Christ" or "in him." This interpretive move is partly to make the sentence intelligible, but it also highlights the phrase, "in Christ," which he regards as the formal key to the passage; this phrase should constantly "reorient the listeners to the subject matter."<sup>69</sup> His framing of the text is evident in his outline of the doxology:

In Christ, we have election (vv. 4-6)

In Christ, we have forgiveness (vv. 7-10)

In Christ, we have hope (vv. 11-12)

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<sup>67</sup> He accepts Pauline authorship, but says: "frankly, I do not have any great interest in the question. As far as I am concerned, it could be otherwise. I have treated the matter this thoroughly in order to fulfill all righteousness," EE, 6. For brevity's sake, the analytical section of the study reflects Barth's position.

<sup>68</sup> EE, 100.

<sup>69</sup> EE, 37.



In Christ, we have the sealing of the Spirit (vv. 13-14)

The blessings which Paul describes should be understood as one reality, expressed in three temporal frameworks, which Barth depicts as three circles proceeding from a common center:

Circle 1: The Past (election – vv. 4-6)

Circle 2: The Present (forgiveness – vv. 7-10)

Circle 3: The Future (hope and sealing or eschatology – vv. 11-14)

Barth's eight lectures on the doxology are arranged in accordance with these three circles, with approximately equal space devoted to each subsection.

3. Prayer, vv. 15-23 (pp. 102-16). Barth poses the question: Why does Paul *pray* that his hearers may have precisely the blessings which he spent the last 12 verses saying they *already have*? These blessings *become* what they *are* only when believers receive them in each present moment, he explains. The prayer consists of three implied questions in vv. 17-18 which the apostle answers with three corresponding statements in vv. 20-23.<sup>70</sup>

Q: "What is the hope given to believers?" (v. 17)

A: "God raised Christ from the dead" (v. 20).

Q: "What is the power given to believers?" (v. 19)

A: "God has established Christ at his right hand." (v. 20)

Q: "What is the inheritance promised to believers?" (v. 18)

A: "God has made Christ head of all God's activity, including our Christian existence." (v. 22)

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<sup>70</sup> For the quotations in this section, see EE, 106-07.

In short, vv. 20 – 23 contain Paul's answer to the question, "How have [believers] been blessed?" or "What is the essence of their Christianity?"<sup>71</sup> At this point, the resurrection is the focal point of the exposition, and Barth incorporates material from 1 Cor. 15 that appears in more developed form in the 1923 exegetical lectures. Paul proclaims the resurrection as the basis for our Christian existence, Barth asserts, using three moments in Christ's saving career: resurrection, ascension, and glory.

Barth's actual exposition is considerably more fluid than the outline suggests, and he occasionally alters his terminology and precise framework. But the outline reveals his attention to the structure of the text as an important element of interpretation.

4. Outline of chapters 2-6 (pp. 117-128). Barth divides the remainder of the epistle into seven sections and summarizes each in a brief overview. He sees a common Pauline theme or thread running through these individual sections: the ultimate antithesis revealed in Jesus Christ relativizes all finite antitheses.

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|-----------|---|
| 2:1-10    | A continuation and inversion of the ideas in 1:20-23          |
| 2:11-22   | The ultimate antithesis and the penultimate                   |
| 3:1-13    | Jews and Gentiles in Christ signify Paul's apostolic calling  |
| 3:14-21   | The resumption of Paul's prayer: the high-point of the letter |
| 4:1-16    | An admonition flowing from the prayer                         |
| 4:17-24   | Ethics, based on the specific application of the admonition   |
| 4:25-5:20 | The Christian ethos   |
| 5:21-6:9  | Concrete relationships seen in light of the great antithesis  |
| 6:10-24   | Christianity as pilgrimage: the call to watch and wait        |

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<sup>71</sup> An allusion to Harnack's *Das Wesens des Christentums*, lectures delivered at the University of Berlin, 1899-1900; ET: *What is Christianity?* trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

**Karl Barth**  
**Academic Lectures on Ephesians**  
**Göttingen, 1921-1922**

The editor's notations have been incorporated into the translation without comment, except where further explanation helps clarify the text. Material which Barth has deleted is provided in a footnote, as this material occasionally helps interpret the text. Orthographic changes have been made to bring the text into conformity with standard practice. The Greek text is rendered in bold print at the beginning of each paragraph to indicate the textual unit being interpreted; other Greek citations are in normal type, and lower case is used for the first word of a sentence where Barth uses upper case. Italics indicate words which Barth underlined for emphasis. Multiple verses are indicated by "vv." where Barth habitually uses "v." For ease of reading Barth's long paragraphs are frequently divided at logical breaks, signaled by a vertical stroke ( | ). Moreover, subheadings have been added in accordance with his outline. The date for each lecture appears in brackets. Use of the typescript for the translation is with the permission of the Karl Barth Archives, Basel. Use of either the German text or the translation of the exegetical lectures in this study is permissible only with written consent from the Barth Archives.

NB: Barth's lectures are assigned separate pagination from the analysis which precedes and follows them.

## Preface

1:1-2

**1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the saints and believers in Christ Jesus. 2 Grace be with you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

The so-called "Preface," consists of an identification and brief description of the author of the letter and its recipients.<sup>1</sup>

Παῦλος. The first word of the epistle has attracted more attention and certainly more interest than all the other words in the letter put together, during the period of "historical critical research" of the Bible, which has certainly not yet run its course. There is a question about whether the apostle Paul is actually the author of the epistle, or whether one of Paul's unknown disciples placed the famous man's name on his own work, an acceptable and unobjectionable custom at the time. In contrast to the unanimity which still existed less than 30 years ago when one camp of New Testament scholarship prevailed, the current state of research on this matter can be summarized as a cautious, *non liquet*.<sup>2</sup> Individual scholars defend a position for or against the letter's authenticity with more or less certainty. The excursus which M. Dibelius provides in his

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<sup>1</sup> The typescript includes the following in the upper left margin: "The Epistle to the Ephesians Winter Semester, 1921-1922" and the date of the lecture, November 10, 1921.

<sup>2</sup> "It is doubtful;" a legal term used when there is not sufficient evidence to decide the case.

commentary at v. 4:16 reflects the current situation.<sup>3</sup> In addition to that discussion, you will find clear accounts of the matter in the New Testament introductions by Jülicher and by Fr. Barth; and because I am not in the position to add to the controversy, which has quieted down somewhat, I would like to limit myself to briefly identifying the main points in order to explain my own position on the matter, which is in no way original.<sup>4</sup> |

If I am correct, there are two central points. The first concerns the *close relationship* between *Ephesians and Colossians* at the level of both vocabulary and ideas. On the basis of even a superficial comparison, there can be no real doubt that this relationship is not accidental. It follows that if both letters are genuine, they belong to the same period of Paul's life as Philippians, in the time of his Roman imprisonment. They form a closely related group, and must be interpreted by noting the parallels that exist between them. But because Ephesians is so dependent on Colossians, it must have been written by a disciple who redacted the material (so it is claimed); and because Colossians is shorter and more historically certain, this relationship of dependence has usually reflected negatively on Ephesians. The decisive evidence against this view, in my opinion, is that it is impossible to interpret the alleged redactor except through suspiciously complicated theories, such as those advocated by H. Holtzmann.<sup>5</sup> Nothing is ruled out, even the ordering of the parallel passages, not to mention their selection. It seems to me much more likely that *one* author wrote both letters, drawing from the same conceptual framework, but expressing his ideas in different situations, freely adapting his

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Dibelius, *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, 3. Bd.: Die Briefe des Apostles Paulus II an die Kolosser Epheser, an Philemon* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr - Paul Siebeck, 1912), 113-14.

<sup>4</sup> Adolf Jülicher, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Tübingen und Leipzig: 1906); ET: *An Introduction to the New Testament*, trans., Janet Penrose Ward (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 127-47; Fritz Barth, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1908), 70-77.

<sup>5</sup> Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der Neuestamentlichen Theologie*, 2. Band, ed., Adolf Jülicher and Walter Bauer (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr - Paul Siebeck, 1911), 262-94.

own ideas the second time, much as any of us might do today, when we have lectured on or written about similar material to different audiences.<sup>6</sup> The fact that the same term is used to express different ideas, a feature which M. Dibelius demonstrates and emphasizes in his discussion of σώμα and μυστήριον, does not seem to me to be sufficient evidence against this view, considering the extreme dialectical flexibility which Paul usually displays (for example, in his treatment of the concept of νόμος within Romans itself).<sup>7</sup>

The second point is more serious. It concerns the *linguistic and thematic* material, which is characteristic of Ephesians (some of which also appears in Philippians and Colossians; some of which is unique to Ephesians), compared to Paul's so-called major letters. After examining the facts of the matter, there are various ways of evaluating their significance. And in fact, if we come to Ephesians after reading the Corinthian letters, for example,<sup>8</sup> we find all kinds of things both formal and material which seem to be very different; and surprisingly, certain other things which we definitely expect seem to be absent. In the first section, 1:3-14, we immediately encounter unusual vocabulary, such as τὰ ἐπουράνια, καταβολὴ κόσμου, χαριτοῦν, and προσελπίζειν. We encounter an almost unbearably meandering sentence construction, which makes it difficult to understand, let alone to reflect with the writer.<sup>9</sup> A detailed examination reveals a variety of curious gems in a strange, ornamental style which is so

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<sup>6</sup> Barth's suggestion and wording here bear a strong resemblance to Fritz Barth's handling of the subject: "Viel einfacher ist die Annahme, daß ein und derselbe Verfasser, nämlich *Paulus* die beiden Briefe kurz nacheinander geschrieben und dabei die Gedanken, die ihn bewegten, vielfach auch mit den nämlichen Worten ausgedrückt hat." Fritz Barth, *Einleitung*, 74; his emphasis.

<sup>7</sup> Dibelius, *Handbuch*, 114.

<sup>8</sup> This statement reflects Barth's experience. He began serious exegetical work on Ephesians shortly after producing a small commentary on 1 Corinthians in November, 1919. Busch, KB, 108. See Chapter One for a complete discussion.

<sup>9</sup> "Nachdenkvermögen." Cf. pp. 102-03: "diese Anschauung nicht nur nachzuempfinden, sondern ihr *nachzudenken*." For a discussion of Barth's distinctive use of the prefix, "-nach," to describe the activity of interpretation, see Chapter Three.

typical of Ephesians (it has been referred to as, “solemn”<sup>10</sup> and “hieratical”). On the other hand, we do not find the familiar Pauline signature words, such as δικαιοῦν, θάνατος, θέλειν, and φρονεῖν, just to name a few; or the short exclamatory phrases, such as τί οὖν and μὴ γένοιτο; or the edgy, restless, direct and polemical style which we find in Romans and Galatians. And we cannot avoid mentioning the more important material differences. In Ephesians, *Christ’s office* is presented in what most interpreters can only describe as the “cosmic Christ” or by recourse to “metaphysical” language.<sup>11</sup> The theme of the *church* is central and is closely related to this so-called “cosmic Christ.”<sup>12</sup>

Ephesians offers a glimpse into the kingdom of good and evil spirits. All of Christendom is seen from the point of view of the *mystery*, μυστήριον which was long concealed but is now revealed. It is seen in light of the characteristics of God, on the one hand, and the intellectual characteristics of the human creature required for salvation, γνῶσις, which is related to it. In several passages, the apostles are ranked with the prophets as historical, holy figures – a particularly difficult point. The great battle about the *value of the Law* has receded into the distance, now sounding like the rumbling of distant thunder. And what has happened to the *parousia expectation*, so decisively important in Paul’s early epistles? In Ephesians, the church seems to reach perfection through a kind of natural evolution, without even a hint that some kind of catastrophe is necessary to bring about its perfection. To quote H. Holtzmann, it is dominated by “the notion of a certain and

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<sup>10</sup> The term appears in Jülicher’s *Introduction*. The Pauline thanksgivings are distinguished by “a solemn contemplation of the majesty which, through Christ, had given mankind the Gospel of atonement, of re-creation and of peace.” *Einleitung*, 129.

<sup>11</sup> Such language can be found in Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch*, 282: “Vorausgesetzt ist der leitende Gedanke von Kol ja auch Eph 1,10: Christus als kosmisches Zentralwesen.” For similar vocabulary, see Dibelius, *Handbuch*, 113.

<sup>12</sup> See note 11.

inexorable surging movement, from which Christ proceeds, imbuing everything with the effects of his immanence.”<sup>13</sup> |

Nevertheless, we should not overestimate these differences. They are striking, but not unprecedented. The modified style which Paul uses here is understandable, given his new framework of ideas. Both the altered expression and the partially new ideas are understandable, given the different time and circumstances in which this letter originated, compared to the major letters. Paul wrote Ephesians when he was an old man. I hope that I am not giving you even the slightest impression that this is said critically. But if we think about Plato, Schelling, or Paul Natorp,<sup>14</sup> to use a contemporary example, and how their ideas changed, both formally and materially, we have an accurate analogy of the relationship of Ephesians to, say, Romans. If Paul was actually the author of Ephesians, then the revolution which took place in him was even greater than we normally think. Even the scholars who currently maintain that the letter is unoriginal acknowledge that most of its themes and its substance are clearly Pauline, though expressed differently. We will not be quite so astonished by things which seem strange or which seem to be missing (here, I am thinking expressly about parousia expectation) if we follow the thread which leads from the former letters to this one; if we discover the new in the old and rediscover the old in the new. How easily someone in a later century could mistake one of Natorp’s authentic writings as inauthentic. Such a mistake is possible, if the person merely reads the words and clinically establishes what is there, rather than following the

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<sup>13</sup> Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch*, 293.

<sup>14</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854), the idealist philosopher. Paul Natorp (1854-1924), the Marburg philosopher, was one of the neo-Kantian thinkers who may have influenced Barth during this period. For a discussion, see McCormack, *Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 42-49.



text and thinking along with what it actually means. Regrettably, even H. Holtzmann, such a profitable scholar in other respects, is slightly ponderous in this respect.

Personally, I would defend the authenticity of Ephesians. But frankly, I do not have any great interest in the question. As far as I am concerned, it could be otherwise. I have treated the matter this thoroughly in order to fulfill all righteousness.<sup>15</sup> Bengel expresses my true opinion about it when he says, “Noli quaerere quis scripserit sed quid scriptum est.”<sup>16</sup> Now that we have dealt with this second unavoidable introductory question, we can happily devote ourselves entirely to “*quod scriptum est.*”<sup>17</sup> As for the authorship question, it is enough to know that someone, at any rate, wrote Ephesians (why not Paul?), 30 to 60 years after Christ’s death (hardly any later than that, since it is attested by Ignatius, Polycarp, and Justin),<sup>18</sup> someone who understood Paul well and developed the apostle’s ideas with conspicuous loyalty as well as originality.

The author of the epistle calls himself an ἀπόστολος. The literal meaning of ἀπόστολος is “an ambassador.” Curiously, in classical Greek the word always had the special meaning of “admiral,” according to Lietzmann’s discussion of Romans 1:1.<sup>19</sup> And even if the use of the word in the New Testament does not prove that it has this meaning, we can certainly assume that originally it had a military ring which it no longer has for us. In the New Testament, at first only the twelve disciples are called “apostles.” Then Paul, claiming God as his sole authority, assumed this title. Apparently, it was used

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<sup>15</sup> Pencil notation on the margin of the manuscript: “[vgl. Mt. 3,15]”; ET: cf. Mtt. 3:15.

<sup>16</sup> “Do not ask, Who wrote it? but, What is written?”

<sup>17</sup> “what is written.”

<sup>18</sup> Here, Barth seems to be relying on information from Fritz Barth’s New Testament introduction: “freilich nicht tief herab, da der Epheserbrief schon einem Ignatius, Polykarp und Justin scheint bekannt gewesen zu sein.” *Einleitung*, 75.

<sup>19</sup> Hans Lietzmann, *Einführung in die Textgeschichte der Paulusbriefe an die Römer* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr - Paul Siebeck: 1919), 24: “Das Wort ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ bedeutet im klass. Griechisch die Flottenexpedition (so Dittenberger Syll. I 153 79ff.) oder ihren Leiter, den Admiral.”

more generally for a while. Barnabas is referred to in this way in Acts 14:4, 14. 2 Cor. 8:23 refers to people who are called ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν. ψευδαπόστολοι also make an appearance (2 Cor. 11:13; Rev. 2:2). In the *Didache* and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, ἀπόστολος seems to be almost a synonym for “preacher.”<sup>20</sup> Later, this general use is discontinued, and once more it is used as a designation of honor for the twelve, including Paul. An apostle is a person with a mission and the power to carry it out. He is sent to enemy-occupied territory to break up a blockade, so to speak. We should think about the ἀπόστολοι as the messengers of the βασιλεία, the royal rule. Certainly, a person is not an ἀπόστολος by virtue of being a preacher, or of anything else, for that matter, even the greatest poet, thinker, or artist. As Kierkegaard says, “The vocation of apostle is a paradoxical fact” (“*Über den Unterschied Zwischen einem Apostel und einem Genie*”).<sup>21</sup> The apostolic vocation splits the person, so to speak. He is an apostle apart from what *he* is, on the basis of something which *he* absolutely is *not*. A demand of a very *different* order is made on him, and a demand of a very different order directs him to his fellow human creatures. There is something exceptional and astonishing about him; but it is not his genius, his experience, his unmediated knowledge [*Unmittelbares*],<sup>22</sup> or anything that

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<sup>20</sup> “Now about the apostles and prophets: Act in line with the gospel precept. Welcome every apostle on arriving, as if he were the Lord. But he must not stay beyond one day. In case of necessity, however, the next day too. If he stays three days, he is a false prophet. On departing, an apostle must not accept anything save sufficient food to carry him till his next lodging.” “The teaching of the twelve apostles, commonly called The Didache,” trans., Cyril C. Richardson in *Early Christian Fathers*, Volume 1 (Philadelphia: Westminster: 1953), 176.

<sup>21</sup> “Apostolic calling is a paradoxical factor which from first to last in his life stands paradoxically outside his personal identity with himself as the definite person he is.” Søren Kierkegaard, “Of the Difference between a Genius and an Apostle,” trans., Alexander Dru, in *The Present Age and Two Minor Ethico-Religious Treatises* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 143.

<sup>22</sup> With the term, “das Unmittelbares,” Barth refers to psychologically quantifiable knowledge which is available without mediation. “Unmediated” conveys Barth’s meaning better than the standard translation, “immediate.” “The German terms ‘mittelbar’ and ‘unmittelbar’ translate as ‘mediate’ and ‘immediate,’ where the German emphasis is upon the ‘medium,’ that which ‘mediates.’ Although this root idea is still present in the English terms, it is largely lost in current usage,” RC, 286. For a discussion of Barth’s use of the term, see McCormack, *Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 160-62.

can be accounted for psychologically as greatness or character. What makes him an apostle is his mission, instructions, and the service he is to offer. Psychologically, these are not even *his own matter* but the matter which *has him* and sends him.<sup>23</sup> That is the source of his burden [*Bürde*]; and that is the source of his honor [*Würde*]. The order to which he submits imposes a limit, not only on himself but also on anything which might harm him, and makes him intrepid, secure, and unyielding for all time.

ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, Paul calls himself, and thereby indicates the source of his authority.<sup>24</sup> In this formula, Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς, Christ Jesus, or with the emphasis reversed, Jesus, the Christ, the essence of Paul's life – and not only Paul's – is contained and expressed. Time does not permit a thorough discussion of the phrase here, but I will suggest its meaning. You know the context; Χριστὸς means “Messiah,” or “the anointed King of Israel;” an outstanding historical figure, reminiscent of the bright but distant past, who has now become the personification of the eschatological expectation. He is the one from above, who brings and restores the kingdom. All of that is easy for us to say, but what an upheaval of heaven and earth had to occur in the late Jewish period to generate this expectation and this concept! And how baffling that when the gospel about Israel's Christ was directed to the whole world, it displaced so many other rival claims at the time and could meet with such success! Most of all, how incomprehensible the actual contents [*Inhalt*] of this gospel. An individual, particular, and historical man, Jesus of Nazareth, is this Χριστὸς. He is the κύριος, the Lord, to clarify the claim with a term which was common in both political and religious language of the period. A man is *the* man. All others are shadows of him. As they wait longingly for him, they wait for their own

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<sup>23</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>24</sup> “. . . an Apostle is what he is through having divine authority. *Divine authority* is, *qualitatively, the decisive factor,*” Kierkegaard, “Genius and Apostle,” 144; his emphasis.

fulfillment. The formula, Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς means the uniting of the incompatible, the *coincidentia oppositorum*,<sup>25</sup> and the complete riddle of Christology which later centuries labored over.]

But what are we saying? This formula, Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς, contains the deepest problem of life that confronts all of us. Does not your life in time, and mine, this particular, random, unique existence of ours, stand under the demand that they *should* share and the promise that they *may* share in the source of ultimate truth and reality? Not only partially, or spiritually, but down to the last detail? Not only as parts of a whole, but themselves as a whole? Not only a second compared to a first, but rather as one without a second? Moreover, the form of this announcement is also determined by its contents. Observe and underscore this: “Christ” or “Messiah” means “King.” There is an unmistakable progression from the King to the ἀπόστολος, to envoys who are instructed and equipped with power. The message of the incarnation is not proclaimed as an idea, in the normal sense of the word; rather, the word from the peaceful kingdom enters the world as a battle cry, as a declaration of war. Here the δύναμις τοῦ Θεοῦ speaks.<sup>26</sup> Here, One demands an acknowledgement, which initially is not acknowledged, then *is* acknowledged. One intends to rule as monarch, and *all* other demands with which life confronts us are called into question by him. Here, it is a matter of God’s decisive battle against idols. And in order to assure that this battle is taken seriously; to prevent us from turning it into a religious or philosophical so-called “truth;” to impress upon us that we can have truth only in the eternal moment of knowledge, the concrete contents of this gospel and its most characteristic trait is a human face, the completely mysterious face of

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<sup>25</sup> “the uniting of opposites.”

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Rom. 1:16, which includes the phrase, δύναμις γὰρ Θεοῦ.

one who suffers, is rejected, and dies; the face of Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. Obviously, ἀπόστολος is a parable. As with the master, so it is with the disciples. Paradox can be explained only through paradox. Immanuel! God with us!<sup>27</sup> That is the meaning of the formula, Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς. The existence of an ἀπόστολος is a variation of the same theme, but repeated at a lower level, where it is possible to serve, to point, and to witness. To be an ἀπόστολος means to serve Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς. But he can *only* serve him. To be Christ himself is out of the question. Think about it, you who wish to become pastors. The pastorate has meaning only because the office is supported by the possibility that one can be an ἀπόστολος. But then the actual theme of this office is that the unheard of event has become a reality in Christ. Consequently, it is a matter of serving in that office where all one can do is serve.

διὰ Θελήματος θεοῦ, Paul adds. He uses exactly the same phrase in 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1. In Gal. 1:1, he interprets this phrase precisely and unambiguously: οὐκ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ δι' ἀνθρώπου ἀλλὰ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν. An apostle is an apostle because of the will of God. In the Galatians passage, this will is identified as the same incomprehensible will of God that brought Jesus back to life from the dead. Most of all, it means negation. Paul renounces all natural protection. He abandons all defenses, which he, like anyone else, could have found useful. When a person risks saying what Paul had to say, he inevitably opens himself to the accusation of being *presumptuous*. Human society has always been, if not practically, then at least in principle, a well-ordered *world* of functions, which are recognized (more or less) as necessary and useful,

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<sup>27</sup> Mtt. 1:23.

as can be observed on a small scale in the organization of a university. But what gives a person the right to speak about *God* and about the last things? How does one justify the necessity and the usefulness of *this* function? Certainly, one can appeal to “religious” needs. And as it is well known, such an appeal is the safeguard and defense which the church has always enjoyed in the world of human society. In that case, speaking about God is a *legitima vocatio*.<sup>28</sup> The idea of such a human basis for the apostolic office obviously played an important role even in original Palestinian Christianity. Its classic development occurred in the Roman Catholic Church, and analogous developments can be seen in all other religions. Basically, the idea is unobjectionable. How could religion not fall into line with the rules which everything human must observe, either tacitly or explicitly?|

But what if a person has something to say which goes so far beyond “religion” and all the recognizable human concerns and needs that it radically calls them into question, along with the fabric of society which is based upon them? What authorizes someone like Socrates, Paul, or Kierkegaard? Is it not obvious that people like this leave themselves open to the accusation that they are presumptuous, enthusiasts, and nihilists when they prefer not to cover up the facts and seek accommodations as normal citizens somewhere within the shaky construction of human activities? Paul preferred not to cover up the facts. He never did so with the apostles, just as they could not cover things up regarding *their* churchly authority. He renounced the shelter and protection which he could have received from human authority. With his appeal to διὰ Θελήματος, he risks being taken for a fool, and that is precisely what happened. He will not assume any authority which has not been given to him by God. In this light, perhaps it is better

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<sup>28</sup> “an official vocation.”

understood as his *humility*. He really means to relinquish self-honor, precisely because he seeks his honor in God alone. Most of all, by appealing to this διὰ Θελήματος Θεοῦ, he negates himself. Agreeing to receive honor from others is certainly the most subtle form of attributing honor to ourselves. And because he is basically not afraid of offending anyone with his claim, he has become immune to the accusation of being presumptuous. In the case of the apostolic vocation, no one except God and God alone can say to a person, “You are [an apostle], not an enthusiast!”<sup>29</sup> Consequently, he must accept the humiliation which may be laid upon him, and in most cases *is* laid upon him,<sup>30</sup> because he can do no other.<sup>31</sup>

[November 17] The phrase, ἀπόστολος διὰ Θελήματος Θεοῦ, is a dialectical expression. It includes two possible meanings, which are mutually exclusive but also explain each other. Each possible meaning points beyond itself, and the meaning of the phrase is found precisely in *that to which they point*. Is Paul expressing supreme self-confidence or profound humility? Is he supremely self-confident when he humbly refuses to claim any human rank and appeals instead to the fact that God has appointed him? Or is it the other way around? Is true apostolic humility what enables him to remain self-confident in the face of the weakness which he confesses? Can we really say

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<sup>29</sup> “daß heir Keiner dem Menschen sagen kann: du bist kein Schwärmer! als Gott selbst, Gott allein.” The phrase, “an apostle” is added to clarify the contrast which Barth expresses.

<sup>30</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>31</sup> The following appears at the end of the lecture on November 10: “SUBSEQUENTLY DELETED: Last time, we ended with the Pauline phrase, διὰ Θελήματος Θεοῦ and established that with this expression, the author consciously both opens himself to *and* frees himself from the reproach of presumptuousness. It is an expression of his self-confidence *and* his humility. If his honor as ἀπόστολος were established through people, even the best people, this apparent humility would actually be arrogance for him, a form of seeking his own, human honor. By appealing to the will of God, this apparent arrogance is actually humility for him, because by it he renounces all that is considered valuable by people. The visible manifestation of this expression is that the writer becomes neutral and indifferent. END OF DELETION” Barth incorporated the contents of this paragraph, worded slightly differently, in the following lecture, delivered on November 17.

conclusively that it is either one or the other? When arrogance can be humility and humility can be arrogance, then clearly there is another factor at work. We need to see the larger sphere, where self-confidence and humility are equally appropriate and even necessary. Paul is referring to the sphere where the word seizes the creature, neutralizing and bypassing our *exceedingly good behavior* as well as our bad habits, our *commendable* behavior as well that which is reprehensible about us. When he calls himself ἀπόστολος διὰ Θελήματος θεοῦ and addresses his readers on this basis, Paul does not intend to assert his personality, not even his religious personality; or to flaunt his personal or empirical experience [*nicht sein Erlebnis, seine Erfahrung*]; or to impress them with his knowledge. He finds no reason *to linger* on these human factors, painfully acknowledging either their alleged good or evil dimensions. His relationship to his readers is determined by the fact that he is a servant of the word. He has something to say to them, and he appeals to them to listen to the substance of his message as one who is appointed διὰ Θελήματος θεοῦ.]

Listen to what Calvin said in a sermon delivered on this text, May 15, 1558:

It is a deceit of the devil, designed to diminish our reverence for the Word of God, when he directs our attention to *the one who delivers the word*: Or il est certain que nous sommes des vaisseaux *fragiles* et de *nulle* valeur, voire mesmes comme des pots cassez. Of what importance are those whom God appoints as servants of his Word? They are like vessels, who are content to be regarded with contempt, because they know that they are holding priceless treasure. Notons bien donc, quand les *hommes* viennent à nous pour estre tesmoins de la remission de nos pechez et du salut qu'il nous faut esperer, que nostre foy doit monter plus haut, et qu'il n'est pas question de nous enquerir, et cestuy-ci merite-il d'estre escouté? Et qui est-il en sa personne? Contentons-nous que Dieu par cemoien-la nous veult attirer a soy.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> “For one of the common artifices which the devil uses to diminish reverence for God’s Word is to place before our eyes the person who brings it. Now it is certain that we are frail vessels and of no value, yes, of no more worth than broken pots. What is there in those whom God has ordained to be the ministers of his Word? But the treasure is inestimably great at all times, despite the contemptibleness of the vessels [2 Cor. 4:7]. . . . Let us take note then that when men come to bear testimony to the forgiveness of our sins and the



No true bearer of the divine word preaches another gospel, becoming reprehensible, and then looks for an excuse (1 Cor. 9:27).<sup>33</sup> He, most of all, stands under the judgment of this word, a judgment which brings about cleansing. Certainly, his human nature, his “personality,” including his religious personality, is affected by this cleansing judgment. How could it be otherwise? But what is cleansed and refashioned by the word remains *human*; and this refashioning and cleansing take place through *judgment*, the repeated judgment of the word. The human creature is a mortal bearer of that word.

Remembering this judgment prevents the bearer of the word from confusing *God’s* questions and answers with any other theme, with his own being, having, and doing – even his supremely religious being, having and doing. This recollection should also prevent his hearers or readers from becoming preoccupied with the messenger instead of the message. “For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience” (2 Cor. 1:12). However, “We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor. 4:5).

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salvation we ought to hope for, our faith must rise up higher and not stand questioning whether such a man is worthy to be heard or not, or enquiring what manner of person he is. Let us content ourselves with the thought that God by that means intends to draw us to himself.” SoE, 12; Barth’s emphasis. “Car voilà aussi l’astuce dont le diable use coutumierement pour diminuer de la reverence de la parole de Dieu: c’est qu’il nous met devant les yeux ceux qui las portent. Or il est certain que nous sommes des vaisseaux fragiles et de nulle valeur, voire mesmes comme des pots cassez. Qu’y a-il en ceux que Dieu ordonne pour Ministres de sa parole? Mais tant y a que le thresor est tousiours inestimable, combien que les vaisseaux soyent contemptibles. . . . Notons bien donc, quand les hommes viennent à nous pour estre tesmoins de la remission de nos pechez et du salut qu’il nous faut esperer, que nostre foy doit monstrier plus haut, et uq’il n’est pas question de nous enquerir, et ectuy-ci merite-il d’estre escouté ? Contentons-nous que Dieu par ce moyen-la nous veut attirer à soy.” SsE, 249.

<sup>33</sup> Whereas RSV and most English translations render the text, “so that I not become *disqualified*,” Luther uses “*verwerflich*,” meaning “worthless” for ἀδόκιμος: “sondern ich bezwinge meinen Leib und zähme ihn, damit ich nicht andern predige und selbst verwerflich werde.” BL, 1 Cor. 9:27. The Greek term means, “failing to stand the test; unqualified, worthless, or base; disqualified.” BAGD, s.v. “ἀδόκιμος.”

We now turn to the description of the recipients of the letter: τοῖς ἁγίοις . . . καὶ πιστοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. The words, τοῖς οὖσιν (and subsequently ἐν Ἐφέσῳ) do not belong in the phrase, but in a subsequent position.<sup>34</sup>

ἅγιοι comes first (as in Col. 1:2). Paul did not use a phrase like ἁγίοις . . . καὶ πιστοῖς to describe his readers in Galatians or 1 and 2 Thessalonians. In the preface of those epistles, he simply addresses them as ἐκκλησία θεοῦ (ἐκκλησία θεοῦ, in Gal.) The designation ἅγιοι appears in Rom. 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:2, 2 Cor. 1:1, and Phil. 1:1. The addition of πιστοί in this passage and in Col. 1:2 is distinctive of the mature style of Paul's later epistles, in which he develops concepts more fully. In these salutations, πιστοί never occurs without ἅγιοι. This fact alone tells us that ἅγιοι is the more important term; it does not derive its meaning from πιστοί; instead, πιστοί is clarified in light of ἅγιοι.

In the Old Testament, which is clearly the background to Paul's use of the term here, ἅγιος signifies a place, object, or person located in the creaturely realm but under the jurisdiction of God's power and splendor. Therefore, ἅγιος means *negation*; quarantine has been imposed; there has been an amputation; there has been an attack, and as if a shell had landed and exploded, a void has been formed.<sup>35</sup> This negation is strictly *paradoxical*. According to creaturely standards of thinking and experience, what is made holy remains unchanged. The one who makes them holy, the cause of this negation, does not appear as such, occupying time and space. The qualification, the

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<sup>34</sup> Barth reads the text, "To the saints and believers in Christ Jesus." By contrast, the Nestle text reads: "τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῖς οὖσιν [ἐν Ἐφέσῳ] καὶ πιστοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ." NTG, Eph. 1:1. For Barth's detailed discussion of the text-critical issues and possible interpretations, see pp. 21-24.

<sup>35</sup> "Eine Absonderung, eine Wegnahme hat sich vollzogen, ein Angriff ist geschehen und ein Hohlraum ist entstanden wie von einer einschlagenden und expoldierenden Granate." The first two terms, *Absonderung* and *Wegnahme*, can refer either to medical conditions (quarantine, amputation) or to military/political affairs (solitary confinement; removal of a dictator). For similar use of "*Hohlraum*," see ER, 29, 36; 65. This passage is an example of how Barth adapted terminology from Franz Overbeck's *Christentum und Kultur*. For a discussion, see McCormack, *Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 232.

demands, and the threat which this event introduces cannot be perceived; the void which opens up in a creaturely object or a person and enables them to become what they are not, cannot be perceived either. In the strict sense, ἅγιος means that  $a = (-a)$ . Only God can guarantee that this qualification is *divine* and therefore real. There is no way to directly identify the state of holiness as such! Holiness which is clearly visible, tangible, and perceptible (humanly speaking) is not holiness. Nothing is holy by virtue of what it is or is not – by itself, independent of God. None of us is holy by virtue of what we believe or do not believe, do or do not do. God is the one who makes holy what will always remain unholy. And *God* reveals what is holy as he makes the creature holy. Only the holy of *God* exist in the sphere where *God himself* is holy and plans to do things for them and with them that they cannot resist; any holiness springing out of human activity would be our own rather than the holiness which is uniquely and completely God's. Holiness is a relationship with God. This relationship is established by *God*. It is never simply a given. It is never something which has already happened. For the human creature, it will never be anything other than a question and goal; but as free grace, it becomes more than a question and goal. It exists wonderfully, each moment that it is established as God's eternal election; and absolutely *no* law could possibly be at work, above or apart from God's *beneplacitum*<sup>36</sup> diverting the course of this election. To *call a person holy* means that God eternally disturbs him and fills him with joy, that he has laid his hand upon the creature. He is attacked and wounded right at the core of his life,<sup>37</sup> namely in his

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<sup>36</sup> "good pleasure." In Reformed theology, the phrase is particularly associated with "the ground of God's elective choice (Eph. 1:5) . . . where emphasis is placed on the freedom and sovereignty of the divine purpose." Richard A Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant and Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 57.

<sup>37</sup> "an seiner vitalsten Stelle." Literally, "where he is most vital or alive" or "the source of his energy and power."

subjectivity, in his existence. Existentially, he is no longer his own. He himself no longer lives. He resembles a wheel [*Exzenterrad*] which no longer revolves around its own center. As God first appeared to Abraham, God appears at his dwelling like a stranger, making a promise and demanding obedience.<sup>38</sup> |

Has a miracle occurred? No, there is no miracle. Everywhere we turn, all we can see is the creature, living in sin and death. God remains hidden – fundamentally hidden – after he has revealed himself to the creature; precisely because he has wrapped himself in the impenetrable mystery of his divinity, he has revealed himself as *his God*: as *his* God, because he is infinitely near those who are utterly lost, destitute, and lonely, whose gods and idols lie shattered before them; but he has also revealed himself his *God*, because unlike all gods and idols, he draws near in his infinite distance; he is majestically free with the creature while remaining utterly unapproachable. When God claims a person as his holy one, what occurs is not a miracle [*Mirakel*] but a wonder [*Wunder*], the wonder of knowing [*Erkenntnis*].<sup>39</sup>

Even though ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ follows πιστοί, the phrase also applies to ἄγιοι. In Christ, the human creature is sanctified (Eph. 5:25; 1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:4; Col. 1:22). Remember what we heard about Christ in the last lecture. Christ is the claim which God makes on a person when he lays his hand upon him; the ultimatum addressed to the person; God's communication that this sinning and dying creature belongs to the jurisdiction of God's authority and glory. In this context, the Old Testament claim that

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<sup>38</sup> Gen. 18:1-10.

<sup>39</sup> When Barth distinguishes here between *Mirakel* and *Wunder*, the latter refers to a divine event which occurs within contingent reality. John Webster, in private conversation, Aberdeen, Scotland, June 24, 2005. Describing the devolution of the doctrine of verbal inspiration, Barth says: "The divine wonder of inspiration became the worldly wonder of inspiredness. To put it differently, the wonder [*Wunder*] became a miracle [*Mirakel*] that then as such quite rightly had to evoke reservations, criticism, and laughter." RC, 62; RB, 99. However, Barth does not maintain the distinction consistently. Sometimes, when he says, "*Mirakel*" he clearly means "miracle." The context determines which meaning is in view.

our God is a consuming fire takes on new significance.<sup>40</sup> Christ is the place where God's question becomes so acute that he must be simultaneously God's answer. Here, everything appears to be a riddle from the human point of view; therefore, precisely here we find the divine solution to all riddles. Here God's holiness speaks the final, devastating word – mercy. In Christ, the human creature in all of his spectacular incompetence is a holy person – he is holy as his God is holy. I am speaking about Christ, crucified and risen, as Paul did, not about the pious man Jesus. Nor am I speaking about a psychological relationship between us and this pious man, a path which might lead somehow from him to us, from our experience of him. Paul certainly did not address his readers as holy on the basis of their experience or their condition – past, present or future. What is at stake here is the human creature's *eternal* relationship to God, *the* relationship in which the person *is* eternal and will become what he certainly never was; and *becomes* what he eternally is: God's possession, instrument, servant, and child. This relationship is real only because it begins where *everything* comes to an end, in *the* life which comes from death. As the Old Testament continues to teach us, life after death would be a heathen illusion without this ultimate foundation. To address a person as holy in Christ Jesus requires a point of view wide enough to encompass time and eternity, law and grace, earth and heaven – both, in their distinction from each other as well as in their relationship to each other. Today we are probably only beginning to realize how much we lack this point of view. No wonder that what we preach as the word of God rarely approaches the heights of Ephesians' spirit, contents, or truth.

We turn to πιστοί, the second word which Paul uses to designate his readers. It is often said that, in contrast with ἄγιοι, it denotes the subjective state of the readers, and of

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<sup>40</sup> Deut. 4:24.

course to a certain extent that is correct. Nevertheless, we should treat the concepts, “subjective” and “objective” with care when they apply to the relationship between God and human creatures, particularly in the case of Paul. In this context, can something be subjective which is not also objective? In its most complete sense, ἄγιοι certainly denotes the subjective state of man, what Kierkegaard referred to when he said that the subjective is the objective. Conversely, the meaning of πιστοί is so closely associated with the object of πίστις that in Rom. 3:3 and in many other places in Romans and Galatians, it inevitably coincides with this object, without, of course, losing its significance as human attitude as well. In Paul at any rate a polarity, equilibrium, or balance never occurs between divine and human action; wherever “faith” is spoken of in such a fashion, it leads to simplistic and false dogmatics. We won’t go far wrong if we understand πιστοί in close connection with the more important term, ἄγιοι; it refers to those who recognize the divine demands with confident hope. As such, it refers to a truly subjective human state.|

But where, when, and how does any such hope-filled recognition<sup>41</sup> actually occur? Where, when, and how could faith as a psychological and historical reality become such an event? Who at any moment could say about himself, “I believe!” without in the same moment contradicting himself by adding, “Dear Lord, help my unbelief!”<sup>42</sup> Who could answer the question which is put to a person when he is chosen to be God’s holy one? Truly, faith is just as much of a paradox as holiness. Faith is the action of the new person in me, the person *I am not*; but the identity of the new person in me is the greatest possible dignity. Faith is an eternal event, occurring completely within

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<sup>41</sup> "solche vertrauensvolle Anerkennung."

<sup>42</sup> Mk. 9:24.

time yet surpassing time and of fundamental significance. Faith is God's work in us. It takes place in us, to be sure; it is not an invisible metaphysical occurrence alongside of the event which occurs when we recognize that God's mercy is enclosed in his holiness. But it takes place only as God's work, as the eternal moment hidden within the present moment; it is one with what occurs in us. Faith is as pure and original a creation as God's original creation, *creatio ex nihilo*, or it does not deserve to be called πίστις or to be spoken in the same breath as the holiness which Calvin refers to when he says, "De re infinita nihil potest dici imodice."<sup>43</sup> Because faith denotes human behavior, we must guard against thinking that we must be miserly with it, as if we must be reimbursed when we have spent it. The only faith we have to spend is this "*res infinita*."<sup>44</sup> According to the text, a person is πιστός ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. With this statement, the text constructs the narrow gate of critical negation, which no one passes through. Here, the Forward! which is spoken to us begins with a Halt! The life which opens up before us is preceded by death. This assurance comes at the point at which the person, including the religious person, despairs in himself. Then, of course, the promise is certain. God remains loyal to his holy ones. The promise is heard only when people recognize God in Christ Jesus as the Lord of life and death, the Lord of lords, the sure foundation and the unfailing hope of those who put their trust in him. But only in Christ Jesus. In him, the incomparable promise is spoken.

By listening attentively to the text, we have explained as clearly as possible why Paul dares to refer to his readers as ἄγιοι and πιστοί. No historical or pragmatic reasons

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<sup>43</sup> "For what is infinite cannot be too strongly expressed." CoE, 210. "Nam de re infinita nihil potest dici imodice." CiE, 154. Barth omits, "*Nam*." The meaning is not changed.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., "what is infinite."

are adequate to explain this risk. It is either foolishness or the ultimate insight into that which gives coherence to human life.

The phrase, τοῖς οὖσιν [ἐν Ἐφέσῳ] which is found between ἀγίοις and καὶ πιστοῖς, leads us from relatively peaceful to considerably more uncertain readings.<sup>45</sup>

1. We begin with the last two words, ἐν Ἐφέσῳ, because there seems to me to be compelling internal and external evidence that they are not part of the original letter. The codices  $\aleph$  and B, as well as those of Origen, Basil and Chrysostom provide evidence of an early text without this phrase; and the fact that Marcion understood the letter to be addressed to the congregation in Laodicea supports the older text.<sup>46</sup> The internal evidence for the shorter text is that the letter is written to a general audience, without personal knowledge of his hearers,<sup>47</sup> so that it is difficult to establish that Paul is familiar with the congregation in Ephesus.

2. One must consider whether the text should be understood without reference to a specific location.

Jerome<sup>48</sup>            τοῖς οὖσιν            those who exist in the metaphysical sense

B. Weiß and von Soden<sup>49</sup>            the saints, who are also faithful, in contrast to the covenant people of the Old Testament

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<sup>45</sup> At this point, the typescript is set out in the form of notes rather than in complete sentences, as the translation and layout reflect.

<sup>46</sup> NTG, Eph. 1:1; Fritz Barth, *Einleitung*, 71.

<sup>47</sup> Pencil notation on the margin: "6,23-24!"

<sup>48</sup> Barth misreads Jerome here. Jerome considers then rejects the suggestion that "those who are saints and faithful in Ephesus are referred to by the term 'being'." He mentions interpreters who support this reading on the basis of Ex. 3:14, "He who is has sent me," and concludes that they are "more curious than is necessary." He prefers the theory that it was "written straightforwardly not to those 'who are,' but 'who are the saints and faithful in Ephesus'." Ronald E. Heine, ed., *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 80.

<sup>49</sup> Johannes Weiß, ed., *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, 2.Bd.: Die Briefe (Göttingen, 1907), 358-61.



J. T. Beck<sup>50</sup> those in various congregations who remained loyal in a dispute between Jewish Christians and those following Paul

All of that is artificial in light of the parallels in 2 Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:7; and Phil.1:1.

3. Was Marcion correct? Harnack: Yes!<sup>51</sup> Laodicea was deleted, a conclusion based on Rev. 3:15ff. But Laodicea was one of the congregations with which Paul was acquainted.

4. A gap needed to be filled. A modern assumption. And why wasn't it preserved in a copy?

5. A circular letter written to various congregations in Asia Minor (an argument based on the reference to Tychicus in 6:21) which according to Marcion included Laodicea, the church with the respectable name, basing his argument on Col. 4:16. On this account, the designation of the congregation was accidentally lost. Unsatisfactory but not at all unlikely.<sup>52</sup>

[November 24] At the end of the last lecture we considered the possible ways of handling τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ.<sup>53</sup> Despite both the evidence of certain early documents and the internal difficulties, one can accept the phrase, ἐν Ἐφέσῳ, as authentic as do the

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<sup>50</sup> Johann Tobias Beck, *Erklärung des Briefes Pauli an die Epheser*, ed., J. Lindenmeyer (Güttersloh: 1891), 29-30.

<sup>51</sup> Adolf von Harnack, "Die Adresse des Epheserbriefs des Paulus," in *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Jahrgang 1910, 2. Halbbd.

<sup>52</sup> Jülicher's position. *Einleitung*, 141-42.

<sup>53</sup> In the upper margin, there are notes for an announcement to be given prior to the lecture: "Randnotiz: Nicht fertig lesen 'Epheserbrief'. Nicht den ganzen Brief aber das was gründlich ENDE DER RANDNOTIZ." "Marginal note: not finish reading 'Ephesians.' Not the entire letter but all that thoroughly. End of the marginal note." Apparently, Barth realized by this point that he would not have time to cover the entire letter. The following is a reconstruction of the announcement: "We will not finish reading 'Ephesians,' that is, not the *entire* letter; but that which [is covered will be done so] *thoroughly*." The following is crossed out in pencil: "SUBSEQUENTLY DELETED Χάρις is the unheard of conduct of God. God is with us despite us. And εἰρήνη, to be reconciled by the unfathomable will of God, is just as much of a paradox! It is not a matter of divine capacity in the first case and human feelings in the second, but truth through God's act, established by God *and* Christ. END OF DELETED SECTION"

newer interpreters, Meyer and Haupt.<sup>54</sup> I confess a certain fondness [*Heimweh*]<sup>55</sup> for this first solution, in light of how unsatisfactory the other suggestions are. One can maintain that ἐν Ἐφέσω is simply an insertion and try to find another way to deal with the resulting awkward phrase, τοῖς οὖσιν καὶ πιστοῖς, the solution of the ancient church theologians whom Jerome cites as well as that of Hofmann, Beck, B. Weiß, von Soden, and Barth.<sup>56</sup> One can take Marcion and Harnack's position that the original text read, ἐν Λαοδικεία.<sup>57</sup> One can conjecture that in the original manuscript, the space now occupied by ἐν Ἐφέσω was left empty, because it was a circular letter, Bengel and Olshausen's solution.<sup>58</sup> One can maintain as Jülicher does that we are dealing with an old manuscript copy, which had been originally addressed to a circle of gentile Christian congregations and accidentally lost. One can regard the entire epistle as inauthentic and the phrase ἐν Ἐφέσω as someone else's insertion, claiming 2 Tim. 4:12 as evidence, as Dibelius does.<sup>59</sup> Finally, as in our recent discussion [*Besprechungsstunde!*],<sup>60</sup> one can maintain along with Kühl that a fragment in v. 1 was lost and that τοῖς οὖσιν is a corruption of κλητοῖς οὖσιν

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<sup>54</sup> Heinrich A. W. Meyer, *Kritisch Exegetisches Handbuch über den Brief an die Epheser* (Göttingen: 1865); ET *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistle to the Ephesians*, ed., William P. Dickson; trans. from the 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Maurice J. Evans (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), 287-350; Haupt, *Gefangenschaftsbrieife* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1902), 1-2.

<sup>55</sup> There is no equivalent word in English to render the German, "Heimweh," which suggests deep longing or homesickness for one's homeland, Heimat. "Fondness" is appropriate here in light of the technical, academic point which Barth is making, but it does not express the same emotional intensity and resonances as "Heimweh."

<sup>56</sup> Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann, *Die Heilige Schrift neuen Testaments etc.* 4.Bd, *Der Brief Pauli an die Epheser* (Nördlingen, 1870); Beck, *Erklärung*, 25-26; Weiß, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, 358-61; Hermann Freiherr von Soden, *Urchristliche Literaturgeschichte: die Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin: Alexander Duncker, no date given); Fritz Barth, *Einleitung*, 70-72.

<sup>57</sup> Harnack, "Die Adresse des Epheserbriefs des Paulus."

<sup>58</sup> Johann Albrecht Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, 4.Bd. (Tübingen, 1850), 741-42; ET *Gnomon of the New Testament* Volume IV, trans., James Bryce (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1858), 61-62; Hermann Olshausen, *Biblicher Commentar über sämtliche Schriften des Neuen Testaments etc.*, 4.Bd.: *Die Briefe Pauli an die Galater, Ephesier, Kolosser und Thessalonicher enthaltend* (Königsburg, 1840); ET *Biblical Commentary on the New Testament* Volume 4, trans., David Fosdick, Jr. (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman & Co., 1857-1858).

<sup>59</sup> "Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus." Dibelius, *Handbuch*, 96-97.

<sup>60</sup> The reference is to one of the weekly seminars which Barth offered in connection with the lectures.

(as in Rom. 8:28).<sup>61</sup> In that case, ἐν Ἐφέσῳ could be deleted without further difficulties.

I believe that I have discharged my duty by making you aware of all these possibilities, and I leave it to you to decide which of them is the least improbable. Because of the inherent problems, the older theologians would never have made extravagant claims about their methods, not to mention their results.

Our greatest difficulty in understanding the familiar apostolic greeting, **χάρις ὑμῖν**, in v. 2 is that we know it far too well, or think that we do. Perhaps if it were censored in all churches for 50 years, we could hear once again what it originally meant. The same thing could be said about many other “familiar” Bible words. It is not insignificant that Paul adapted a common greeting, which he used almost word for word in all of his letters. Both the familiar **χαίρειν** from Greek epistolary salutations and **εἰρήνη**, which was roughly equivalent to the Hebrew **שלום**, were merely peripheral to Paul’s material concerns. By changing **χαίρειν** to **χάρις** and, more importantly, by linking both terms to the phrase, **ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς**, etc., Paul creates a characteristically new phrase. His intention was not to use impressive liturgical cadences but to say something of supreme importance, to summarize his entire message. What **χάρις** and **εἰρήνη** have in common is that both words point to conduct which is not the least bit obvious (God’s, on the one hand, the human creature’s, on the other). Clearly, Paul understands that the reality corresponding to these terms is not given, not readily at hand. Instead, Paul can only long for people, even Christians, to experience these realities. **χάρις** is not simply there; it *comes* and must come continually afresh. **εἰρήνη** is not something we possess; we *receive* it and must continually receive it. |

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<sup>61</sup> Ernst Kühl, *Elauterung der paulinischen Briefe unter Beibehaltung der Briefform*, 2.Bd.: *Die jüngeren paulinischen Briefe* (Gr. Lichterfelde-Berlin, 1909).

Already in the greeting, we are right at the heart of Paul's message. His greeting to his congregation, his proclamation to them, is a *remembrance*, a prayer for them. It is a remembrance of what the human creature as creature always fails to see, what is always lost on him, what he perennially forgets, but what is always infinitely near, always present, always offered as a gift and so utterly certain that one needs only remember it. In this *prayer* Paul brings to bear his entire personality in order to confront people with this remembrance, to say to them what they actually know already; because only as he appeals to God in human presence and speaks in their defense before the final court can he tell them the simplest thing of all; since the simplest is also the hardest thing of all (remember how all of the other Pauline letters begin with εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ or a similar phrase; take a look at εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς in vv. 3-14, the first section of our letter, in order to see for yourselves that with Paul, the necessary word of *remembrance* directed to the human creature and the word of *prayer* directed to God are inextricably related and fundamentally one). Already in his greeting, Paul says *everything*. As he greets his readers, he indicates what is beyond both him and them, what they both lack and can only pray for (and may pray for). Even so, his greeting is a true greeting, an indication of the *community* which exists between them; because human community exists only on the basis of what is beyond human capacity, what they lack and can only pray for. Nothing that is self-evident or given can ground a community as the hidden God, the Not-given [*das Nicht-Gegebene*] does.

*χάρις* indicates God's unheard of, strange conduct with the human creature. God, whom the human creature cannot know at all – because anything that the creature can know is not God – God, who dwells in unapproachable light; God, from whom Isaiah

recoiled (and with good reason); saying, “Woe is me! For I am lost;”<sup>62</sup> the *Deus absconditus* is the *Deus revelatus*.<sup>63</sup> Even though we can only speak about God in negation, God himself says Yes to this human creature, who is known for his utter sinfulness, creatureliness, mortality and therefore absolute God-forsakenness. The Absolute is present to this human creature, who possesses no organ for the Absolute, no possibility, no predisposition (what is the “human religious capacity” except a question mark which hangs above us without providing the anticipated answer? How can it be anything other than the realization that we are not able to take the first step toward God, not even the smallest baby step? What else can we discover from the religious heights except that the human creature is human?). *No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no heart has conceived* of that which God has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor. 2:9). The meaning of this verse is that they *become* the ones who love him as such, because he has *prepared* it for them! It is worth considering what Rom. 5:5, 8:28, and 1 Cor. 8:3 say about where our love for God comes from.]

Grace means that God is the ground of the human creature. But this grounding is ungrounded; otherwise it would not be grounding in God.<sup>64</sup> Grace is the fact of forgiveness, which has no continuity that we can grasp (apart from that which is established by the will of God himself, God’s alone!). This human creature, who is fallen, and without exception fails to recognize it, is recognized by God as his child. If we really want to think about what the term *χάρις* refers to, *we cannot do enough*; we

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<sup>62</sup> Is. 6:5

<sup>63</sup> “The hidden God is the revealed God.” These two expressions convey “the paradox of God’s unknowability and self-manifestation as stated by Luther. . . . God is revealed in his hiddenness and hidden in his revelation,” Muller, 90.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. RB, 92; RC, 56-57: “With the statement, ‘It is God’s Word!’ we have arrived apparently at the point where the scriptural principle seems to be grounded on its groundlessness, or better, it is grounded in God alone.”

cannot elevate God enough in our thoughts, be sufficiently amazed at the unfathomable mystery of his will, or give him enough honor; and then, there is *the Nevertheless* – despite our *most reverent* thoughts, our *deepest* fear, our *most genuine* amazement, which never even comes close to being adequate, despite all this, the completely unexpected, unforeseen, incalculable, incomprehensible (even through the logic of conversion), and unprecedented surprise, as surprising as rising again from the dead and seeing with our own eyes the wonder of God’s *reality* in contrast to everything that we think about God – *that* is grace. Paul sees his readers in the light of this great *possibility*. *Grace* is with them. They really are the ἀγίοι καὶ πιστοί. Can we say more? Can we say that they *are* pardoned, that they *have* grace, and that they *stand* in grace? Actually, we *can* say all that, provided we are clear that we can only remember *the reality* of grace and pray for it. “Grace be with you!” I think that Luther’s “with” expresses something very original. Grace is not poured into a person so that it becomes a possession or an attribute.<sup>65</sup> Grace can only be *with* and accompany a person. The person continues to be what he is, a human being in all of his questionableness. How could he recognize grace as grace without continually recognizing his own God-forsakenness?<sup>66</sup> What makes grace graceful [*das Gnädige der Gnade*] is that God in his majesty is *with* the human being in his creatureliness. If we tried to say more, we would say less.

Now εἰρήνη indicates the human creature’s equally strange and unheard of conduct with God. χάρις and εἰρήνη, which Paul combines repeatedly with equal emphasis, correspond to each other; Paul sees them as the two endpoints of the relationship between God and the human creature in the first case, the human creature

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<sup>65</sup> “Gnade sei mit euch und Friede von Gott, unserm Vater, und dem Herrn Jesus Christus!” BL, Eph. 1:2.

<sup>66</sup> Barth attributes this idea to Calvin. *The Theology of John Calvin*, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 80.

with God in the second, a relationship which is infinitely real and therefore is never given. εἰρήνη is also a *Nevertheless!*, the removal of a barrier, a victory, a breakthrough. Although the conditions for peace do not exist, a peace *settlement* is established (compare Rom. 5:1ff.). The human creature is reconciled with God, *even though* he remains human, *even though* the creature's sin which separates him from God is infinite and absolute, *even though* there are no means of mediation [*Vermittlungen*] for the creature, no bridge, no way to God, *even though* from the summit of his existence – I am thinking again about religion – the only thing he learns about himself is that he is a rebel against God. The unrighteous person we know is reconciled with the holy God, whom we do not know! God stands before the creature and the creature before God. God has restored the relationship with the human creature. The incomprehensible event is that time and eternity have drawn near.<sup>67</sup> The human creature can, may and should be in a normal, orderly, peaceful relationship with God. There comes a point when God, whose hand is raised against the human creature with the power to crush him, relents, because he brings the creature's revolution against God (the only thing we could know from our relationship with him) to a forceful end. The impossible becomes possible. There is an objective [*sachgemäß*] relationship between God and the human creature, because the infinite distance between the creator and the creature is acknowledged; and precisely because it is acknowledged, the distance is ultimately proximity. That is εἰρήνη, peace.

The commentaries often interpret peace as the feeling of peace with God that the human creature can experience. One can say that. But, even though I am reluctant to initiate a dilettante debate with psychology (such a debate is as unappealing to me as debates about history), I must avoid saying too little. Anyone who says that peace with

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<sup>67</sup> Literally, "there is proximity between eternity and time."

God is something we experience must add that it is an *unfamiliar* feeling which we *never* have as such and which absolutely *transcends* all of our other feelings. In any case, I must issue a warning about identifying this feeling with what Schleiermacher called “the feeling of absolute dependence” [*das schlechthinige Abhängigkeitsgefühl*]<sup>68</sup> by which he meant the ultimate human possibility. What feeling that we know or can imagine is adequate to grasp this matter? As Paul says in Phil.4:7, it will certainly be grounded in the εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ, another Bible phrase which, unfortunately, is too familiar; he longs for this peace to guard, preserve, and keep them as a soldier keeps his prisoners, referring to it as the peace which ὑπερέχουσα πάντα νοῦν. To interpret the verse correctly, we must point out that εἰρήνη absolutely towers above this νοῦς, which includes even the most soaring human feelings that we can imagine. Indeed, the essential elements of εἰρήνη are the *idea of God* [*Gottesgedanke*], the idea of *eternity*.<sup>69</sup> We can only know what “peace” is on the basis of “*grace*.” As Calvin said, God’s *acts of creation and redemption* are “the opposite of any capricious, carnal certainty,”<sup>70</sup> any romantic illusions about our relationship with God, any grasping or seizing to oneself his fullness, which does not belong to us. We have peace with God in the knowledge that *God is God* and remains *God*, in the knowledge that we can *only* believe in God.<sup>71</sup> |

The human creature can *only* wait and hope without seeing. But because the waiting and hoping is in God, the human creature has peace with him. Peace with God is

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<sup>68</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans., H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928-1956), 16.

<sup>69</sup> The phrase, “the idea of God,” occurs frequently in Barth’s writings during this period. For another example, see RB, 174; RC, 110.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. ER, 151; CoE, 208: “The true conviction which believers have of the word of God of their own salvation, and of religion in general, does not spring from the judgment of the flesh, or from human and philosophical arguments, but from the sealing of the Spirit, who imparts to their consciences such certainty as to remove all doubt.”

<sup>71</sup> For other examples of this signature phrase, see ER, 11, 83, 346; and GD, 88. See also the discussion in Jüngel, *Legacy*, chapter 2.



certainly not an aspect of a certain kind of temperament, human attitude, or school of thought. Peace with God can occur just as easily through the luminous simplicity of Blumhardt's sermons and prayers<sup>72</sup> as through the severity of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*; it is neither the one nor the other but the meaning which *God* can give to what is profoundly childlike or extraordinarily sophisticated, and which either *lacks* until God creates this meaning; consequently, they must continually *receive* it. Notice that *God* is the one who sets out the terms of the peace settlement which this victory has achieved, and that this is a true and lasting peace only because God sets up his rule according to his good pleasure.

Paul says explicitly that χάρις and εἰρήνη come ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. A few minutes ago, if you were silently wondering how I know all those things that I was saying about χάρις and εἰρήνη, I will answer on the same basis that Paul does when he prays for his readers and of what he emphasizes here, namely, that when these words address us as the writer intended them, we are dealing with *God*. The reality he is referring to is hidden in *God*, and *God* himself guarantees that they are reality. We might say that I know (1) the reality to which the Pauline concepts refer; and (2) we have assurance that this actually *is* reality only by following the course indicated by Paul, namely, by listening to and interpreting what God has said. If we know what we are doing and try to say as best we can what we have heard from God, we cannot entirely go astray, even though we will, of course, err in certain details.

In my explanation of χάρις and εἰρήνη, I have already pointed out the most important thing about ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς, etc., for the moment. Paul expects grace to come

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<sup>72</sup> Christoph Blumhardt, pastor and leader of the Bad Boll community, which Barth visited in April, 1915. Blumhardt's meditation, "Peace be with you" impressed Barth on that visit. KB, 85. For Barth's meditation on Blumhardt following his death, August 2, 1919, see *Predigten 1919*, 291-95.

expressly from God and peace to be received expressly from God. This is why he insists on relating χάρις and εἰρήνη so exclusively and so radically to God; (from your experience, you might consider Paul's presentation somewhat inhumane and hostile to the world). This is why we must draw attention to the incomprehensible Nevertheless! at the heart of both terms. In spite of God's holiness, Grace! In spite of human sin, Peace! This is why Calvin's observation, "*de re infinita nihil potest dici immodice,*" applies to both.<sup>73</sup>

I would like to emphasize just two other matters. (1) ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν indicates as sharply as possible that Paul is not thinking about a metaphysical object when he refers to God as the One who gives grace and from whom we receive peace. By calling God our Father, he is using a parable as a parable of the inexpressible, the unimaginable, our origin. *Our origin*:<sup>74</sup> although thoroughly human, *we* human creatures are related to him, who is most wonderful, who is not given and never will be given, who is unknown, who is holy, the *Deus absconditus*.<sup>75</sup> When we speak about this God, we are speaking about *ourselves*, our fundamental *existence*, the invisible mystery of our visible life, about the θεωρία of our existence, which πραξις can never truly account for, about the answer which comes from our deepest question when we speak about God. Even though God meets us in such an un-human, unworldly fashion, even though many of you must feel that his χάρις and εἰρήνη manifest themselves in our individual, daily lives more like Faust's spirit living in us than as good gifts given by God, this God is our Father, we all really come from him; and he is the most unique, personal, and universal

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<sup>73</sup> "For what is infinite cannot be too strongly expressed." CoE, 210; CiE, 154.

<sup>74</sup> The concept of the "Ursprung" is another dominant theme in Barth's early theology. For examples, see ER, 342, 346 and "The Christian's Place in Society," WG, 285. See pp. 9-10, n. 38.

<sup>75</sup> See note 63, page 27.

basis of our existence, the most wonderful and inaccessible One, who appears before us as soon as we remember him. It is only as a stranger that we actually come to know him. Only when we fear him above all things do we have the desire or the ability to love him. Paul requests that χάρις and εἰρήνη may happen to his readers.

(2) καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ also indicates as sharply as possible that this event between God and the human creature is not a logical a priori which can be accounted for rationally through terms used in Logic, such as “The Not-Given,” “ἀνυπόθεσις” “the origin,” or any other term one could choose. Instead, it must be described as an event.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> The following is crossed through in pencil: "ACHTUNG NACH 'DES URSPRUNGS' USPR. 'des Nicht-Ich' nachträglich GESTRICHEN M.E. ABER NIRGENDWIE AUFNEHMEN."  
"ATTENTION REGARDING "THE ORIGIN" [URSPR]. 'of the Not-I' later DELETED IN MY OPINION no way to establish."

The following appears below the crossed-out portion: "God is God. God is free. God acts. God reveals himself. There is *knowledge* of God only in light of God's *revelation*. This dual emphasis on the acting and self-revealing of God is indicated by the strange καὶ in the text between the words "God" and "Jesus," so that Paul calls God our Father and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without this "and" Jesus would appear to be a second God or half-God alongside the Father. But Paul is speaking about the same God in both cases, referring here to his work as God and there to the significance of his work. What God's work means, the mystery of the creation and redemption of humanity, is the mystery which Paul simultaneously veils and discloses in the expression κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός. Here we stand before the final riddle and final solution that arises from the historical appearance of Christianity and from the problematic of our own life."

The following notes are crossed through in pencil: "(Abmachung mit Lempp. 25% Christ in der Gesellschaft, Biblische Fragen. Zur inneren Lage. Dostojewski. (Römb.) stud. Hagemann Testatbuch)." Albert Lempp (1884-1943) was the owner of Christian Kaiser Verlag in Munich and Barth's publisher for the Romans commentaries. The marginal note refers to interest in Barth's and Thurneysen's published material, as is evident in the following letter to Thurneysen on November 27, three days after the lecture was delivered: "ein kleiner Handel, den ich durch einen eifrigen Wingolfmann mit deinen und meinen sämtlichen Werken in Betrieb setzen ließ, setzte so schwunghaft ein, daß binnen 24 Stunden 4 mal 12 Exemplare (Tambacher, Aarauer Vortrag, Overbeck und Dostojewski) abgesetzt waren und Lempp um einen neuen Stock ersucht werden mußte." B-Th II, 14. Barth refers to his lectures, "Der Christ in der Gesellschaft" (1919); ET "The Christian's Place in Society" and "Biblische Fragen, Einsichten und Ausblicke" (1920); ET "Biblical Questions, Insights and Vistas," WG, 272-327 and 51-96, respectively.

## Doxology

1:3-14

**3 Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, in heaven, in Christ:**

**4 In him, he *chose* us before the creation of the world to be spotless and blameless before him. 5 In love he determined us through Jesus Christ his Son, according to his good pleasure, to exist 6 for the praise of the glory of his grace, which he lavished upon us in the Beloved.**

**7 In him we have *redemption* through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he has generously given us in perfect wisdom and insight: 9 to make known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure 10 (to accomplish in the fullness of time according to his intention) to gather together everything in Christ, the heavenly and the earthly in him.**

**11 In him we have also become *heirs*, having been determined (according to the intention of him who accomplishes everything according to the purpose of his will) 12 to the praise of his glory to be the first to hope in Christ.**

**13 In him, you also, having heard the word of truth, the message of your salvation and believing in him, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 the downpayment of our inheritance, until it becomes our own possession, to the praise of his glory.<sup>1</sup>**

### Overview

First, we will get an overview of the *entire* section that was read.<sup>2</sup> It is a *doxology*, in which the apostle praises God with the clear intention of inviting his readers into the same cry of praise, in order to orient them to the direction from which he intends to

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<sup>1</sup> “Gelobt sei der Gott, der der Vater unseres Herrn Jesus Christus ist, der uns gesegnet hat mit dem ganzen geistlichen Segen, im Himmel, in Christus. 4 Nämlich: In ihm hat er uns *erwählt* vor Erschaffung der Welt, zu unserem Heilig- und Makellossein vor ihm. 5 In Liebe hat er uns dazu bestimmt, durch Jesus Christus seine Söhne zu sein nach dem Wohlgefallen seines Willens 6 zum Lob der Herrlichkeit seiner Gnade, mit der er uns begnadigt hat in dem Geliebten. 7 In ihm haben wir die *Erlösung* durch sein Blut, die Vergebung der Sünden nach dem Reichtum seiner Gnade, 8 in welcher er freigebig gewesen ist gegen uns an vollkommenen Wissen und Besonnensein: 9 Wissen ließ er uns das Geheimnis seines Willens, nach seinem Wohlgefallen 10 (zur Durchführung in der Fülle der Zeiten nach seinem Vorsatz) Alles in Christus wieder zusammenzufassen, das Himmlische und das Irdische in ihm. 11 In ihm sind wir auch *Erben* geworden, wir, die wir dazu bestimmt waren (nach dem Vorsatz dessen, der Alles nach seines Willens Ratschluß bewirkt), 12 zum Lob seiner Herrlichkeit die zuerst Hoffenden zu sein in Christus. 13 In ihm seid auch ihr, die ihr das Wort der Wahrheit gehört, die Heilsbotschaft von eurer Errettung, in ihm glaubend seid ihr versiegelt worden mit dem *heiligen Geist der Verheißung*, 14 der das Angeld unseres Erbes ist, bis es unser Eigentum sein wird, zum Lob seiner Herrlichkeit.” For a comparison of Barth’s translations of Ephesians 1 in the sermons and the lectures, see Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> In a marginal note, Barth indicates the date of the lecture: December 1, 1921.

address them. The phrase in v. 4,<sup>3</sup> “Praised be him who has blessed us,” contains an untranslatable word play; the meaning depends not on aesthetic affect but on the nature of the human act which enables the readers to understand the writer of the letter and in which he invites them to participate; an act which he describes as an echo of what God has done first, not only temporally but *before* in the fundamental sense of the eternal divine priority, an echo which *necessarily follows* immediately from this divine act. Accordingly, the ideas in vv. 4-14 move between two poles, described as εὐδοκία, the *beneplacitum* of God, on the one hand, and ἑπαινος, the *glorificatio* of God through the human creature, on the other.<sup>4</sup>

The term εὐλογεῖν, *benedictio*, which occurs throughout v. 3, includes both the idea that *God* should be recognized as the one who *blesses* the human creature, and that as he is recognized as such by man, he is to be blessed, praised, and glorified. As Bengel correctly pointed out, “Aliter deus benedicit nobis, aliter nos benedicimus illi.”<sup>5</sup> Between the one and the other, there is the infinite distinction between the act of the creator and that of the creature. However, the infinite nature of this antithesis is precisely what binds the one indissolubly to the other. God can only bless man as his *creature*, and man can only bless God as his *creator*. Recognizing the necessity of this infinite antithesis is precisely what makes the blessing true and the praising necessary. As the deity of God is

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<sup>3</sup> Barth erroneously has v. 4; he refers here to v. 3.

<sup>4</sup> See previous note.

<sup>5</sup> “God has blessed us in one sense, we bless Him in another.” Bengel, *Gnomon*, 63. “aliter benedixit Deus nobis, aliter nos benedicimus illi.” *Gnomon*, 741. Barth has slightly misquoted Bengel, placing “benedicit” where the original reads, “benedixit,” and slightly inverting the word order, stating “deus benedicit” where Bengel has “benedixit Deus.” The meaning is not substantially altered.

recognized, the “*aliter*” is established on both sides; and precisely by being established, it is sublated [*aufgehoben*].<sup>6</sup> |

It is no accident that Calvin, who understood this connection as few before or after him, seems particularly to have loved v. 3, which sets the tone for the entire epistle. We are created *by* God, from whom we come and *for* God, towards whom we are moving.<sup>7</sup> We *are standing* on the ground of the *beneplacitum Dei*; we *are moving* toward the goal of the *gloria Dei*. The knowledge of God is the *presupposition* and the knowledge of God is the *goal* of all human being, having and doing, including our present speaking and hearing of divine things! This is what Paul wishes to shout to his readers in this doxology. By grasping both the beginning and the end, he intends to jolt them out of the forgetfulness to which they are constantly prone; from the irrelevant matters in which they are constantly becoming lost; from false subjectivity and equally false objectivity when the creature is confronted by the fundamental questions of his existence and the answer that is already given by God; Paul calls them from the posture of spectators and observers into a relationship with the subject, to a vocation – a movement, an upheaval, a sublation [*Aufhebung*] of time and everything temporal through eternity, in which the human creature regains consciousness and walks before God.|

This event must take place in Christ. Therefore, “in Christ” is really the key to our passage – from v. 3b, then to ἐν αὐτῷ in v. 4, and continuing to the three-fold

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<sup>6</sup> In Hegelian terminology, *Aufhebung* and cognates could be translated, “abrogation or suppression,” but given Hegel’s special usage, “sublation” is the best choice. “In Hegel’s special usage, the term combines its ordinary meaning with a rarer sense of ‘setting aside’ or ‘preservation.’ It thus serves to designate the dialectical transition in which a lower state is both cancelled and preserved in a higher,” Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), xi.

<sup>7</sup> My emphasis.

Ἐν ᾧ in vv.7, 11 and 13; we should not only see this phrase as the key but use it vigorously to unlock the meaning of the passage.<sup>8</sup> We would do well to follow the text's structure, which is reflected in Dibelius' outline:<sup>9</sup> vv. 4-6, Jesus Christ our election; vv. 7-10, Jesus Christ our liberation; vv. 11-12, Jesus Christ our hope; vv. 13-14, Jesus Christ our sealing. Even with Dibelius' outline, I suggest translating each individual phrase or sentence as a separate unit, beginning with Ἐν ᾧ ("In him, he has chosen us . . ." [v. 4]; "In him, we have liberation . . ." [v. 7]; "In him, we are heirs" [v. 11]; "In him you also . . . have been sealed"[ v. 13] ). This is the only possible way to understand the passage in German. In Luther's translation, which preserves all of the relative clauses, it impossible to get an overview of the passage or to understand it, either when reading it or, even less, when hearing it read; in sermons and Bible studies, I strongly recommend that you accommodate the listener by adopting Dibelius' suggestion. |

We need to be reminded, of course, that this solution runs the risk of obscuring a distinctive feature of the text, namely, the huge span of ideas, expressed in an overwhelming cavalcade [*Verkettung*] of sentences, pointing in so many different directions. In early Christianity, the whole matter could be expressed and received as *one* sentence, *one* thesis, *one* whole and rounded truth, because it was regarded as completely integrated and flexible [*So einheitlich, so beweglich*]. We must understand the text the same way, as integrated and flexible; not as a collection of dogmatic *loci*, but as a single *kerygma*, hearing all the parts simultaneously, in their relation to each other, each part equally important; otherwise, the separation of syntactical units for linguistic clarity will

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<sup>8</sup> "nicht nur gezeigt, sondern energisch im Schlosse gedreht wurde."

<sup>9</sup> Dibelius, *Handbuch*, 97: "4 – 14 wird dieses ἐν Χριστῷ weiter ausgeführt vgl. das durchgehende ἐν ᾧ 7.11.13." Barth accurately summarizes Dibelius' outline, in which the passage is divided into distinct sections, beginning with the phrase, "in Christ" or "in him." He groups vv. 4-6; vv. 7-10; and vv. 11-12 and vv. 12-13, although his schema is not quite as clearly delineated as Barth's outline. Dibelius, 97-99.

result in a toning down and a distortion of the contents. In any case, whether we read the original Greek text, Luther's translation, or Dibelius', let us be sure that we are repeatedly reoriented to the subject<sup>10</sup> by the constantly appearing Ἐν ᾧ and the equivalent ἐν Χριστῷ. What is expressed here is not truth in general, and therefore cannot be expressed directly, rationally or irrationally, speculatively or experientially through the vagaries of the "pious consciousness;" the truth expressed here is expressed existentially, indirectly from God and by God, not as individual words in themselves, but with every single word in relationship to *the* Word, which is not exhausted by any individual word. Because *that* is what is meant by the phrase, ἐν Χριστῷ, it constitutes the formal key to the section. We are placed before *God*, claimed by *God*, born from *God*, and determined for *God*. Because this is the case, because God himself has blessed us, therefore we should praise him. ἐν Χριστῷ, there is a tearing of the veil which disguises the human creature's true situation and keeps him from seeing that he belongs to God. ἐν Χριστῷ means Immanuel! God with us!<sup>11</sup> ἐν Χριστῷ, God is near, but in his self-revelation as the distant, strange, incomprehensible God, the *Deus absconditus*; he is near as *the* proximity of God, which always signifies eternity and can never be reduced to an extension of the temporal; proximity which is never objectified, comprehensible, or observable; precisely because it is ultimately real, it can only be believed (faith itself is the wonder of its revelation); Paul says that election, liberation, hope, and sealing are ἐν Χριστῷ; he does not mean truths, even holy truths, a series of points from which we can pick and choose based on our preferences; rather, he means *the* truth, *the* salvation, which can only be truly understood and received in time through various relations, in human

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<sup>10</sup> "immer wieder zur Ordnung, zur Sache rufen lassen."

<sup>11</sup> Mtt. 1:23.



language with all its various expressions, and certainly in human life with its various levels of knowledge and experience, all competing with one another; but understood and received as *one* amidst all the various possibilities which seem to exist for us, and therefore as one in its totality, in the necessity and interrelatedness of all its various relations. |

We are ἐν Χριστῷ; therefore, God has blessed us; therefore, we should praise him; therein, he is the creator and we the creature. Note well that ἐν Χριστῷ is the *presupposition* and *goal* of our human being, having, and doing. It is about the *beneplacitum Dei* on the one hand and the *glorificatio Dei* on the other in their original connection, not the human creature's own being, having or doing. Paul would never have understood his conversion at Damascus as the cause of his being ἐν Χριστῷ. He is not ἐν Χριστῷ because he experienced Damascus; he experienced Damascus because he is ἐν Χριστῷ. If we reverse this order for purposes of clarity, we sever the nerve, depriving ourselves of the *unique* possibility of understanding the words which sound and soar from beginning to end: κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ – εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ. So ἐν Χριστῷ, we are the people who we never were, never are, and never can be; because of our standing ἐν Χριστῷ, we are a *new* creature, unique, incommensurable with our existence in time; that is what induces Paul to praise God and to remind his readers that they are ἅγιοι καὶ πιστοί, they are not unknown or dispossessed.<sup>12</sup> Let us turn to the *detailed exposition*.

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<sup>12</sup> “die Nicht-Unwissenden, die Nicht-Unbeteiligten.” An allusion to Rom. 9:25-26, where Paul quotes Hos. 2:23; 1:10: “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘my beloved.’”

“Blessed be God”

Concerning εὐλογητός we should observe that for Paul and for the Bible, Old and New Testament, *praise of God* is not by any means superfluous, casual, or a merely superficial matter. It *can* be a form of lip service and certainly *will* be if the object of praise ceases to be God and becomes the epitome of our thoughts, ideas and wishes, the epitome of the known world, the universe in microcosm or macrocosm. Such casual praise of God is fundamentally about *us*.<sup>13</sup> Such action is self-evident, and because it exists on the same level as others, can also be replaced by opposing actions. The praise of God to which Paul refers is not self-evident, and there is no room for anything else beside it. It is praise directed to God, the Father of Jesus Christ, who reveals himself in his hiddenness and is the creator of all things. It is an act of knowledge, of repentance, of transformed thinking. Something new is opened up in the human creature when he is able to εὐλογεῖν. He has found light where human eyes can only detect darkness. He has made the most important discovery of all. He has found *God*; and he has *found* God. He not only *can* but *must* εὐλογεῖν. “For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”<sup>14</sup> In this context, how could the inward and outward be separated, how could the praise of God consist in word only? There is no word, nor is there any action adequate for it. We can only cover our faces [*die Augen aufzureißen*] and give God the glory (“*crever les yeux*” Calvin).

[8 December 1921] ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατήρ. καὶ emphasizes the designation of God as πατήρ (as in Eph. 1:3, καὶ πιστεύσαντες; and Rom. 16:1, καὶ διάκονον). God is praised

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<sup>13</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Cor. 9:16. Barth has, “Eine Zwang ist über mir, wehe mir, wenn ich das Evangelium *nicht* das Evangelium verkündigte!” Cf. BL, 1 Cor. 9:16: “denn ich muss es tun. Und wehe mir, wenn ich das Evangelium nicht predigte!” Barth’s translation emphasizes the compelling nature of Paul’s experience. “*Zwang*” suggests pressure, an irresistible urge, or an impulse rather than a legal obligation.

as *this* God, and therefore as ὁ θεός. *This* God emerges victoriously from all the other actual or imaginary gods to receive all the honor, as he did in Athens, the unknown God emerging from the known gods.<sup>15</sup> Monotheism is not a self-evident, dogmatic truism [*Selbsverständlichkeit*] for Paul;<sup>16</sup> on the contrary, it must be continually reestablished. The vigor of Paul’s ideas, when we understand them, is that even at the foundations of his “system,” he *always* begins at the beginning, not with anything assumed or conceded [*Konzediertem*], as religious thinkers commonly do. Nothing is assumed or conceded [*konzediert*]. The reality that God is the *Father of Jesus Christ* and that the Father of Jesus Christ is *God* is just as new and unheard of now as ever and must be acknowledged and expressed continually on the basis of revelation, not as something which we know already. To learn what this means for Paul, we must turn to the following clause, which clarifies the statement about God.

ὁ εὐλογήσας ἡμᾶς, etc. First, we should notice the relationship between εὐλογήσας and the earlier εὐλογητός. I said at that point in the exposition that the εὐλογεῖν to which Paul invites his readers is fundamentally a matter of being surprised; we could just as easily call it joyful discovery as terror. The act of εὐλογεῖν which is evoked by God never occurs apart from ἔκστασις that takes place when the human creature faces the reality of God. εὐλογεῖν is the act *done by* man, when God has drawn near to him, who draws near only as the *unknown* God, whose goodness is *new* every morning.<sup>17</sup> εὐλογεῖν is the act of knowing God directly, but an act which emerges originally and wonderfully

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<sup>15</sup> A reference to Paul in Athens, where the apostle speaks of, “the unknown god.” Acts 22:23.

<sup>16</sup> Adolf von Harnack asserts that monotheistic religions were pervasive during the time of the prophets and criticizes the “dogmatic system” which is based on Pauline theology. See *What is Christianity?* 47; 230. Barth may have Harnack in mind at this point in the lecture, particularly in light of the reference below to “the simple Jesus” and to “*das Wesens Christentums*,” ideas of Harnack’s which Barth publicly criticized in the 1923 debate with his former teacher. See note 28, p. 44.

<sup>17</sup> Lam. 3:23.

from not knowing him, and which itself is nothing other than a qualified, prolonged<sup>18</sup> not knowing of God, a *docta ignorantia*,<sup>19</sup> the act of worshiping God with reverence and love in his divinity, that is, in his unfathomable majesty. Therefore, when God reveals himself in Christ, he reveals himself in Christ in his absolute mystery, in contrast to anything that is known or given. He is *revelatus* as *absconditus*. This seems to me to be the only possible interpretation of εὐλόγητος, considering the relationship between the human act described as εὐλογητός and the εὐλογία which is attributed to God, as well as the ideas developed vv. 4-14. Man's election from eternity, redemption, establishment in hope, and sealing through the Holy Spirit – these constitute the *divine* act which Paul describes as εὐλογεῖν. *Human* εὐλογεῖν must mean that in this act, man *actually* faces God, that he places himself in the position where this God draws near him.<sup>20</sup> Think about what this means! It is to be taken out of oneself, far beyond anything that we typically describe as psychological ecstasy; it is an act in which the human creature categorically transcends all known human possibilities. How could the human creature at any moment actually stand facing God or at any moment of time even begin to do so? How could εὐλογεῖν not at any moment signify the unprecedented transformation, the act which brings light out of darkness, a sublation of time?<sup>21</sup> No, says Paul, the origin of human εὐλογεῖν, what stimulates and actualizes it, is not dependent on the human creature living in time. Rather, *God* arrives first with *his* εὐλογεῖν. Human εὐλογεῖν is a response to *his* call. *His* freedom is the sphere in which the human creature acquires freedom for his own act. *This* possibility for the creature is incommensurable with and radically different from all

<sup>18</sup> Marginal note: “prolongiertes [?]”

<sup>19</sup> “Learned ignorance,” i.e., lack of knowledge which is prescribed or acquired.

<sup>20</sup> “daß der Mensch diesem Tun Gottes gegenüber *sachlich* wird.”

<sup>21</sup> “*Aufhebung der Zeit.*”

other human possibilities and occurs at the point where God himself emerges from all other gods. This explains the necessity for the human creature's praise of God and the vigor with which the creature is claimed for the glory of God. This act is emerges as the divinely given possibility for the human creature; the unprecedented actually occurs, transcending observable reality [*Anschaulichkeit*] and all human boundaries. When it does occur, the divinely given possibility is a *necessity*. It becomes manifest as *absolute* act, and in no other way.

We should note that the *divine* act that is the basis of this human act is described simply as *speech*. God blesses. He *speaks* a *word* of promise and a *word* of grace. That is all. There is no *gratia infusa*,<sup>22</sup> no direct *imparting* of the divine life, no direct connection between God's will and what happens in the world or what happens in and to the human creature; therefore, it is not an *act* of creation but a *word* of creation, just as in Genesis. He *speaks*, and it happens, he *commands*, and it appears.<sup>23</sup> The word *alone* accomplishes it. Every conceivable act is included in the word as the *Word*. As divine *word*, God's εὐλογεῖν becomes the ground of and occasion for the human creature's εὐλογεῖν. If God's possibility for the human creature does not come as a *word*, with all of the unheard of strangeness and peculiarity of the word, a possibility which must be understood as distinct from everything that is directly apprehended, it does not come at all. If it is not *the* possibility that we can only *believe*, it is not *God's* possibility for the human creature. In the New Testament, at any rate, λόγος does *not* mean a superior form of mediation<sup>24</sup> or any material *hypostasis*; λόγος refers to God confronting the human creature as *God* indirectly – as in λογίζεσθαι, or in this context, εὐλογεῖν – not any kind

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<sup>22</sup> “infused grace.”

<sup>23</sup> An allusion to Genesis 1:1-2:4. Cf. ER, 102.

<sup>24</sup> “eine höchste Mittelbarkeit, eine dingliche Hypostase, sondern die Unmittelbarkeit.”

of so-called *apriori* relationship between God and man but an active [*schöpferische*] relationship. εὐλογεῖν refers to a divine act which is non-contingent, unexpected, and free, an absolute act of revelation.<sup>25</sup> As such, the word calls the human creature out of himself and into the world of the Father of Jesus Christ, into the world of freedom.

The preposition, ἐν, which occurs three times, also points us in this direction. Following Hofmann's suggestion, I think the simplest and the best way to render the passage is to form three parallel statements beginning with ἐν, rather than constructing subordinate clauses.<sup>26</sup> Nearly all the other exegetes understand the three clauses to be grammatically dependent on each other, particularly the first two ἐν-clauses, but there is nothing in the text to support this position, and it seems to me that the meaning of the passage emerges relatively clearly [*am larsten*] if, instead, we separate each ἐν-clause with a comma and imagine three circles going out from the center, εὐλογήσας. Before exploring *what* the blessing is, we must describe *how* God blesses the human creature. God blesses (1) with every blessing of the Spirit; (2) in heaven; and (3) in Christ. If this summary gives the impression of saying the same thing three times, then we have got it exactly right; one circle goes out from the same center three times, although each time in a distinctive way.

ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ. The play on words with εὐλογεῖν appears once again. “God blesses us with blessings – and precisely for that, we are blessed!”<sup>27</sup> Unless we have decided ahead of time that Paul wrote in such a complicated fashion simply to

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<sup>25</sup> “ein schlechthin offenbarendes Tun.” Literally, “an absolutely revealing act.” The German emphasizes revelation as an ongoing and living action. Because the English, “revealing” has different connotations, the noun, “revelation” is used here.

<sup>26</sup> Hofmann, *Der Brief Pauli an die Epheser*.

<sup>27</sup> More idiomatically, “God blesses us with blessings – and that is precisely the reason that we are blessed!”

sound poetic, this passage should make it obvious that the Pauline message is intentionally dialectical and must be understood dialectically. Do not be led astray by the current voices clamoring for simplicity, especially not by the completely false contrast between the dialectical Paul and the allegedly simple Jesus.<sup>28</sup> The goal of dialectical communication is simplicity itself, namely the truth, namely God. But we must believe in God as he really is, and that is possible *only* by believing; consequently, any communication that is truly about God is necessarily dialectical, that is, broken, indirect, pointing beyond itself.<sup>29</sup> We are not so simple that we can receive a simple communication about simplicity. *Our* alleged simplicity is increasing complexity and confusion. We can only be made open for the divine simplicity when our human simplicity is fundamentally shaken. Do not think that dialectic is a special feature of Paul, something we can dismiss with the catchword, "Paulinism." Dialectical theology is behind the best of Luther's early sermons and table talk. Most important of all, Jesus' speech is supremely dialectical. I would even say that Jesus' speech is more dialectical than Paul's, precisely because what at first glance is said simply and directly is intended so differently, so immeasurably suggestive and full of meaning. Where God is spoken about, the communication is always intended differently than it is spoken, and the more truly God is spoken about, the greater is the difference between what is spoken and its

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<sup>28</sup> This comment anticipates Barth's polemical response to Harnack in 1923, when he repeatedly criticizes Harnack for speaking of the "simple Gospel" ("*schlichte Evangelium*") and for portraying Paul as complicated, dogmatic, and systematic in contrast to Jesus' simplicity. What Harnack calls the "simple Gospel" is "what is left over" when the Bible's subject matter is removed, i.e., revelation. Barth concludes that "neither revelation nor faith is made understandable in the familiar 'simple' way as a frame of mind" which Harnack advocates. See "An Professor Dr. Adolf von Harnack, Berlin, 1923," in *Offene Briefe 1909 – 1935*, ed., Diether Koch (Zurich: TVZ, 2001), 55-88; ET "The Debate on the Critical Historical Method: Correspondence Between Adolf von Harnack and Karl Barth," in *The Beginnings of Dialectical Theology*, Vol. 1, ed., James M. Robinson; trans., Keith R. Crim (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968) 165-87; especially, 177, 185.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. ER, 38: "Now, Spirit is the denial of direct immediacy. If Christ be very God, He must be unknown, for to be known directly is the characteristic mark of an idol' (Kierkegaard)."

intended meaning; that is what is infinitely instructive and infinitely annoying about dialectical communication. Whoever intends to avoid it should be clear that he would rather not hear about God. Whoever intends to hear about God, in whom one can *only* believe, and hear what is always new – that God is the one in whom we can only *believe* – does not avoid dialectical communication, because he understands that this is the only type of communication that is appropriate.

“God blesses us with *blessings*.” The gift of the divine word itself is a word, *only* a word, *only* a pledge, *only* a promise; we do not see its fulfillment. If we saw its fulfillment, the promise would not be *God’s* promise. If in the giving of this gift God ceased to be a mystery, it would not be *God’s* gift. No, here *we* can never reach the limit; *our* hands necessarily reach into the void; for *us*, nearness never beckons. The *pleroma*<sup>30</sup> announced in the New Testament is not that we are different from Abraham, or that we have something more than God’s word, or that we can do more than believe in this word; rather, it is the announcement that in Christ, the blessing of Abraham is recognized as the blessing for every creature in every generation;<sup>31</sup> in Christ, the word of God is recognized as the divine and therefore universal possibility embracing all human creatures in all times and in every nation; faith in Christ is no longer seen as merely one “historical religion” among many and is recognized as the presupposition of our existence, of which we merely need to become conscious<sup>32</sup> in order to participate in the generation that is blessed in Abraham. But blessing remains blessing. Word remains word. Faith remains

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<sup>30</sup> “Plerophorie,” from the Greek, πληρώμα, Eph. 1:10: “the state of being full, fullness of time.” BAGD, s.v. “πληρώμα.”

<sup>31</sup> Gen. 22:17-18.

<sup>32</sup> “die Voraussetzung, von der wir alle herkommen und die wir alle nur zu realisieren brauchen.”



faith.<sup>33</sup> Even in light of the fullness of the New Testament, the human creature remains human, and the world continues to be the world, just as in Christ, time has been fulfilled, but *in* time, there is no way of looking directly into its fulfillment [*Erfülltsein*] or into the coming of the new heaven and the new earth. “My grace *is sufficient* for you!”<sup>34</sup> Anyone who desires more, desires less. To want more than God’s blessing is to desire *heathen* fullness, a material, direct, and visible presence of God; and it ends up being the presence of gods and idols. Let us take care here, precisely where it is a matter of understanding what God’s blessing is, that we do not lose what we do and can have out of zeal to take what is not proper for us to have.<sup>35</sup> God blesses us with blessings. The trains which attempt to run through this Halt! signal are always derailed, as church history teaches us a thousand times. |

But God blesses us “with the blessing of the Spirit”. With that, admittedly, the unheard of is expressed: God’s non-mediated presence, his inaccessibility, his seclusion, is his non-mediated presence to us, to you and to me.<sup>36</sup> God, who cannot be known, surrounds, besieges, storms and determines the domain of my knowing.<sup>37</sup> At the beginning and end of my natural, spiritual, and mental strength is the strength of *God*, the final question as well as the final answer. The boundary of my existence runs up against [stößt an] God’s existence, not as separate existence but as its own non-being, as its

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. ER, 38.

<sup>34</sup> 2 Cor. 12:9. The emphasis and exclamation mark are Barth’s. Luther’s translation has a hortatory element which is lacking in the English: “Lass dir an meiner Gnade genügen.” “Let my grace be sufficient for you.” BL, 2 Cor. 12:9.

<sup>35</sup> Calvin frequently speaks about “robbing” God when we attribute to ourselves what is rightly his: “Therefore, let us assure ourselves that we hold all things of God and his pure grace, and that we cannot attribute anything to ourselves, unless we intend to rob him of his right.” CoE, 12.

<sup>36</sup> “daß Gottes Unmittelbarkeit, Weglosigkeit, Unzugänglichkeit, Verborgenheit sein Unmittelbarkeit zu uns, zu dir und mir ist.”

<sup>37</sup> “Bezirk meines Wissens.”

ultimate *Aufhebung* and grounding.<sup>38</sup> My personality is found as it is lost and lost as it is found in the only real personality, God's personality.<sup>39</sup> God speaks; what difference does it make that I speak or remain silent? God acts; where does my acting or not acting come from? God is in the right; does it matter if I have any rights or not? God lives; what do my living and dying mean? Nothing that is mine, positive or negative, is obliterated, neutralized, or made indifferent by this knowledge, but it is definitely relativized, or to be precise, related to its origin, measured according to the standard by which all things are decided, large and small, life and death, good and evil. What I am, I am in relation to God. What is mine may stand under grace or law, but this is a secondary question that must be decided on a case by case basis; and to be precise, it must be said that both grace and law are significant in every case. Let us establish the following as fundamental: God gives us the Spirit; we are related to him; without him we are nothing, with him we are everything that he is himself.<sup>40</sup> God *gives* us the Spirit. Then how could our relationship to God at any moment be based on something which is already given, the object of rational knowledge or irrational feeling? No, *this* point in us, the Spirit of God, is not accessible by either rational or irrational paths. The Spirit is not accessible at all; he is absolutely beyond us; even the supremely religious achievements of our spirit in this world<sup>41</sup> exist in distinction from the Spirit [*gegenüberstehen*]. He is God's act of creation in us, not one act among others or an act which we can imagine by a *regressus*;<sup>42</sup> certainly not as a visible, material, or temporal act; rather, the Spirit is God's act of

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<sup>38</sup> "als an ihre eigene letzte *Aufhebung* und Begründung." See p. 33, n. 8.

<sup>39</sup> An allusion to Lk. 9:24.

<sup>40</sup> "das ist der Geist, den Gott uns gibt, daß wir auf ihn bezogen sind, ohne ihn nichts, in ihm Alles, was er selbst ist." Barth does not clarify whether the personal pronouns refer to God or to the Spirit. The translation reflects this ambiguity.

<sup>41</sup> "unseres Geistes als Diesseits"

<sup>42</sup> By "regressus," Barth means imagining God's creative activity as a superior form of human creativity.

creation, God's *word*, God's *logos*, God's own Spirit, meaning and ground. God blesses us with a *word* of blessing that proceeds from the Spirit. It has been so from the beginning: God's *word* alone stands; word, not act (despite what Goethe says), the act only in the *word*, the *word* as act, which should be sufficient guarantee that in his Spirit, God blesses us with his ultimately real presence.

Paul emphasizes the boundless significance of this εὐλογία, this state of blessedness [*Gesegnetseins*], when he says that God blesses us with *every* blessing of the Spirit. Haupt's translation of εὐλογία πνευματική as "blessing from the religious realm" suggests almost the opposite meaning.<sup>43</sup> No, the Spirit means the end of these distinctions between different realms; and in the course of spiritual history, if the Spirit has ever been *absent*, it is because people made this kind of distinction and confined him to the "religious realm." What do "religious" and "realm" mean when the subject matter is the relationship between the human creature and God? This kind of delimitation has meaning only to the extent that the relationship is *absent*. Where the relationship exists, such distinctions have already been removed. Spirit is the attack on the entirety of human being, having, and doing and includes the problematic nature as well as the promise of all things human. Take away the Spirit, that is, a relationship to what is infinite, in which the problematic nature and the promise are grounded in God, and the negative consequences tend to be just as bitter in the scientific, artistic, and political realms as in the "religious realm." In the New Testament, therefore, the correlate of the Spirit is the resurrection of the body (Rom. 8:11), which determines the totality of our existence, including our particular mode of existence [*So-Seins*], by our relationship with God.

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<sup>43</sup> Haupt, *Gefangenschaftsbriefe*, 4.

Because the divine word of blessing with which we are blessed is a πνευματικὴ εὐλογία, it is necessarily πᾶσα. By contrast, a merely religious εὐλογία is not worthy of the designation πνευματικὴ and is certainly not the truly divine word of blessing commensurate with human extremity.

ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις. Ephesians is the only place in the New Testament where this phrase occurs (cf. 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:2). Paul uses τὰ ἐπουράνια as a noun; in all these passages, the meaning is *locative*.<sup>44</sup> Christ is seated at God's right in heaven (1:20) and we with him (2:6). The wisdom of God is revealed to the powers and principalities in heaven through the existence of the ἐκκλησία (3:10); so are the πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας with which we must contend (6:2). In light of these parallels, we must reject the suggestion of Beck and others to translate it, "God has blessed us with heavenly *benefits*."<sup>45</sup> Instead, as with the paradox of εὐλογία, we are pointed for the second time to the fact that Paul is speaking about *God's* blessing, which can only be given to us. "Voluit indicare praestantiam gratiae quae per Christum nobis confertur" is how Calvin interprets it, getting it exactly right.<sup>46</sup> In the most spacious of all rooms, as Hofmann says rather well,<sup>47</sup> the decisive word is spoken, and the decision turns out to be favorable for us. "Every good and perfect gift comes from above," as James says.<sup>48</sup> Clearly Paul thinks about this "above" as a battlefield; on one side, Christ is standing as the field marshal at the King's right hand, and we with him; on the other side, the principalities

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Dibelius, *Handbuch*, 97: "Sind die Wendungen ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις wie ἐν Χριστῷ s. zu I Thess 1,1 beide lokal zu verstehen, so wird man die erste auf die εὐλογία, die zweite auf das εὐλογεῖν beziehen vgl. ἐλπίς., Col 1,5."

<sup>45</sup> Beck, 35-41.

<sup>46</sup> "All that was intended to be expressed is the superiority of that grace which we receive through Christ." CoE, 197. "Tantum voluit indicare praestantiam gratiae, quae per Christum nobis confertur." CiE, 147. Barth omits, "Tantum" and adds emphasis.

<sup>47</sup> Hofmann, *Der Brief Pauli an die Epheser*.

<sup>48</sup> James 1:17

and powers which are alienated from God and opposed to him appear in utter disarray, exercising their limited influence. The problematic nature of this event has the same origin as the problematic nature of our current situation of life under siege, described in the sixth chapter; likewise, the promise of victory has the same ultimate origin in the divine blessing. We should not be put off by the pictorial quality of Paul’s speech; it is not grounds either for metaphysical speculation or for rationalistic rejection of the ideas that are expressed. Throughout the passage, Paul is thinking from a human point of view. The riddle confronting us here, like the fact that we can recognize God only in his word, is that we see God and our relationship with him in light of the “not yet,” the victory which is still unfinished. But even from this darkness, ἐπουράνια heralds the last word – εὐλογία: nothing can separate us from the love of God.<sup>49</sup> And so, finally and emphatically: ἐν Χριστῷ.<sup>50</sup>

[December 15, 1921] καθώς (v. 4) functions like a colon that introduces the words that follow. Although grammatically, it belongs with vv. 4-6, I would certainly relate it to the entire section, vv. 4-14.<sup>51</sup> God has blessed us with every blessing of the Spirit in

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<sup>49</sup> Rom. 8:39

<sup>50</sup> At the conclusion of the phrase, there follows: “vgl. S. [11].” “Cf. p. .” It appears that Barth left a blank space, intending to fill it in later. The editor has inserted the page number in pencil.

There follows a large section of typescript, which has been crossed out in pencil by the editor, indicating that Barth deleted the material. A translation appears in Appendix B. The material is useful, because at several points it clarifies Barth’s meaning (see below on the question of whether Barth meant “predestinator” or “predestination”).

<sup>51</sup> The following comments in the margin appear to be Barth’s notes for an announcement prior to the lecture. The heading, *RANDNOTIZ*, has been penciled out, and the editor has added an explanation (illegible).

“Klage:	zu langsam
Text:	nicht leicht nicht gleichgültig nicht erste Kontroverse
Verstehen:	aufs Wort merken, gerade keine Kontrolle, wie weit verstanden, wie weit nicht.”

“Complaint:	too slow
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heaven, in Christ, καθώς, *that is*, he has chosen us in him; we have redemption in him; we are heirs in him, awaiting our inheritance in the future salvation,<sup>52</sup> and all this you share with us. As I said in the last lecture, I would outline the entire section as follows. There is a blessing of God from which *we come*, ἐκλογή (vv. 4-6). There is a blessing of God in which we *stand*, ἀπολύτρωσις, the forgiveness of sins (vv. 7-10). And there is a blessing of God to which we *are heading*, the future κληρονομία for which we hope, developed in two different expressions (vv. 11-12 and vv. 13-14).|

We should note carefully that in this succession of three or four trains of thought, Paul is not speaking about three different truths. They are related to each other not because they form a single train of thought that expresses a plan, method, or history of the acts of God. Rather, one and the same truth is expressed in three different forms; only by constant reference to their common origin can we understand each individual, distinct form. What connects this train of thought is that each form is a visible illustration of the one invisible act of God, his εὐλογεῖν ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ.|

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Text: not simple  
not insignificant  
not first controversy

*Understand:* to understand something from the word, no control how far to understand or not to understand.”

The following is an attempt to reconstruct Barth’s announcement based on the notes: “Announcement: In response to the complaints that we are moving too slowly, I would point out that the text we are considering is not easy to interpret, not insignificant, and not merely a matter of controversy. Our goal is to *understand* the text. We have no control over how far we go or do not go when it is a matter of understanding something from the word.” By this point in the course, Barth had delivered 5 lectures, roughly one half of the semester, and covered only three verses. We have evidence from the announcement prior to the third lecture on November 24 that he realized that he would not be able to cover the entire epistle. This announcement suggests that he did not know how much of the letter he would cover until the end of the course (see p. 117 for his comments about the necessity of summarizing chapters 2 – 6 in a final lecture). In the Calvin lectures, he faced a similar challenge. At some point in the semester, he realized that he would not be able to cover the material that he had announced and would need to alter his approach. *Theology of Calvin*, xvi-xvii.

<sup>52</sup> “Anwärter der künftigen Errettung geworden.”

In view of the one act of God, we can emphasize the blessing of God from which we come, so that predestination<sup>53</sup> is expressed (following Calvin). We can emphasize the blessing of God in which we stand, the forgiveness of sins (following Luther and many others). Finally, we can emphasize the blessing of God for which we are headed, so that eschatology comes to expression (following Blumhardt, for example). In each case, the decisive thing is that we know what we are doing and why, namely, that with the perceptible, temporal truth by which we express any one of these emphases, we actually mean the one imperceptible eternal act of God. Part of the greatness of the theology of the Reformers is that precisely *because* they grasped the truth with such one-sidedness, this ultimate relationship to the origin is so clear and precise. Let us not abandon this one-sidedness too quickly. To become as inclusive [*universal*] as Paul, we must first become one-sided. The possibility of formulating and depicting each of the various forms of the truth as equally serious, equally significant and important, the possibility of being, say, Calvin, Luther and Blumhardt simultaneously, is either an intellectual feat of the first order or a more or less mindless, unoriginal compendium. Whether “dogmatics,” which, as is well known, is the attempt to form an ordered relation of the various truth forms, is judged to be an intellectual feat of the first order or a mindless, unoriginal compendium, must, of course, be assessed on a case by case basis. In any case, we should be aware as dogmaticians (it is well known that, secretly, everyone is a dogmatician) that it is no small matter to form an ordered relation of all truths and with

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<sup>53</sup> The typescript is difficult to read at this point. To the word, “Prädestianer” the editor has inserted “nati” to signal a typist’s error, giving us “Prädesti[nati]aner.” Does Barth mean God, “the predestinator,” or simply “predestination”? The deleted section suggests the latter (see note 52, p. 51 and Appendix B). There, Barth wrote, “When Paul seeks to give an account to himself and his readers about the extent to which and the sense in which the human creature is the one who blesses God, he directs his attention first to the mystery of *predestination*. I said to you two lectures ago that I would outline the entire passage as follows . . .” If “predestination” is correct, then the text should read: “und wird dann zum ausgesprochenen Prädestination.”

seriousness to indicate the truth.<sup>54</sup> The best way to avoid a mindless compendium is to begin with an intellectual act of the second order, that is, to start with one of the possible forms of truth [*Wahrheitsgestalten*], not with the idea of remaining there (neither Calvin, Luther, nor Blumhardt did that, to mention them again), but to propose a survey of all the possible points of view in relation to the origin to which each individual visible point of view is related.]

In our section, Paul speaks on the basis of such a survey. He speaks from a goal which we have not yet actually reached. If we want to understand him, we must realize we can only do so by *anticipating* a viewpoint which presumably not a single one of us here actually possesses. Our actual viewpoint of the divine blessing in Christ will include only a small sector of the circle described here. However, let us read Paul, so that through such anticipation we can at least be sure that our small sector is truly part of a *circle*. We should try to understand as *one* reality what Paul presents successively as election – reconciliation – hope.<sup>55</sup> Paul indicates that he understands everything to be truly *one* both formally, by enclosing all three within the phrase, Ἐν ᾧ or ἐν Χριστῷ, and materially, by what he says about each individual part.

### **The Blessing of God from which we Come: Election (vv. 4-6)**

ἐξελέξατο. ἐκλέγεσθαι means to pick out, select or choose. To understand what Paul means here, we should be wary about jumping to the conclusion, as Calvin does, that this election is necessarily a double election, that the election to be ἅγιος and ἄμωμος, which the passage is about, necessarily implies a corresponding election to condemnation; we

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<sup>54</sup> More idiomatically, “on the basis of this ordered relation, make a serious attempt to indicate the truth.”

<sup>55</sup> “nebeneinander und nacheinander.”



should be just as wary of the more or less forced attempts of many recent exegetes to avoid this obvious implication by saying, as Ritschl and Hofmann do, that the object of election is actually the church of Christ; or, following Beck, all of humanity rather than individuals; or by softening the seriousness of this implication by saying, as does Ph. M. Hahn (“Erbauungsstunden über den Brief an die Epheser”, 1878),<sup>56</sup> that election merely indicates the order in which God reveals himself first to this one, then to everyone; or with Haupt, that it “is only the projection of an event occurring in time as κλησις.”<sup>57</sup> All of these interpretations, even Calvin’s, suffer from the fact that they originate from anthropological concerns. Can there be, may there be, must there be *human creatures* chosen for condemnation along side those chosen for blessedness? That is the question behind these interpretations. Yes, says Calvin. He once preached on double predestination from this text for literally almost an entire day, a long sermon in the morning followed by an even longer one in the afternoon, claiming that this teaching has “utilité si grande, qu’il vaudroit mieux que nous ne fussions pas nés, que d’être ignorants de ce que S. Paul nous déclare ici,” and more than that, “qu’il vaudroit mieux que tout le monde fust absymé,<sup>58</sup> que de se taire de ceste doctrine.”<sup>59</sup> Undoubtedly, Calvin’s Yes is closer to Paul’s meaning than the other exegetes’ variously qualified No. Paul also

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<sup>56</sup> Philipp M. Hahn, *Erbauungs-Stunden über den Brief an die Epheser* (Basel, 1878), 7-8.

<sup>57</sup> Haupt, *Gefangenschaftsbriefe*, 4-7.

<sup>58</sup> Marginal editorial notation: “abymé?”

<sup>59</sup> “. . . such great profit from it that it had been much better if we had never been born than be ignorant of what St. Paul shows here . . . it were better that the whole world should go to confusion than that this doctrine should be reduced to silence.” SoE, 26; SsE, 262. Barth has “ignorants” where the French reads, “ignorans” and “absymé” where the French reads, “abysmé.” For emphasis, he slightly rearranges the sequence of Calvin’s thought.

responded with an unqualified Yes when he was forced to answer the anthropological question, though I do not intend to introduce Rom. 9 here.<sup>60</sup>

But the actual significance of predestination – and in this regard even Calvin occasionally departs from Paul – is *not* to be found in this anthropological question, for him and finally not even for Calvin. For Paul, the statement: God chooses! is primarily a statement about God, indeed, a statement about God's relationship with the human creature, and more precisely, about *God's* relationship with the human creature. When he attempts to give an account of himself in the presence of Christ, asking: Who am I? Where do I, who am blessed by God, come from? he answers:<sup>61</sup> I am chosen by God! That statement includes the possibility that I am *not* chosen or that I am chosen for unbelief and condemnation, because I, myself, might not be recognized in the presence of Jesus Christ; therefore the possibility and even the reality of double predestination cannot be disputed; to this extent, Calvin is right. But with Paul, a lot depends on the objectivity with which he express this ἐκλέγεσθαι of God; because of this objectivity, he is not compelled to point out or describe every situation in which both sides of predestination are either possible or impossible. He is concerned about the double predestination of the human creature in *God*, not about the double predestination of the *human creature*. The direction in which he is pointing is above, not below;<sup>62</sup> by contrast, in the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, at least, as he expressed it dogmatically and homiletically,

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<sup>60</sup> "das ist aus Röm. 9 nicht wegzubringen." "Wegbringen" can have the sense of "take away" or "take in" or introduce, as in introducing a toast. Evidently, Barth is thinking about references to God's decision to harden certain hearts and to bear with "patience the objects of his wrath," according to Paul, Rom. 9:14-26. His point is that in Rom. 9, Paul answers Yes to the question of whether or not there are "*human creatures* chosen for condemnation along side those chosen for blessedness."

<sup>61</sup> "dann hat er sich die Antwort gegeben." The translation uses present tense here where Barth has past tense.

<sup>62</sup> "Sein aufgehobener Finger weist nach oben, nicht nach unten." One of Barth's favorite images is the prominent pointing finger of John the Baptist in the Isenheim Altar piece. There, John's finger points up to the crucified and dying Christ. See "Biblical Questions," WG, 65.

psychological concerns already cast their shadow; and this feature characterized the period of Calvin's imitators<sup>63</sup> following the Reformation as in all such periods. Because the "utilité de cette doctrine"<sup>64</sup> is, as Calvin develops in detail, that through it and only through it the human creature is truly humbled and truly certain of his salvation, this interpretation of ἐκλέγεσθαι depends on *God* being recognized in election in his unfathomable freedom, sovereignty and majesty. *He* chooses, *he only*, *he himself* and *he alone*. *He* is recognized as the human creature's origin, because *he* humbles us, sending us back to the dust,<sup>65</sup> and exalts us in the community of his glory. *This* is how he reveals himself in Christ, as one who is utterly remote; the King of kings and Lord of lords, the beginning who was before all of our beginnings. Because *that* is the fundamental meaning of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and constantly shines through, despite the psychological elements, Calvin and his doctrine tower above all the recent theological midgets, who have forgotten the meaning of "*solī Deo gloria.*"

If Calvin had perceived *that* as the basic meaning of his doctrine, he could have spared himself many forced and artificial explanations. The claim that the double predestination of the *human creature* effectively humbles and assures might or might not prove to be forced and artificial; and to the extent that more recent theologians are interested fundamentally only in the religious situation of man in and of himself, they are more correct than Calvin. They need to understand, however, that Calvin is wrong

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<sup>63</sup> "Epigonenzeiten."

<sup>64</sup> "The profit of this doctrine." Barth attributes this phrase to Calvin, but in fact he has created it by combining words from the following sentence: "Au reste, il y a deux raisons pour monstrier qu'il est plus que necessaire que ceste doctrine se presche, et que nous en avons une utilité si grande." SsE 262; SoE, 26: "But there are yet two more reasons which show that this doctrine must of necessity be preached, and that we reap such great profit from it."

<sup>65</sup> A reference to Ps. 90:3. Cf. "Biblical Questions," 78-79, where Barth says that this psalm expresses the "unmistakable undertone of the piety of the Psalms which people so much admire."

precisely at the point that his position is eroded by embracing their assumptions.<sup>66</sup> We must first understand Paul, bypassing Calvin, in order to understand Paul on the basis of Calvin; but we will understand neither by formulating the question in a way that we find normal or plausible.

Everything else in vv. 4-6 is merely a description and explanation of this ἐξελέξατο. It could scarcely escape notice that what Paul is speaking about here is one segment of a circle.

ἐν αὐτῷ, in Christ, God has chosen us, Paul says. Who is this αὐτός, or Christ, in this relationship? Clearly, he is God's grasp upon the human creature when God summons a person; not his grasp upon humanity in general, but upon a *particular* person according to God's *choice*; not his grasp upon this or that person on account of this or that human quality, but upon particular a person according to *God's* choice; not upon this or that human circle or any group distinguished by corporate character, but, once again, *God's* choice upon *these particular* people in all of their individuality and uniqueness,<sup>67</sup> just as Christ is not a generic term for humanity, church, a people group, or corporation, but the Individual, Unique One. He is, however, the Individual, Unique One in his

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<sup>66</sup> "als er von ihren eigenen Voraussetzungen auch schon ein wenig angefressen ist." The word, "anfressen" suggests rusting metal or something that is being nibbled away. Barth argues as follows: Calvin assumed that teaching on election humbles the believer and assures him of his salvation. But because his teaching on double predestination wrongly places the emphasis on the anthropological dimension (What does election say about man?), this assumption is not necessarily true. Knowledge of election might not in fact evoke humility. Modern theologians, wholly concerned with anthropology, understand this ambiguity better than Calvin and therefore are alert to an inherent conflict in his theology. But Calvin's position is so compromised precisely because he "adopts their assumptions," i.e., he anticipates the anthropological orientation which dominates modern theology. In this way, the Reformer introduces an element that is alien to "the basic meaning of his doctrine."

<sup>67</sup> "Einzelheit und Einsamkeit." "Einsamkeit" suggests isolation and solitude. Barth's meaning is clarified by noting how he uses a similar word, "Isoliertheit" to speak of God's complete majesty and freedom: "God speaks – and as we say this, we must always hear God in his superiority, his majesty and freedom, in his isolatedness as God." RC, 56; RB, 91. It is notable that here, he applies the same term to Jesus Christ as he does to humanity, a move which is consistent with his concern to show the relation between divine and human existence.

individuality and uniqueness before *God*, the historical one who is eternal, the Son of Man who is the Son of God. In him we recognize God as *our* God who turns to us in complete freedom, because in him God *himself* is given and able to be recognized as such. ἐν αὐτῷ does not imply any toning down of the *wonder* of election; it does not imply that that a bridge is built from eternity to time, from God to the human creature. Eternity remains eternity, and God remains God; the event that takes place in Christ and is revealed in him is that man, who lives in time, lives in God, the One who lives and remains in eternity. God turns to the human creature only as the God who elects in absolute freedom, but in this way, he truly turns to the creature. “Si in Christo sumus electi, ergo extra nos” (Calvin),<sup>68</sup> but “*sumus electi.*” Everything depends on our not removing at any point the enormous tension which exists in this ἐν αὐτῷ. Are we chosen? Yes, we are chosen by God, whom we do not choose and have never chosen; we are chosen as these particular people in *this* time in *this* world, and only in this way.

πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου. These words safeguard Paul’s understanding of election from any possible confusion with fate, nature or history. No relationship in time, in the world, in history, not even an historical connection with Jesus assures the relationship which is described by the concept of election in Christ, however assured we may be in all of these other relationships. We should learn to understand, however, that there is a relationship beyond all relationships, an ultimate synthesis. That is what meets us in Jesus Christ. Our ἐκλογή, the Yes which God speaks to us, is rooted in this synthesis. He is beyond time, beyond the world, beyond all causality, though not as if he himself were

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<sup>68</sup> “For if we are chosen *in* Christ, it is *not of* ourselves’ (Calvin), but *we are chosen.*” Barth’s emphasis. CoE, 147; Barth omits, “Nam” and repeats “sumus electi” for emphasis. “Nam si in Christo sumus electi, ergo extra nos.” CiE, 198.

*prima causa*, the first of a series.<sup>69</sup> Paul's doctrine of predestination is more sharply formulated than both Augustine's and the Reformers'. It is not a question of a second being chosen by a first; rather, God chooses as the One and Only; as the eternal One, he chooses the human creature who lives in time.<sup>70</sup> In this decisive moment of God's freedom, emphasized here by ἐκλέγεσθαι, God is distinguished from all random events, gods and idols. We should not confuse any causality in the κόσμος with *this* causality, because this causality is the causality through the uncaused causality. Its ground πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου must be sought yesterday, today, tomorrow, and ever again. God is living, not a stiff, lifeless material concept; his election is not natural law, but the law of freedom; that is what is conveyed here.

[January 12, 1922] We resume with the infinitive phrase in v. 4, εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ.<sup>71</sup> The divine act that is described here as ἐκλέγεσθαι is directed to the existence of the human creature determined by God: to be holy and perfect before him – for this, he has chosen us. Our being before him as the elect, summarized in the expression, εἰς υἰοθεσίαν, in v. 5, is the next, temporal purpose willed and achieved by God in Christ for the accomplishment of his final eternal purpose, εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ (v. 6). It is thus a self-enclosed circle that Paul has in view: God's intention for us proceeds from the mystery of his own counsel and will and goes forth to us known, perceptible human creatures who are utterly finite; as soon as it does, it also goes beyond us and returns to the mystery itself. We, his children, should be holy and

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<sup>69</sup> "das erste Glied aller Reihen."

<sup>70</sup> Nicht als ein Zweiter einem Ersten gegenüber, sondern als der Erste, der der Eine ist, als der Ewige wählt Gott in der Zeit lebenden Menschen.

<sup>71</sup> Because of Christmas break, this lecture begins nearly a month after the previous one. Barth picks up right where he left off, a good example of how he allows the text, rather than the academic calendar, to determine the form of the exposition.

blameless before him so that the glory of his grace might be praised. The human creature is the scene of action of the Unique One [*Einzigem*] who is his own purpose and goal; *we* are only the scene; nevertheless, we are the *scene*; that is what is promised to us here.]

As I said last time, the interpretation of ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους is uncertain. J. T. Beck argues, with characteristic liveliness, that the phrase refers to the “ethical quality” that is established for “humanity chosen in Christ through the determination to election in Christ before the world was created.”<sup>72</sup> I must reject this view, as do most other interpreters, because of the whole context from v. 3 on; the phrase, εἰς υἰοθεσίαν, is parallel to εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους and to the corresponding passage in Colossians, Col. 1:22; as I see it, this parallelism provides clear evidence for the view that “v. 4 speaks of God’s conduct with the human creature, not of the human creature’s conduct with God” (Haupt).<sup>73</sup> However, I think that v. Soden is cavalier to say, in pointed opposition to Beck’s interpretation, that “only the religious relationship” in which Christians are placed is emphasized here.<sup>74</sup> Expressions such as εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους are intended to be taken empirically,<sup>75</sup> and Beck’s intention is undoubtedly correct. We can assume that Paul simply would not understand the careful distinction between the religious and the ethical. For him, there is only one sphere of God’s reality. Paul is talking about God’s intention for us, which undoubtedly means an unparalleled attack<sup>76</sup> on the human creature, on all human creatures; and he does not exclude its effects on what we normally call the ethical life. Remember what we said about ἁγιος in

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<sup>72</sup> Beck, *Erklärung.*, 49.

<sup>73</sup> Haupt, *Gefangenschaftsbriefe*, 6.

<sup>74</sup> von Soden, *Urchristliche Literaturgeschichte*.

<sup>75</sup> "vor Allem Höchst real genommen sein."

<sup>76</sup> For similar use of the presence of God as “*Angriff*,” or attack, see ER, 2, 86-87. The theme of the fear of God, found in the psalms, Job, and Isaiah 59 is a “radical attack.”

the first lecture. A person who is chosen by God and therefore a holy one of God, a prophet or apostle, for example, is certainly not holy merely in his religious relationship with God; rather, he is shaken all along the line and thrown off the track; it is utterly impossible that what the hidden God effects in the person will not also have the greatest visible consequences in his life; it is utterly impossible for his faith not to be accompanied by good works, as Luther says. The seismic tremor that shakes the human creature's assurance in the things of the world, the moral appeal to the human creature to "Be what you are!" at the heart of this infinitive clause, is unmistakable; but what is even clearer is the phrase, *κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ*, holy and blameless in God's presence; everything by which the human creature has been shaken and wounded, all good works, even the greatest prophetic or apostolic holiness as human work, is at once called into question and relativized. When we have done everything that we are obliged to do, we can only say that we are useless servants!<sup>77</sup> *ἄγιοι καὶ ἄμωμοι*, or, as Paul usually says in his earlier letters, *δίκαιοι*, which means the world of sin understood through the forgiveness of what we are, and that in God's judgment, we are pleasing to God as we are, *that* is the happy Christian proclamation. Who could hear such a proclamation and walk away undisturbed, no matter who he is or what he is like? Conversely, how could anyone who truly hears it confuse the little disturbance that it effects in him with the imputed, forensic alien righteousness which is ascribed to us in Christ? "Gloria Dei summus est finis, cui nostra sanctificatio est subordinata"<sup>78</sup> (Calvin). This "summus

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<sup>77</sup> Lk. 17:10.

<sup>78</sup> "For the glory of God is the highest end, to which our sanctification is subordinate." CoE, 198. "siquidem gloria Dei summus est finis, cui nostra sanctificatio subordinatur." CiE, 147 The typescript has "subordinata" where the original reads, "subordinatur," although it is impossible to tell whether the error is Barth's or the typist's.



finis”<sup>79</sup> begins to manifest itself from before as well as from behind; from *before*, in the reassurance that is expressed in the phrase, “only the religious relationship;”<sup>80</sup> from *behind*, in that a *habitus* for ethical behavior is rendered impossible *in the same way*. What is impossible is what man continues to be; what is possible is the faith and obedience in which man recognizes himself as that which is overcome; what is possible is God who intercedes for man in Christ.<sup>81</sup>

The participial phrase in v. 5, ἐν ἀγάπῃ προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υἰοθεσίαν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς αὐτόν, is a second description of the same idea. I agree with most recent exegetes that ἐν ἀγάπῃ belongs with the phrase that follows it, but I would like at least to raise a question. I do not think we can rule out the possibility that the phrase refers to the human creature’s love for God, described in Rom. 8:28 as the correlate of divine election. The Romans text supports this position, because the parallel phrase in v. 8, ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσει, *cannot* belong with the phrase that comes after it. On this reading of Ephesians, human love for God would be associated with εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀγίους καὶ ἀμώμους and, in contrast to these objective, “juristic” human characteristics, would refer to an ultimate and unheard of human act in which the divine act is affirmed and grasped, just as love for God is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, according to Rom. 5:5, as I understand it.<sup>82</sup> However, the evidence against this interpretation is that relating ἐν ἀγάπῃ to ἀγίους καὶ ἀμώμους in this way would be completely unique; above all, it would go against the context of the passage as a whole, in which human action plays no sustained role, because the emphasis is on the praise of the divine εὐλογία. We will

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<sup>79</sup> “highest end.”

<sup>80</sup> von Soden, *Urchristliche Literaturgeschichte*.

<sup>81</sup> “daß Gott für uns eintritt,” taking “eintreten für” to mean “stand up for someone” or “speak in someone’s defense” in the legal sense.

<sup>82</sup> ER, 157-58.

therefore interpret ἀγάπη as God’s love *for us* and render the phrase as follows: In love, God has determined us to be his children through Jesus Christ. The sovereign freedom and ruling power of God, who conducts himself toward us exclusively on the basis of his electing, understood from beginning to end as an entirely absolute action, is revealed in Jesus Christ as love; the *Deus absconditus* is revealed as our Father. There is no place for shuddering as before a despot, because his is the despotism of love; in love, he determines what happens to us according to what is well pleasing in his purpose, as it says later. προορίζειν is synonymous with ἐκλέγεσθαι, just as *praedestinatio* is synonymous with *electio* in Latin. Both expressions are pictures, certainly anthropomorphic pictures, for the sovereignty by which God has created a relationship with us; προορίζειν emphasizes more the divine will in itself, ἐκλέγεσθαι more his absolute freedom, while προγγιγώσκειν, which appears in Rom. 8.29, is the knowledge of God that anticipates all actual events [*Faktizität*] and in this way guards the idea of divine sovereignty from confusion with necessary events, fate or natural causes. So it is certain that we are εἰς υἰοθεσίαν εἰς αὐτόν in love according to the will of God.

In Haupt’s commentary, you find the dreadful [*schauerliche*] translation, “being made into a child” [*Einkindung*].<sup>83</sup> But it actually strikes exactly the right emphasis. We do not become God’s children either by being created or by being procreated. If we become God’s children, there is a new creation, a new birth. But we must become his children. The good news that the human creature becomes God’s child is not a direct communication. It is *never* based on experience; its proof can *never* consist in a direct and natural spiritual relation between God and the human creature. The relationship

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<sup>83</sup> Haupt, *Gefangenschaftsbriefe*, 10-11.

presupposes an infinite abyss between the creator and the created. υιοθεσία is a strange, new event, completely distinct from all of the recognizable relationships in our life. υιοθεσία means that the estranged from God [*Gottesfremden*] are adopted and become children of God [*Gotteskindern*]. υιοθεσία is creation out of nothing. We become God's children<sup>84</sup> by divine determination, according to divine will, through an event that takes place διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. There is one begotten Son of God; he is the reflection of our existence through divine determination, not κατὰ σάρκα, not ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυίδ, but κατὰ πνεύματος αἰγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν (Rom. 1:3-4); he is appointed by God ἐν δυνάμει, as the One facing us,<sup>85</sup> standing on the other side of all of the known relationships in our life, the One whom only *God* can give and *does give* to those he wills and determines to become his children. Dibelius says that childhood in Christ is "experienced."<sup>86</sup> We can say that, as long as we qualify "experience" as that which we do not experience, that which we experience as promise; how could we have an experience of the Son of God, of the Resurrected One, the experience of being new, of the man who is begotten by God for us, except on the basis of promise, since none of these occur in our greatest experience? That is the promise of our υιοθεσία, the promise of the Holy Spirit and of the resurrection of the dead, the promise of the fulfillment of what God wills and determines concerning us; Paul means that this is given to us in Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ we stand before the possibility that God intercedes for us, before the possibility of faith and obedience.

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<sup>84</sup> "unser Werden zu Gottes Kindern"

<sup>85</sup> Barth uses "gegenüber" idiosyncratically here, i.e., as a noun to refer to Jesus Christ. He is appointed by God "gegenüber der Totalität des uns bekannten Lebenszusammenhangs als das Gegenüber, das eben nur *Gott* geben kann."

<sup>86</sup> Dibelius, *Handbuch*, 98: "διὰ Ἰ. Χρ. sagt, daß die Kindschaft 'in Christus' erlebt wird." (with the following reference: "Schettler, Die paul. Formel 'durch Christus'.")

But let us be clear: he immediately adds that this possibility is God's possibility; and he establishes this claim by describing the promise given to us as *God's* promise.<sup>87</sup> God wills and determines κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, that we should become his children. εὐδοκία, what is pleasing,<sup>88</sup> is not merely a second, weaker description of what is expressed in the words ἐν ἀγαπῇ. It means being loved and esteemed freely by God. "Gratis non mercenario amore Deus nos complectitur"<sup>89</sup> (Calvin) and "Dominus nos adoptando, non respicit quales simus, nec conciliatur nobis ulla personae nostrae dignitate: sed una illi causa est beneplacitum aeternum, quo nos praedestinavit"<sup>90</sup> (Calvin). God loves us for his own sake. God himself is the possibility that we become his children. God himself gives us this promise; in God himself and only in him is its fulfillment and reality to be found. About this insight Calvin says: "hic verus fons est unde haurienda est divinae misericordiae cognitio."<sup>91</sup> He and people like him have not shaken their heads, baffled and horrified before the possibility that everything, everything could hang on the single thread of God's will, or let us go ahead and speak the

<sup>87</sup> "Aber, wohlverstanden [,] fügt er sofort hinzu, diese Möglichkeit ist die Möglichkeit Gottes und begründet die Darlegung der uns gegebenen Zusage dadurch, daß er sie noch einmal als Zusage *Gottes* beschreibt." Does Barth intend this as a kind of indirect speech, attributing to Paul the introductory words, "Understand this," or is he using "*wohlverstanden*" in his usual way to say, "Note the following"? Although the typescript suggests the former, the latter is more likely. Barth usually avoids putting his own words in the apostle's mouth in the form of indirect speech. The words following this introductory formula are Barthian, not Pauline (i.e., "God's possibility"). Complicating the matter, it is not clear from the typescript whether a comma belongs after "*wohlverstanden*." The typist placed a comma after the word, "*rechtverstanden*," which the editor subsequently crossed through, substituting "*wohlverstanden*" without indicating whether the comma stands. The translation assumes that Barth is speaking for himself, that is, paraphrasing and interpreting Paul rather than putting the words in Paul's mouth.

<sup>88</sup> Barth uses "*Wohlgefallen*" to translate the Latin, "*eudokia*."

<sup>89</sup> ". . . and on no mercenary grounds, does God bestow upon us his love." CiE, 49; CoE, 201. Barth has "*complectitur*" where the original reads, "*complecti*."

<sup>90</sup> "In adopting us, therefore, God does not inquire what we are, and is not reconciled to us by any personal worth. His single motive is the eternal good pleasure, by which he predestinated us." CiE, 149; CoE, 201. Barth omits "*Ergo*," where the original reads, "*Ergo Dominus nos adoptando, etc.*" Moreover, he has inverted the sequence of the two sentences.

<sup>91</sup> "This is the true fountain from which we must draw our knowledge of the divine mercy." CoE, 199. "Hic enim verus fons est unde haurienda est divinae misericordiae cognitio." CiE, 199. The typescript has a gap between "*hic*" and "*verus*" where the original has "*enim*." It appears that "*enim*" was originally typed, then deleted," suggesting that Barth included the word in his manuscript.

horrible word out loud, the arbitrary act [*Will-Kür*], that is, the free election of God. For them, the knowledge of precisely this possibility has become knowledge of the saving mercy of God, grounded on unshakable certainty; whereas they found in all the supposedly reciprocal relations [*Gegenseitigkeitsverhältnissen*] between God and man the element of uncertainty, which was unbearable for their faith. Conversely, all domesticated piety, so to speak, which regards *living* with God to be more important than living with *God*, will protest against this insight, and relegate it to the background as much as possible. What becomes of us if, even for a second, we are independent from the *beneplicitum* of God? What becomes of our certainty if we lack the kind of certainty that God himself gives? How shall one live with God if he can only believe in God? Any rapprochement between the Pauline-Reformation and this domesticated-bourgeois piety is ruled out. Anyone who contends that the former is valid merely as a corrective and counterweight and who wishes to lodge a thousand protests against the latter on the basis of practical necessity will find plenty of justification in history to do so. It is even more certain that Paulinism has the logic of the subject on its side and that the full flowering of Pelagianism and Semipelagianism known as church history actually lives fundamentally from *their* resources.<sup>92</sup> There is one person for whom the honor of God is central and who awaits the salvation of man with only this in mind, so that God may receive his honor; there is another person who would like above all to save men, and asks about the honor of God only for the sake of this goal; these two people will and must always talk past each other, and all formulas of concord are impossible. Here, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ

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<sup>92</sup> ". . . und daß die ganze Fülle von Pelagianismus und Semipelagianismus, die wir die Kirchengeschichte heißen, tatsächlich und im letezten Grund von *seinen* Kräften lebt." Marginal note: "Mskr: 'leben', Änderung." The editor replaces Barth's "leben" with "lebt." This seems to be justified, since the meaning of the sentence is that the "flowering" of these heresies lives on the basis of their own resources (that of the heresies).

θελήματος αὐτοῦ, is essential. Here, whether or not we take note of what is beyond us<sup>93</sup> is essential. Here, election is essential. Either – Or!

And now finally, where does the journey lead? What does God will in Christ? For what purpose does he determine us to become his children through him? The answer is: εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἧς ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ. With that phrase, the first circle which Paul describes here is closed. We think of the famous formula in Rom. 11.36: ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα. God's purpose rests in himself. He goes his wonderful way with us human creatures to glorify himself. Just for that reason, we can at no moment come to a resting point where we know, possess, and enjoy. Just for that reason, the crisis of everything human is how we encounter him in Christ in each moment. Open your eyes and your ears: our salvation is there; see and hear the good news of grace that is announced precisely there. Because if God himself is the goal, then grace is his goal. Grace is his being, which is revealed only when we are brought seek him as he really is and him alone. Then he *speaks* with us. Then he *gives* himself to us. Then he *is* our God, our *Father*. Is this true?, we would like to ask. Can a person endure being led to seek him and him alone, to seek him as he really is? What distinguishes the tidings of despair from the tidings of grace? What gives man the right to say: If I have only you, I ask for nothing in heaven or earth? [Ps. 73:25]. How does God's freedom become our freedom, his goal, which is himself, our salvation? Paul answers that it happens by the grace with which God has graced us in the Beloved. The election of our existence as the elect is in Christ. The determination of God concerning us over us is love. The *beneplicitum* of God is his good pleasure to us. Here

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<sup>93</sup> “fernehin.”

the mystery is revealed. How can this be? Because precisely here, God becomes *word* in an unprecedented way on the cross of Christ, but becomes word as *God* in his resurrection.

**The Blessing of God in which we Stand: the Forgiveness of Sins (vv. 7-10)**

[January 19, 1922] Verses 7-14 describe the blessings with which God has blessed us from the point of view of the *present*. From the distant background of that past, in which God elected us to be his children πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, in love, according to the good pleasure of *his* will for the praise of the glory of *his* grace, a discussion emerges into the seemingly lighter foreground where, with the expression ἔχομεν (v. 7), there is something to restore our breath; the familiar ground of human being, having and doing is touched on for a moment. It would be prudent not to make too much out of the fact that this point of view is indeed possible. Upon observing the ideas in these verses even superficially, it is immediately clear that they are not speaking about a *different* subject matter; rather, they speak *differently* about the *same* subject matter. Differently, because the only method for speaking properly about *this* subject matter – if we can speak about a method at all – consists in speaking about it differently ever again. Therefore human speaking about this subject matter is proper when every possible human manner of seeing and speaking as such is relativized and the attention is directed to what is observed, to what the speech is about, to the object; I would like to say “forced upon it.” Paul handles this method really admirably. In vv. 4-6 he speaks about the *past*; but what is the past, if the meaning of this past is our eternal determination in Jesus Christ? Clearly this past could just as easily mean the present as the future. And now in vv. 7-10 he *speaks* in fact about the present;

but what is the present if its meaning is the possession of our redemption, certainly more imminent than our knowledge about the mystery of God's will? Is it not clear that this present could just as easily mean the past or the future? Our familiar human being, having and doing is genuinely called into question from another world, breathtakingly, by this statement also, which is introduced by the apparently straightforward ἔχομεν. There is no possibility of remaining with this cozy ἔχομεν if this statement is allowed to say precisely what it really says, no possibility for it to do other than to point us back to the pattern of the past that we just considered or to a third and new pattern, that of the future, as Paul clearly does in vv. 11-14, in order to say the same thing one once more by means of this third pattern. Could he make it any clearer than he does by this alteration, in which the times, the καιροί (v. 10), past, present and future as such are only patterns, that he does not intend to speak about them but about the πλήρωμα τῶν καρῶν, about the *end* of time, about eternity, which we can never speak about in and of itself but only by means of the patterns of the καιροί, yet paradoxically to speak only by means of a continual alteration and reciprocal suspension of the times? How could our attention be diverted from the human observer and riveted upon that which is observed, if we were in a position to speak about it unambiguously? The very limitation of our speaking and the knowledge of this limitation are the necessary guarantee that our speech is proper. Paul speaks about the ἔσχατον, he pursues eschatology entirely without concern for whether the matter at hand begins πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, or whether he identifies it as something *which we have*, or whether he identifies it as the inheritance *for which we hope*. We cannot avoid the strangeness of what he is communicating. Its very strangeness gives it



unambiguous clarity. Precisely the fact that *we* are always empty-handed at this point is evidence that *God* is being spoken about.

We “have” τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων, κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ.

ἀπολύτρωσις means the purchase of freedom. Human creatures have entered into imprisonment, into slavery. They are set free from this slavery through a payment made for them. What kind of slavery is this and what kind of payment? Paul does not develop it here in detail. We learn only this much from the additional appositional clause: the human creatures’ slavery is related to their sins, whether they have fallen into it as a result of their sins or whether the sins themselves hold them there. The essence of the purchase of freedom that is granted to them is that their sins are forgiven, literally, that they do not hold them; rather, they are released, so that their sins fall away from them as chains fall away from a prisoner who is granted freedom. In Paul’s view, the human creature is in a state of contradiction to his eternal determination as God’s child; he is under a spell, he is living in tyranny. His own action, his παραπτώματα, his trespasses, have brought him there, and the meaning is the same whether we say that his own action is the imprisonment in which he lies or the chains which hold him. This tyranny is so absolute that any rebellion or escape is out of the question. There is nothing of the human creature’s own doing that would not be a repetition of his own παραπτώματα, additional chains; there is nothing else he might be capable of other than confirming and strengthening the imprisonment where he lies. We ourselves are actually the enemies of our freedom; how could we be in a position to set ourselves free? For that, an ἄφεσις is needed. The command to Halt!, which is given to our action, to ourselves, must be given

from the outside. God must face man [*gegenübertreten*] in order to say to him, *I am your Lord!*, in order to set him free from himself. In the totality of his own essence, man must face up [*gegenübertreten*] to this high claim of a new essence, which is compelling, absorbing, and oriented to devotion. That is the forgiveness of sins. The good news of the forgiveness of sins means: We have received a new Lord! Whether we call the old lord “sin,” *peccatum originale*, as later church doctrine spoke about profoundly, or the “I,” that is, our known, empirical I, or the devil – it is sufficient that he has become our Lord, absolutely. He has put an end to the old lord so that God is our new Lord. And he is absolutely our Lord in a completely different way, because he is God. By rights, slavery to sin is really unlawful, because we belong to the one who now sets us free and does so by a two-fold right: by right of the creator *and* of the redeemer, who names his own. This is certainly sufficient: we see that the forgiveness of sins is nothing other than God’s rule. It is *one* term for the purpose of clarifying our *thinking*, and we will certainly do wrong to play the one against the other or even to assert one without thinking about the other. Forgiveness cannot mean only that the human creature is excused; he is also made obedient. And God’s rule cannot refer only to the dynamic of divine action; it effects a wonderful acquittal in which human action in its entirety is cancelled and now stands on a new foundation. The word, βασιλεία, indicates that God’s word is an *act*. The terms ἀφεις and ἀπολύτρωσις indicate that God’s act is his *word* exclusively.]

Now, on the basis of the additional appositional phrase, τὴν ἀφεισιν . . . , Paul gives ἀπολύτρωσις itself yet another explanation: τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ ἁίματος αὐτοῦ. We see who the αὐτός is from the conclusion of v. 6: the ἡγαπημένος, the one through whom God has graced us. In his blood we have the purchase of our freedom, our

release from sin. When the New Testament refers to the blood of Christ, there is no reason to think about anything other than the suffering and action of Jesus in his passion, where in obscurity and hiddenness that acquittal of God concerning man is named, that Halt! confronting our action, that claim of our new Lord, who is the oldest, is proclaimed. Jesus is the *ἱλαστήριον*. . . διὰ τοῦ ἁίματος αὐτοῦ, or (Rom. 3.25) ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ ἁίματι, the *Kapporeth* from the Old Testament ark of the covenant, where on the Day of Atonement peace between God and his people was proclaimed through sprinkling with blood, and consequently the place where our lot turns, where we pass over from one side to the other, where our sins are forgiven.<sup>94</sup> Only God himself can say that it is so, that in Jesus God intends to be our Lord and our Father anew; only God can say this freely and continuously [*fort und fort*] through his Spirit. What would the blood of Jesus, his suffering and action in his passion be, without the resurrection which reveals their meaning? The resurrection however is revealed to us only on the cross, in Jesus' blood. And so the latter is simultaneously revelation and veiling, revealing what is seen and veiling what is unseen. The ἀπολύτρωσις, the ἀφεσις as the mystery of *God*, takes place precisely *here*, where all human lights are extinguished, where in the night of Golgotha, which covers even God's son, *only* God can be considered as the one who himself speaks, acts, and reveals himself. Let us be clear about what we are saying when we say with Paul: ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν. We are saying that we have what only God has, what we could have only in God, by relating time to eternity, i.e., we have what we must receive in time from God ever again.]

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. ER, 104-05.

I know about the attempts of so-called “Biblical Realism” to advance beyond this indirect having, beyond the Reformation doctrine of justification, to a supposed fuller, more actual, more living fellowship with God, but which actually end up being only more crudely and naturalistically conceived. J. T. Beck’s ideas made a deep impression on me as well in earlier years. I moved away from this approach, because I was convinced that with this gain in concreteness and graphic quality, there is a corresponding loss of real meaning. I estimate the meaning of a religious idea by the degree to which it makes me truly attentive to God himself, by the degree in which it is a witness to the reality which is beyond all comprehension. That quality clearly seems to diminish, the more we allow the parable to coincide with the subject matter, and this is patently a tendency of “Biblical Realism.” An excellent example is Beck’s interpretation of just this passage, especially of the phrase, διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ. He speaks about the “sanctified and sanctifying life force of Christ’s soul”, which has been transformed [*sich . . . umgesetzt*] into his nature, and particularly into his blood.<sup>95</sup> Therefore blood is not merely something material, but rather the animating element of the body.<sup>96</sup> By virtue of this pure, holy dynamic activity [*Belebtheit*], the blood of Jesus Christ now has purifying and sanctifying effects in the bodily-spiritual spheres, which have their artificial substance precisely in blood. And this effect of this blood goes beyond him by the effect of his Spirit upon all those purified with him.”<sup>97</sup> Now that is certainly realism; however, if I had to give it a name, I would not call it “biblical” but “mystical-theosophical realism.” And I reject such attempts, because like all mysticism and theosophy they are an attempt to avoid the offense of the cross and the necessity of faith. The word of God does not become more

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<sup>95</sup> Beck, *Erklärung*, 61-62.

<sup>96</sup> “Beseelungselement des Leibes.”

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

real by being drawn into the spheres of what we call “reality.” Let him have his reality; the Bible indicates that such attempts are not employed there. Let us be content with *the* ἔχομεν, which takes our breath away because this is where God is breathing *his* breath into us. |

The third additional phrase undoubtedly points us in this direction; κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ is best related to ἔχομεν the same way that ἡς ἐπερίσσευσεν is related to our human being and having. We have liberation, the forgiveness of sins. How do we have it? Any misunderstanding should be ruled out: God alone should receive honor: we have it “in accordance with the riches of his grace.” God in his grace is rich beyond all asking and understanding, beyond human grasping and ability, so rich, that he has set this wonderful light in our night, so that there, where by human reckoning only sin’s triumph could be detected, where even the Son of God is reckoned under sin and allows himself to be so reckoned, precisely there in his blood, God’s grace and truth triumph. So great is his grace; so deep is his truth. No human parable, no parable taken from the world of our reality can indicate *this* reality. Here, reality indicates *the* parable which is the end of all parables, at whose sight, we who are capable of understanding parables would like to sigh and cry out with the disciples between Good Friday and Easter about the unreality of that which is shown to us, the parable of *death*. Even for Jesus, this was necessarily the final parable. Whoever does not fear but believes in view of this parable sees the reality of God; this is the person who *has* ἀπολύτρωσις and ἄφεσις. And whoever does not fear but believes has *grace* and sees the Resurrected One. It goes without saying that we have this grace not only once on Easter morning. *His* grace, *God’s* grace is always there. Certainty is always found in *God*; and it is always *found* in

God. Would we complain that the foundation of Christian ἔχομεν is grace and nothing else, that God has held it up before himself to be clear? I think that we would do better – without our supposed clarities – to come to rest in God’s clarity.

Regarding this grace of God that is turned to us in Jesus’ blood, the text adds: ἦς ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς ἡμᾶς, ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσει; this phrase forms the transition to γνωρίσας ἡμῖν, at the beginning of the next phrase, in which Paul describes what we have. The phrase beginning with γνωρίσας is precisely parallel to the phrase in vv. 5-6 which begins with προορίσας; and this strongly suggests that ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσει is analogous to ἐν ἀγάπῃ and is therefore connected to γνωρίσας, designating the wisdom [*Weisheit*] and insight [*Klugheit*] of God. So argues Beck.<sup>98</sup> But the context does not suggest this connection: it is not the wisdom and insight in the carrying through of his revelation that should be praised but his revelation itself; we are to give thanks for the wisdom and insight that we have from it. And so our possession of deliverance is described as σοφία and φρονήσις. σοφία means insight into the last things, into the ultimate purpose, the knowledge of God, we could say; φρονήσις means the quintessentially correct point of view of the penultimate [*das Nächste*], the observable, the steps which must be taken from moment to moment. We have deliverance and the riches of God’s grace because such knowledge is poured out and flows to us from what is described as an overflowing vessel. Only knowing? The intellectualism of Ephesians and of Paul! Only a correct thought, an idea? It is not much, but then what else could we have? A feeling? Will? σοφία and φρονήσις identify the crisis in which we stand.

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<sup>98</sup> Beck, *Erklärung*, 68-69.

Therefore, it is completely out of place to say, “only.” God’s idea is our relationship with God’s reality. To know of forgiveness is to have forgiveness.

[January 25] The external parallelism between vv. 4-6 and vv. 7-10 suggests that γνωρίσας ἡμῖν corresponds to προορίσας ἡμᾶς and that with the phrase introduced by γνωρίσας ἡμῖν, we have a second description of the ideas expressed in the main clause. Understanding the relationship of the two clauses in this way is necessary because of the relative clause between them in v. 8, ἧς ἐπερίσσευσεν. In that clause, we hear that the abundance of God’s grace, which effects our ἀπολύτρωσις and ἄφεσις, is lavished upon us. How? As perfect wisdom and insight: we know how things stand with us in relation to the ultimate as well as the penultimate. That is our ἔχομεν, our εὐλογία πνευματική in the present. Paul says that ἔχειν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν is synonymous with the receiving of γνῶσις, the knowledge of the will of God. We have deliverance and forgiveness in that God stands before us as γνωρίσας ἡμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ.]

I said right at the end of the last lecture that it is not at all appropriate to accuse Paul of intellectualism or, because of an anti-intellectual habit, to reject what, in my opinion, is the inevitable interpretation of our passage. γνῶσις, knowledge of the will of God, or expressed objectively, γνωρίζειν, God’s revealing of his eternal will, as Paul uses these terms, cannot be qualified with the disdainful adjective, “only.” The Pauline concept of γνῶσις is just as living and powerful a thing, a concept proceeding just as much from the *whole* and oriented just as absolutely to the *reality* of God as the Lutheran concept of faith. In this late letter of Paul, γνῶσις clearly occupies the place where πίστις was allowed to prevail in the major letters. There is no other explanation for this

alteration except to assume that Paul needed to *intensify* what he had expressed with the word, πίστις, that is, to express even more purely the dominant position of the object or rather, the origin of the relationship that is being described. The term πίστις must have lost something of the ring of objectivity in the ears of Paul's later congregations that it had for the apostle. He relinquished it, demonstrating that he is the model of an undogmatic dogmatician, and, despite his preference for the former term, replaced it with a term which was guaranteed to remind them that that *God* is the alpha and the omega of faith. When one speaks about the *knowledge* of God, the emphasis is on God *facing* us [*gegenübersteht*] as the great *Other*. That this God not only faces us, but is also in relationship with us in the sense of πίστις, that he becomes our possession and we his, is not excluded but rather included, if our description of this relationship emphasizes that God *reveals* himself, that we *recognize* him. This is not to deny that, by shifting the emphasis of man's relationship with God to γνώσις, we proceed into a characteristic danger zone, that "intellectualism" lurks at the door, given the developments which commence in the second century. But human activity, particularly theological activity, is always an escape from one danger zone into another. Unambiguous, unmistakable clarity is not possible through *any* term. Everything has its time, πίστις and γνώσις. We should find a way to sacrifice and adapt our terms for the sake of the subject matter, freedom, and a comprehensive point of view – even favorite terms, if they contribute to misunderstanding. A theologian must be able to speak occasionally as a thoroughgoing gnostic. So much for the γνώσις which appears here surprisingly as a synonym for ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν.



The object of this revelation is τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ. With Paul, mystery is not only the hiddenness of divinity in general. For him, mystery is present where the purpose of the divine action with humanity is veiled as if by a curtain spread out over human-temporal-worldly reality, where God is silent and in his place, something else is heard. This other, the reality of the world [*Weltwirklichkeit*], first has the effect of an absolute occlusion. The direction of God's will is not to be seen.<sup>99</sup> Whoever desires to know God's purpose directly on the basis of given, observable reality will only object to this reality, will only be undone by the mystery. What is required is an actual revelation, a tearing of every veil, a total reversal of every reality. *God* must speak, and God must *speak*, in order for his will to become clear. This is Paul's meaning when he refers to marriage as a mystery in Eph. 5.32; or when in 2 Thes. 2.7 he refers to the mystery of sin which prevents the dawn of Jesus Christ; or in 1 Cor. 15.51, concerning the resurrection, where he refers to the mysterious fact of the non-contemporaneity of the living with those who have already died; or when in Rom. 11.25 he refers to the obduracy and the exclusion of Israel. In this passage as well, the meaning is that the θέλημα of God is veiled in mystery. |

God however has revealed the mystery and has allowed us to know his will. What exactly is the μυστήριον, the other, behind which God is first silent, the reality of the world which first hides his purpose from us? To answer this question, we anticipate the main clause in v. 10: it is the paradoxical fact of the historicity of Christ, of the contemporaneity of his eternity, of the uniqueness of his necessarily divine essence.<sup>100</sup> Paul stands before the riddle of the present moment, the now, the today, which he

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<sup>99</sup> "Es ist nicht abzusehen, wo Gott hinauswill."

<sup>100</sup> "göttlich Notwendigen."

believes is sustained by the name of Jesus. But is not this name merely one name among many others? Does not this moment stand as a contingent event [*Zufälligkeit*] in an unending series of many moments? Could this present stand majestically *above* past and future and not be merely a fleeting moment in-between, immediately passing away? Could there be a will of God in the time in which man lives, a unity of all that in time exists as a series of diffuse things? Could it be possible that a “now” is given in which we know this will, this unity, to be standing before us, personally, actually, compellingly? The question about the meaning of our existence depends on the here and now, the πληρώμα τῶν καιρῶν, the fulfillment of time, the eternity of time which has entered with an answer. But even the will of God is enshrouded in mystery for us. Knowing it directly is impossible, even unimaginable for us. What we can know directly is merely the temporal, even when it concerns Jesus. Even this “today” bears the stamp of a contingency.<sup>101</sup> Even this moment in and of itself is unqualified. Here also, the problem of the will of God, the unity of all things confronts us as a question. How could it be otherwise? How do we come to Jesus the *Christ*? Why and how far is it possible for eternity to be here? Why and how far precisely here? The historicity, the contemporaneity, the uniqueness of this moment also is the μυστήριον, the silence of God. Whoever is not frightened by this silence of God in the temporal present, whoever can never be frightened by it does not know when God ceases to be silent and *speaks*, when the temporal present opens its mouth and speaks its decisive, divine word which it speaks about in its hidden eternity.]

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<sup>101</sup> “den Stempel der Zufälligkeit.”

γνωρίσας ἡμῖν. *Jesus is the Christ.* In the unobservable mid-point [*Mitte*] between past and present *appears* the πληρώμα τῶν καιρῶν, the eternal present. The will of God *meets* us. The *disiecta membra*<sup>102</sup> of this world-reality *do have* a unity. This is so because of *God's* reality, *God's* act, *God's* revelation. *The* moment, which so qualifies it is *God's* truth, *God's* act, *God's* revelation and not the moment in and of itself; it is more than a threshold between *a* past and *a* future. It completely separates *the* past from *the* future; *the* past is the all of time from the earliest ages until the most distant future; *the* future is eternity. In him, in the one moment, it becomes clear what the coming and going of many moments are not, in and of themselves, but which they *point to*. Think about the Christ legend by Selma Lagerlöf, in which two pillars standing close to each other since primeval times must move apart so that the 12-year old Jesus gains access.<sup>103</sup> That is how it is when the will of God meets us. There, between yesterday and today, dawns an incomparable today. There, time is split. There, world-reality is not destroyed but turned upside down. There, God reveals his mystery. The world-reality, temporality, historicity, uniqueness is *God's* mystery; he must reveal it so that we understand it as the mystery of *God*. And he does reveal it. The liberation of man (ἀπολύτρωσις), the forgiveness of sins is itself the revelation of his mystery. We think once more about the modifiers “through his blood” and “according to the riches of his grace,” which have already alerted us to how the ἔχειν of v. 7 designates *the* having, which could only mean our having in God, *our* not having. Who really *has* the resurrection? Who really *has*

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<sup>102</sup> “the diffuse elements.”

<sup>103</sup> Selma Lagerlöf, “In the Temple,” in *Christ Legends*, trans., Velma Swanston Howard (New York: Henry Holt, 1908), 95-118. In the story, two pillars called “Righteousness” Gate” stood “so close to each other that hardly a straw could be squeezed in between them” (103). In order to rescue a poor widow from an unscrupulous judge in the temple, Jesus performs a miracle: “He put his shoulder in the groove between the two pillars, as if to make a way. . . . That instant [Righteousness’ Gate] . . . rumbled in the vaults, and it sang in the old pillars, and they glided apart – one to the right and one to the left – and made a space wide enough for the boy’s slender body to pass between them!” (108).

grace? Who may and could open his mouth and say that he has God in his as he really is? This is the point. Anything less than resurrection, less than grace, less than God's reality is certainly not adequate for ἀπολύτρωσις, for ἄφεσις τῶν παραπτωμάτων. Therefore, v. 9 interprets this ἔχειν for us. God has *revealed* his reality to us. With this, everything is said – neither too much nor too little. We *do* know God; we know him as the *unknown* God. We *do* stand before the mystery when we remember God; we stand before the *revealed* mystery. The one interprets and clarifies the other; the one would not be truth without the other. The Christian gnostic who is concerned with the reality of God as the forgiveness of sin is a Socratic in the strictest sense; he knows that he knows nothing. But precisely in his not knowing, in his *humilitas* before God, which Calvin knew and spoke about so often, he is the one who truly knows and has overcome ἀγνωσία τοῦ θεοῦ (1 Cor.15:34).

I render vv. 9-10 according to Haupt's proposal;<sup>104</sup> he seems to me to have sorted out the primary difficulties in this passage, for the most part. Accordingly, I place *a dash after αὐτοῦ*. The will of God consists in bringing together all things in Christ according to his good pleasure. And I put *the words from ἦν to καιρῶν in parentheses*: God's good pleasure is directed to the οἰκουμία, the carrying out our bringing about of the πληρώμα τῶν καιρῶν.<sup>105</sup>

We turn first to the main idea: ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ. The accomplishment of this ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι according to his sovereign purpose and on the basis of his *beneplacitum* is the will of God that is hidden from us, a matter which we

<sup>104</sup> Haupt, *Gefangenschaftsbriefe*, 18-23.

<sup>105</sup> Marginal note in pencil: "AM RAND: Keine logisch-sachliche Abführung [?] sondern Parallelen." "IN THE MARGIN: No logical-material removal, [?] but parallels." The editor has crossed through the words, "AM RAND."

can know only through revelation. By revealing his will to us, God enables us to receive liberation and forgiveness. He reveals his will to us in Christ's blood, we should add from v. 7, according to the riches of his grace. It is an understanding surpassing all understanding when we learn to understand this ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι as God's will. The term, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι, refers to a thought process [*Denkvorgang*]; the corresponding reality, the event, the carrying out of God's idea which is described as his will, lies beyond himself. Whoever understands this will of God certainly does not see the direct fulfillment of God's will. He sees God's plan, God's course. He has an occasion for hope. He knows that there is something to believe in. However, he must believe and hope afterwards just as much as before. The paradox of the human situation is continually present and must be continually overcome. Only as he knows the will of God, the truth which is beyond the paradox and is not hidden, does he wait upon his Lord as a servant, only then is he content to know his Lord's thoughts, even if they are only thoughts. ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι means to gather together summarily many particulars, to sum up; to use a mathematical expression, it means to reduce many numbers to a common denominator. That is God's idea, what God intends. The assumption behind this idea is that the event has not yet occurred. The world, τὰ πάντα, is fragmented into a multitude of particulars. Its essence is disintegration, fragmentation, dissolution, isolation, and complete contradiction between innumerable entities, all claiming to be ultimately true. As on earth, in the known, observable world, so it is in heaven, in the realm of existence that is hidden from us. We cannot think God's thought without remembering the antithesis between the Creator and what is created, without recalling to the dissolution of all finite things. All attempts at unity that we can imagine or carry out

will remain merely finite, temporal, and relative, pointing beyond themselves to an antithesis. Any human ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι ends up being an illusion. The idea of unity – the unity of this world with the next, God with humanity, eternity with time – is the idea which we must allow God alone to think; we can only anticipate it. He and he alone can and intends to do so; he and he alone is the Lord over life and death. He *is* and wills this unity. In him, it is already at hand. We can and should know that this is true in Christ. And precisely this knowing is our liberation, the forgiveness of sins. Here, there appears a beyond that surpasses our imprisonment, a real beyond.

ἦν προέθετο ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν. This is an explanatory parallel. The *emptiness* in the present corresponds to the fragmentation there. The *fulfillment* corresponds to the gathering together. [πληρώμα is not to be toned down into “the fullness of time” = new time. No, as humanity fills a *ship*, as contents fill a *container*, so πληρώμα is eternity which fills the times, *all* times.]<sup>106</sup> In Christ, all times are fulfilled. This filling *of all* times<sup>107</sup> is the meaning of the present. To achieve this fullness, to create the house rules, is God’s purpose. Now we and all others with us who live in the times are able to see in the light of eternity.

[February 2, 1922] I still have an additional comment to make about v. 10. The phrase, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, is in apposition to τὰ πάντα. Therefore, the expressions ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς and ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς designate the place or location where the objects, creatures or essences designated by τὰ πάντα are to be sought. The synthesis, ἀνακεφαλαιῶν, which is designated as the will of God in vv. 9-10, applies both to heaven and to earth. So it is not about a reconciliation of the heavenly

<sup>106</sup> The editor has placed the sentence in brackets and, in a marginal note, suggests that it be placed in a footnote.

<sup>107</sup> “Erfülltsein aller Zeiten.”

spheres with the terrestrial spheres *under them*,<sup>108</sup> about peace between heaven and earth, angels and humanity; rather, it is about the reconciliation of everything – including the resisting world orders; the heavenly and the terrestrial realms along with everything included in them – with *God* through the will of God itself, which unifies them. Last time, we saw that Paul views all things as congruent circles. The concept of deliverance, of the fulfillment of time, of the one will of God is explicitly *extended*<sup>109</sup> beyond all metaphysical backgrounds, whose existence Paul clearly acknowledged. Whatever we might say about heaven and its inhabitants, about angels and spirits, οὐρανοί is not the last word compared to the earth; the comparison is not between the world above and the world below; rather, the last word is the will of God compared to *heaven* as well as earth, to the *world above* as well as the world below. Our passage says that the most diametrically opposed antitheses that we can imagine stand over against God as *one* denominator.<sup>110</sup> The passage excludes any kind of physical-cosmic deliverance motif. Anything we call “beyond” turns out to be an extension or an enhancement of this world, a repetition of the existence of given objects; and it is certainly very much in need of the divine ἀνακεφαλαίωσις. “Quae enim proportio creaturae ad creatorem, nisi intercedat mediator?”<sup>111</sup> asks Calvin in reference to the angelic world. A deliverance in which *this* beyond were the decisive factor, whether *we* come to this heaven, or *this* heaven comes to us, would not be deliverance. The *actual* beyond is God, and he alone.<sup>112</sup> |

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<sup>108</sup> "Also nicht um eine Versöhnung der himmlischen und der irdischen Sphäre *unter sich*." Barth's emphasis.

<sup>109</sup> "*hinausgerückt*." Barth's emphasis.

<sup>110</sup> "Daß auch die letzten uns denkbaren Gegensätze Gott gegenüber auf *einem* Nenner stehen." Barth's emphasis.

<sup>111</sup> "What comparison is there between a creature and the Creator, without the interposition of a Mediator?" CiE 151; CoE, Barth has "creatorem" where the original uses upper case, "Creatorem."

<sup>112</sup> Apparently, Barth referred to the following diagram at this point in the lecture.

Θ ε ό ς ! ? ↓ ↓

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0

0 0 0 0 0 . . .

This world

“the Beyond”

Physical world

Metaphysical

What is being talked about here is the *actual* beyond: about God’s will, which is the unity of *heavenly* and terrestrial things, what we call “this world,” *and* of what we call “beyond.” This *beyond*, which surpasses “this world” and what we call “beyond”<sup>113</sup> is emphasized finally and emphatically once more by *ἐν αὐτῷ*. These two words must be joined to this clause and not to the following one, as Nestle does.<sup>114</sup> If they were joined to the following clause, they would form an anacoluthon or perhaps, considering the awkward style of this passage, an unexpected repetition of the *ἐν ᾧ*. The parallelism which we have observed between the sentence groups in vv. 4-6 and in vv. 7-10 urges us on the contrary to think about the phrase, *ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ* at the end of v. 6, and in light

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<sup>113</sup> "Dieses *Jenseits* von Diesseits und Jenseits wird zum Schluß noch einmal energisch betont."

<sup>114</sup> εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς | ἐν αὐτῷ, ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἐκκληρώθημεν προορισθέντες κατὰ πρόθεσιν τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργούντος κατὰ τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ. NTG, 7. The vertical line has been added here to indicate the crucial transition from v. 10 to v. 11 that Barth has in mind.



of this parallel, to consider ἐν αὐτῷ as the conclusion of that which immediately precedes it. Vv. 4-6 refer to Christ as ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ (in distinction from the ἐν αὐτῷ in v. 11). *That* is the will of God: to join together all things in Christ, both the heavenly and the terrestrial things in him.<sup>115</sup> Paul uses the thought about Christ as a device to grasp and to make visible<sup>116</sup> the way in which heaven and earth, immanence and transcendence are encompassed by the will of God. Conversely, he maintains that this radical ἀνακεφαλαιώσις, this drastic relativisation of heaven and earth, takes place through Christ. Now we understand why he can equate it with the forgiveness of sins and with the fulfillment of time, which for him are equally valid descriptions of the divine act of revelation which places everything in question and answers all questions. In view of this passage, I certainly would not and could not begin to say in which unheard of place Christ is located, according to Paul. In any case, whenever we have a hard time understanding what Paul means, we should note that he reduces all of the difficulties of his message to *one* point. He poses a riddle to us; not *many*, only *one*. And he *insists* on posing exactly this one riddle to us again and again. It is the riddle which is its own solution.<sup>117</sup>

### **The Blessing of God to which we are Headed vv. 11-14**

We turn to the third circle of the prologue ["*Proömium*"] in vv. 11-14 in which the εὐλογία πνευματικῆ of v. 3 is described from the dominant point of view of the *future* as the subject of hope. This is undoubtedly Paul's intention, in light of the dominant position which προηλπικότεας occupies in the first half of this paragraph and which ἐν τῷ

<sup>115</sup> "dem einen, dem nämlichen."

<sup>116</sup> "als Zange. . . zu fassen und zu veranschaulichen."

<sup>117</sup> "Es ist das Rätsel, das seine eigene Auflösung ist."

Χριστῷ ἐσφραγίσθητε τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας occupies in the second. Notice the dialectical subtlety with which Paul achieves his intention here. To continue with what is said in v. 7, we must now ask what the future is, when it is about God’s future and about the future which we have already, even if we have it only as future.<sup>118</sup> Is it not clear that *this* future could just as easily be called “past” or “present”? And in fact, as the concepts<sup>119</sup> of *υἰοθεσία* and *χάρις*, which are understood as *present* relationships, stood at the mid-point of the explanation in vv. 4-6; and as the *eschatological* terms, “forgiveness of sins,” “the fulfillment of time,” and *ἀνακεφαλαίωσις*, stood at the mid-point of vv. 7-10; so now at the mid-point of vv. 11-14 stand, paradoxically, not a future being and having, but rather the aorists *ἐκκληρώθημεν* and *ἐσφραγίσθητε*, emphasized by the theme of election in v. 11. It is certainly understandable that many interpreters completely overlook the transition which occurs between v. 10 and v. 11 and understand the following verses only as a continuation of the description of the present Christian state of salvation. Such a turn is evident,<sup>120</sup> however, as soon as we pay attention to the material *meaning* of those aorists and what they say about the nature of the Christian’s existence. In contrast to vv. 7-10, which says that Christians are determined to be those who wait, this section says that they are determined to be those who hope.<sup>121</sup> One must pay attention to these mutual intersections in order to do justice to the content of the prologue, even though they do not contribute to what we normally call “clarity.”<sup>122</sup>

<sup>118</sup> To have the future “as future” is a dialectical expression, conveying the paradox that the future is already actual in the life of the believer and yet still in the form of promise.

<sup>119</sup> “Begriffe.” I use “concept” rather than “term” here, since Barth use it with the genitive, “Begriffe der Sündenvergebung, der Erfüllung der Zeiten, der ἀνακεφαλαίωσις.”

<sup>120</sup> “Eine solche Wendung findet aber statt,” taking “stattfinden” to refer to the perception of the transition.

<sup>121</sup> “Bestimmungen . . . als Wartende, als Hoffende.” This is a characteristic phrase of Barth’s, suggesting God’s sovereign determination to make us who we are. Literally, “It designates them, in contrast to the determinations in vv. 7-10 as the ones who wait, as the ones who hope.”

<sup>122</sup> “was wir ‘Klarheit’ zu nennen gewohnt sind, nicht eben dienstlich sind.”

The paragraph begins with the aorist passive *ἐκληρώθημεν*, emphasized by *καί*. One can translate *κληροῦσθαι* three ways: either “were redeemed” (Hofmann);<sup>123</sup> or “have received an inheritance” or “property” (Beck);<sup>124</sup> or “to participate in the inheritance” (Meyer and the more recent interpreters).<sup>125</sup> Because v. 14 is referring explicitly to *κληρονομία ἡμῶν*, I prefer the final possibility, although both the other two could also result in a good reading. Because we are in him, in Christ, we can expect an inheritance. This is the blessing which has been given to us in Christ: we have hope; even though we live in this world, we are reoriented to the world to come, so that we expect all that is good to come *from there*, and from there, we expect *all* that is good. Notice how *έχομεν* in v. 7 is suddenly illuminated, when it is viewed from this angle. Clearly, Christians are those who have and possess something; they have and possess hope. Don’t they have anything else? No, they have absolutely nothing more in addition to that. But what more could one wish to have and to possess than hope, the living hope in the inheritance, which is really *everything*?

As those who hope and wait, Paul adds parenthetically, we are *προορισθέντες κατὰ πρόθεσιν τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργούντος κατὰ τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ*. The Christian’s possession of hope could be threatened from two places. (1) It is possible to confuse *this* hope, the one great hope in the future of God as the source of salvation and blessing, with hopes which we make create for ourselves. How could we avoid this danger, since we also have human hopes? But through the demonic<sup>126</sup> which human

<sup>123</sup> Hofmann, *Die Heilige Schrift neuen Testaments*.

<sup>124</sup> Beck, *Erklärung*, 82-83.

<sup>125</sup> “ἐκληρώθημεν means: *we were made partakers of the κληρος*, ‘inheritance’ (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:12), that is, *of the possession of the Messianic kingdom*, which before the Parousia is an ideal possession (v. 14; Rom. 8:24), and thereafter a real one.” Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book*, 327. His emphasis.

<sup>126</sup> “über die Dämonie.”

hopes instill in us, we can lose the infinite passion of eschatological expectation. (2) The great hope of Christians is veiled from human sight. The assurance of this hope is never given to us directly, in such a way as to make faith unnecessary, even momentarily. And the Spirit, who is the pledge of our inheritance, according to v. 14, is the Spirit of promise. The prototype of the Christian who lives in hope will always be Abraham, who believes  $\pi\alpha\rho' \ \acute{\epsilon}\lambda\pi\acute{\iota}\delta\alpha \ \acute{\epsilon}\pi' \ \acute{\epsilon}\lambda\pi\acute{\iota}\delta\iota$  (Rom. 4.18). How could this hope of ours not be threatened? Paul meets this double threat from human *arrogance* and from human faintheartedness by the constant remembering of election, by reminding us that in Christ, we are what we are only from *God*, and no other way. Also, our possession of hope is not up to us. Our claim on our eternal inheritance<sup>127</sup> can neither rise with the flood of our demonic passion nor fall with its ebb. The infinite passion of the one who hopes is assured independently of the finite passions, which are “Sky high exulting, To death burdened down.”<sup>128</sup> As an inheritor of the world to come, the Christian is *sui juris* or rather *divini juris*.<sup>129</sup> He has his relationship to God with incontestable certainty [*Sicherheit*], precisely because he does not have it like he has things in the normal sense.

<sup>127</sup> "unsere Anwartschaft auf das ewige Erbe." Alternately, “our status waiting as heirs. “

<sup>128</sup> "Himmelhoch jauchzend, zu Tode betrübt." From J. W. von Goethe, *Egmont*, act 3, scene 2; ET *Goethe's Plays*, trans., C. E. Passage (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980), 333.

Himmelhoch jauchzend,	Sky high exulting
Zum Tode betrübt—	To death burdened down;
Glücklich allein	Happiness lives
Ist die Seele, die liebt.	In the lover alone.

Barth uses the same phrase in RB, 192: “Wo das letztere getan wird, da gerät unvermeidlich das Christentum selbst auf dies trottoir rolant der seelischen Erfahrungen, hinein in das ‘Himmelhoch jachzend . . .’, das eben auch der Seele, die *Gott* liebt, nicht erspart ist, und muß darum verteidigt werden.” RC, 123: “Where that does happen, Christianity cannot help but land on the ‘escalator’ [trottoir roulant] of emotional experiences, up in that ‘sky high exulting,’ before which the soul that *loves* God is not protected and must therefore be defended.” I am indebted to the editor and the translator of RB and RC respectively for the source of the quotation and the English translation.

<sup>129</sup> “self-regulated, or rather, regulated by God.” Literally, “the Christian is *a law unto himself* or rather, *by God's law*.” In the first case, Barth is stressing that the Christian is autonomous or independent of the forces which go up and down. In the second phrase, he qualifies this statement by a play on words to say that the Christian is not independent of God, but rather lives by his command. The translation, “self-regulated . . . divine regulated” is an attempt to express the play on words.

It is real certainty [*Gewisβheit*], precisely because it depends on God, and not on himself. He is προορισθείς, determined by God, chosen by God, a priori from eternity. Paul expresses this thought in two parallel expressions with κατά. He is determined by God (1) according to the purpose of the one who ἐνεργεῖ τὰ πάντα,<sup>130</sup> and who is the power who stands above all things. This is the safeguarding against human faintheartedness; we do not ever need to regret that we believe *without* seeing, because we have dealings with the invisible one, who brings into existence all that is visible. And (2) according to his will, which accomplishes his purposes, the meaning of βουλή. That is the safeguarding against human arrogance. It is he, and not we ourselves, who has made us his people and the sheep of his pasture.<sup>131</sup> We should not be deceived that our hoping is or ever will be *our* hoping. The ground of hope which is placed in us by God lies beyond anything we possess.

What is the significance of such an assured Christian hope? The answer is that we are κληρονόμοι εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ τοὺς προηλπικότας ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ. The expression, εἰς τὸ εἶναι, reminds us immediately of v. 4 because of its grammatical construction.<sup>132</sup> On the other hand, a clear answer should be given to the question of how things stand with humanity,<sup>133</sup> of what God intends with the person to whom he devotes himself – here, as the one who makes promises, just as in the previous

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<sup>130</sup> τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος. NTG, 105. Barth has slightly amended the Greek text here in order to conform to his translation, which reads: "nach dem Vorsatz dess, der Alles nach seines Willens Ratschluß bewirkt."

<sup>131</sup> Ps. 95:7. BL, "Denn er ist unser Gott und wir das Volk seiner Weide and Schafe seiner Hand." Barth has "Nicht wir selbst, sondern er hat uns gemacht zu seinem Volk und zu Schafen seitner Weide." Barth slightly alters BL to make it fit the syntax of his sentence. The deliberately formal cadence in my translation attempts to convey Barth's merging of his own sentence with the biblical text.

<sup>132</sup> "schon äuserlich." Barth is pointing out how the vocabulary and syntax are parallel to the earlier verse, even before examining the meaning.

<sup>133</sup> "wie es mit dem Menschen stehen soll." This phrase could be understood as a comment on our need to have an answer as human beings or the phrase could be in apposition with the next one, "what God intends."

passage God is described as the one who elects. And the *answers* which are given here and there explain one another: *on the one hand*, those who stand in God's presence as ἄγιοι καὶ ἄμωμοι are *the ones who hope* in Christ. And *on the other hand*, to hope in Christ is to stand before *God*. *The one* is the goal which God has set for us in this world; *the other* is the absolute demand directed to us, *so that* we praise his holiness, which is possible in our creaturely existence if we dare to *hope* in his word of promise. To hope is the act of fundamental partisanship [*Parteinahme*] with God, with all the risk which this partisanship involves; it is a declaration of war against the reality of this world.<sup>134</sup> We could just as easily call it the willingness to look at this world completely unromantically and without illusion. It is precisely the person who risks thinking about eternity who actually becomes honest vis-à-vis time.<sup>135</sup> Such a person will no longer confuse time with eternity, and by making this critical differentiation, will find courage to wait for eternity *in* time. In this posture – completely bound and therefore completely free, completely expectant and therefore completely flexible – the Christian praises the glory of God. All the commandments of religion and ethics are included for him in the one simple requirement that he must continue to hope and to wait. He is content; with an ultimate skepticism, he repeatedly passes by everything that one must no longer wait for, because it has already come. Christ cannot be identified with anything that has already come. Hope based on what we can see is not hope.<sup>136</sup> Again and again the Christian will be content<sup>137</sup> and remain childlike in the act of waiting *itself*. Such a person has the

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<sup>134</sup> The idea that believers participate in God's attack on this-world reality is central in *Romans II*: "But I am also disturbed, for the demand bids me take up arms against the world of men and against the men of the world." ER, 208.

<sup>135</sup> "ehrlich gegenüber der Zeit."

<sup>136</sup> Rom. 8:24b.

<sup>137</sup> "Er wird sich immer wieder genügen lassen." Here and below, Barth employs a passive construction, suggesting that only God can give contentment.

promise only as one *who waits*. “Waiting on Christ’s glorious future,” Beck beautifully puts it, “distinguishes true believers from all who seek their glory in this age, even the supposed glory of Christendom” – notice especially the last part!<sup>138</sup> Bengel, Meyer, v.Soden, Dibelius<sup>139</sup> and others interpret προηλπικότητα as a reference to the *Jewish Christians* with whom Paul identifies himself by using the pronoun, ἡμᾶς and with whom he later contrasts the gentile Christians in v. 13 by using the phrase, ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς. This interpretation is supported by the change from ἡμεῖς to ὑμεῖς, as well as by the prefix, προ in προ-ηλπικότες, which allegedly would become meaningless according to our interpretation, because of the καὶ before ὑμεῖς; moreover, the debate between Jewish and Gentile Christians plays a large role in the the rest of the letter, as is well known. Nevertheless, I would reject the idea that the phrase refers to Jewish Christians. I regard the change from ἡμεῖς to ὑμεῖς at the beginning of v. 13 as a rhetorical device, indicating a transition from general statements to direct address. The καὶ which accompanies ὑμεῖς is inconclusive; ἐκκληρώθημεν in v. 11 is also introduced with καὶ. Clearly, both times and in other instances before πιστεύσαυτες, its purpose is to emphasize the words which follow rather than to suggest a contrast with what goes before. Regarding the prefix προ in προ-ηλπικότες, Beck points out that in normal Pauline usage, this prefix does not indicate a comparison between different people, but between God and particular people;<sup>140</sup> moreover, it would be impossible to exaggerate how different this particular

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<sup>138</sup> Beck, *Erklärung*, 86-88.

<sup>139</sup> Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, 744; ET 68-69; Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book* 328-30; von Soden, *Die Heilige Schrift neuen Testaments*; Dibelius, *Handbuch*, 99.

<sup>140</sup> Beck, *Erklärung*, 84-85.

Pauline προ is from any temporal beforehand.<sup>141</sup> God's *beforehand* is clearly a very a-temporal or rather supra-temporal beforehand;<sup>142</sup> no human "beforehand" coincides with it, in an unqualified sense; think about προγιγνώσκειν – προορίζειν, for example. As Haupt correctly notes, the προ before ἡλπιότες is redundant; it is no more necessary here than in Rom. 1:2, where the gospel is designated as προεπαγγελόμενον.<sup>143</sup> As our interpretation makes clear, προ-ἡλπιότες in our passage indicates that the hope of the Christian is grounded in God himself; it is hope that is prior to and beyond all hopes; it is hope which is certain in itself, a priori. προἡλπιότες corresponds to προορισθέντες in the previous verse, and is given added significance by the addition of the phrase, ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ. Therefore, it seems to me highly dubious to drag in the opposition between Jewish and Gentile Christians; in the context of the introduction, this would be an extremely colorless and stylistically awkward way to express the matter.<sup>144</sup>

In the phrase, ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς in v. 13, I do not, as I said, find a reference to a second group of readers, the so-called "gentile Christians." When προἡλπιότες is interpreted correctly, the "we" of vv. 11-12 is not seen in contrast to the "we" of the preceding paragraphs. Conversely, nothing is said about "you" in the phrase, ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς in vv. 13-14 that could not also be valid of the "we" in vv. 11-12. Therefore, I understand ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς as a rhetorical expression. Paul reaches the conclusion ad hominem, without in any way removing himself from the εὐλογία πνευματική. After all, Paul is not writing a treatise; he is writing a letter; he is not speaking *about* Christians in

<sup>141</sup> "daß mit der Deutung dieses paulinischen προ auf ein zeitliches Vorher überhaupt nicht sorgfältig genug umgegangen werden kann." In other words, it is impossible to overemphasize the distinction, since the kind of "beforehand" Paul is describing here is categorically different from any human "beforehand."

<sup>142</sup> "ein sehr unzeitliches oder vielmehr überzeitliches Vorher."

<sup>143</sup> Haupt, *Gefangenschaftsbriefe*, 27-28.

<sup>144</sup> "eine Stilwidrigkeit wäre." Barth means that such an opposition would be out of place. Literally, "our passage would be an extremely colorless and a stylistic adversity, judged in relation to the introduction."



general; he is addressing *these* particular Christians. This is how he addresses them:<sup>145</sup>

You are those whom God appointed to be κληρονόμοι, so that you might dare to hope and therefore to live for his honor!|

You are ἐσφραγίσθητε τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἁγίῳ; and here, we must go beyond the participial phrases with ἀκούσαντες and πιστεύσαντες to the finite verb. The position of ἐσφραγίσθητε here corresponds to ἐκληρώθημεν in v. 11; as προορίσας in v. 5 corresponds to ἐξελέξατο in v. 4; and as γνωρίσας in v. 9 corresponds to ἔχομεν in v. 7. In other words, this is a second description of the same reality, using different terms and images: Christians are waiting for future glory. “Sealing” evokes the image of a contract, which becomes legally valid by virtue of the seal placed on the contract by the contracting party.<sup>146</sup> The carrying out of the contract is assured and guaranteed through the symbol, which pledges the parties to honor the contract whether they are present or absent. Christians have received such a seal from God; in so far as they are designated σφραγισθέντες, they are the ones who have received the seal. The seal is the Holy Spirit of promise. It seems to me completely out of context to interpret this passage as a fulfillment of the Johannine promise of the paraclete, that is, to suggest that they have the Spirit who was promised to them beforehand. No, the Spirit is the *Spirit of promise*, as in the same verse, the word is the *word of truth*: the word *is* the truth, and the Spirit *is* the promise. Whoever has the promise, truly *has* it and the Holy Spirit with it. The fact that the children of God wait for their inheritance, truly wait, is its own proof, the guarantee and surety that they do not wait in vain. God does not need anyone other than himself to vouch for his promise; by sealing us with the Holy Spirit, God makes himself available to

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<sup>145</sup> "Ihr seid's, ruft er ihnen zu."

<sup>146</sup> "der durch das darunter gesetzte Siegel des Kontrahenten rechtsgültig wird," taking "Kontrahent" in the technical, legal sense of "contracting party."

us,<sup>147</sup> becoming the guarantor of his promise, allowing himself to be known by us in his divine trustworthiness [*Wahrhaftigkeit*]. To have the Holy Spirit means to be content in God. Paul addresses the Ephesian community here as those who are content in God, who feel blessed by God because they are content in God's truthfulness. Perhaps this explains the real reason for the use of the phrase, ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς: it is an appeal to the subjective in the reader, which in this case coincides with the objective.

The Spirit, previously described by the phrase, τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, is now described more precisely by the additional relative clause in v. 14: ὃ ἐστὶν ἀρραβῶν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν, εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῆς περιποιήσεως. The word, ἀρραβῶν, deposit, pledge, like ἀπαρχή in the other passage, indicates that the possession of the Holy Spirit is not an independent possession;<sup>148</sup> rather, it is the guarantee of the eschatological future, the possession of the kingdom of God. To hope is the Christians' possession, because they have their κληρονομία in *hope*; but in hope, they *have* it – until they enter the event described as ἀπολυτρώσις τῆς περιποιήσεως, the redemption of our possession, the coming into our inheritance. We will not go wrong if we equate this event with what is described in other Pauline passages as Christ's Second Coming in glory. It is the end, the limit of time, and the goal of hope.

[February 9] We must still consider the participial phrase in v. 13, ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγου τῆς ἀληθείας, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν and the parallel phrase ἐν ᾧ καὶ πιστεύσαντες which completes it. Both phrases depend on ἐσφραγίσθητε, grammatically. God vouches for himself.<sup>149</sup> God gives humanity his promise in such a way that it is just

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<sup>147</sup> "sich uns als Bürgen seiner Verheißung stellt."

<sup>148</sup> "selbständiges Gut."

<sup>149</sup> "Gott bürgt für sich selber." Alternatively, "God is his own guarantor."

as certain to a person in the form of promise as if it were already fulfilled, simply because it is God's promise. That is the meaning of sealing with the Holy Spirit. The future is already present for those who are sealed with the Spirit; they can be addressed directly on this basis, as Paul addresses his readers: their hope is not a private faith; it is not a *pudendum*;<sup>150</sup> it cannot be equated with other expectations for the future with their fluctuating certainty, subjective contingency and relative importance. No, it remains secure, more secure than the most certain expectation I can have from anything that happens in the next few minutes. It is completely unconditioned by subjective contingencies; therefore it is certainly not a matter of enthusiasm; it can be expressed just as easily in the words of the most sober<sup>151</sup> thoughts as in the fiery tongues of ecstatic utterances. It cannot fail; it cannot even be relegated to the background, as is the case with so-called eschatology today; no, the ἔσχατον, the last, what counts as truly the last, is also what is first and most important in every moment.<sup>152</sup> In the light of *this* future, our concept of "future" is shattered, or rather, its necessarily pictorial nature is revealed. Whoever believes in the return of Christ, in the ἀπολύτρωσις τῆς περιποιήσεως, says "Yes" to the *Futurum aeternum*, to the qualification of *all* time, God's intensified present. By addressing the Ephesian Christians as σφραγισθέντες, he applies the expression ad hominem precisely at *this* point, ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς; *by it*, he indicates *the precise point* where the objective εὐλογία πνευματική (v. 3) is revealed as subjective. One *can* appeal to human hope, to eternal hope; it is the great possibility of relationship

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<sup>150</sup> "source of shame."

<sup>151</sup>"in Worte nüchternsten Denkens." In the first part of the sentence, Barth uses an abstract noun, "ideas" and in the second, he refers to a person, "Ekstatiker." The latter is translated, "ecstatic utterance" to preserve Barth's contrast.

<sup>152</sup> "das wirklich als das Letzte erfaßt ist." The idiomatic phrase, "most important thing" is not entirely satisfactory here, since Barth would not use "thing" to refer to divine hope.

and communion with God, regardless of what its expression and manner might be. Could Paul be mistaken in his assumption that there is such a point in his readers where their objective relationship to God coincides with their subjectivity? The two participial phrases in v. 13 provide the answer to this ever present doubt.<sup>153</sup> That point is immovable. It lies beyond the place where one can doubt or acquiesce; accept or not accept. Humanity and everything human is questionable [*fragwürdig*]; what is not dubious is the relationship of humanity and everything human to *God*; the more we see humanity's dubiousness for what it is, the less dubious our relationship to God appears; human existence in itself is dubious, because humanity is originally related to God. All things given to us in time are relative; what is not relative is the relation itself, the relation to the *absolute*; the more clearly we recognize this relationship as such, the more clearly we understand the relativity of all things.<sup>154</sup> And Paul addresses his readers here exactly on this basis: they really *have* this insight [*Durchschau*]. They *have heard* the word of truth, the announcement of salvation; and more than that, they have also *believed* (again, one should pay attention to the familiar *καί*); they have believed in him, in Christ. In Christ, the hope of eternity actually became the *presupposition* of humanity. Looking at him, we can be certain each moment that we remember:<sup>155</sup> we have heard; we have believed; we have understood; we have found the immovable point. In him, the non-given is given; God is revealed.<sup>156</sup> In him, the Spirit is upon humanity, and God's

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<sup>153</sup> Barth means that to doubt what Paul asserts here (the objective point in man) is always possible.

<sup>154</sup> "durchschauen." The word means to "see through" or to see things as they really are. In order to emphasize the theme of penetrating or breaking through beyond the surface of things which is implicit in Barth's argument, this sentence could be translated: "the more clearly we see though the relativity of all things." Such a strategy is less satisfactory when Barth uses the cognate, "Durchschau." The idea of looking into and therefore understanding is present in James 1:25. BL: "Wer aber durchschaut in das vollkommene Gesetz der Freiheit . . ."

<sup>155</sup> "jeden Augenblick erinnernd." Alternately, "in every conscious moment."

<sup>156</sup> "In ihm ist das Nicht-Gegebene gegeben, Gott offenbar."

relationship of grace is with humanity; in him, the relativity of all things and their relation to the absolute are one. In him, one can hear what no ear has heard and can believe the utterly unbelievable. In him, every promise whose fulfillment God guarantees by offering himself as surety, enters human existence.|

The λόγος τῆς αληθείας, the εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας, is precisely this entry of God's promise into human existence, the enabling of humanity to understand. Both concepts must be understood analogically. It would tone down the meaning to translate it as the word which "includes" or "brings" the truth or as the gospel which "announces" salvation. No, the word *is* the truth (Jn. 17.17), and the message of salvation *is* the δύναμις θεοῦ εἰς σωτηρίαν (Rom. 1.16). The announcement *about* salvation actually occasions salvation.<sup>157</sup> Whoever hears and believes the word which is spoken in Christ, hears and believes the truth directly [*unmittelbar*]; this is exactly how the message about salvation is related to salvation itself. Clearly, this does not remove the paradox that the truth about salvation is given to us in the form of hope, as sealing with the Spirit of promise. But it has been *given* to us. In Christ, a real *relationship* of humanity to the truth originates and exists; a real *expectation* of salvation, in which we participate already. We should pay close attention to the way ἀλήθεια and σωτηρία are placed next to each other and explicitly related to one another. Salvation comes only from the truth. Whatever is not true, whatever cannot be justified by the given possibility of our sober capacity to think, the kind of thinking about the end of the world that does not actually help us, does not save.<sup>158</sup> And conversely, truth, real truth, is salvation; whatever does

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<sup>157</sup> "Was die Genitive sagen, das tritt real ein mit dem, was das Hauptwort sagt." Literally, "What the genitives describe really occurs with what the noun describes."

<sup>158</sup> "as sich nicht rechtfertigen läßt durch nüchternen Gebrauch der uns gegebenen Möglichkeit zu Denken, des Zu-Ende-Denkens, das kann uns auch nicht helfen, nicht erretten."

not help us in the deepest sense, whatever does not mean a fundamental transformation of the human condition, whatever remains in the realm of ideas alone, is also untrue. The question about truth cannot be separated from the question about spirit and the question about life; ethics cannot be separated from logic. The Holy Spirit is the promise of both truth *and* salvation. This point of view fundamentally calls into question the tidy distinction between philosophy and theology. If it is correct, the least we can expect is a converging of viewpoint on both sides.

And now εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ occurs once more at the end of v. 14 (cf. v. 6 and v. 12). This phrase should not be attached to the words immediately preceding it but with the finite verb, ἐσφραγίσθετε; it is the crux of the sentence and the high point of the entire passage, as Haupt says correctly.<sup>159</sup> Paul addresses his readers: You are what you are – blessed abundantly with the εὐλογία πνευματικῆ – so that you might praise the glory of God. You are the bearers of a great matter, of the greatest matter. You are witnesses, heralds, deputies. The more you become what you are for your own sakes; the more truly the blessing that has been described becomes your own.<sup>160</sup> This truth remains in God; it must be sought again and again in God. Listen to what Calvin observes about this phrase, εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ, which appears repeatedly in our section:

Quod autem toties commemorationem gloriae Dei repetit, non debet videri supervacuum. Nam de re infinita nihil potest dici immodice. Praesertim valet hoc in commendanda Dei misericordia, cuius sensum quisquis vere pius erit nunquam poterit verbis aequare. Itaque tam narrandis eius encomiis promptas esse pias omnes linguas, quam aures libenter audiendis apertas esse convenit. Hoc enim argumentum est, in quo si totam suam facundiam explicent tam angeli quam homines, magnitudini tamen longe cedent.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Haupt, *Gefangenschaftsbriefe*, 29.

<sup>160</sup> "Je mehr ihr das seid, desto mehr seid ihr auch für euch selbst, was ihr seid, desto mehr ist Alles, was von dem euch eigenen Segen gesagt ist, Wahrheit."

<sup>161</sup> "The frequent mention of the glory of God ought not to be regarded as superfluous, for what is infinite cannot be too strongly expressed. This is particularly true in commendations of the Divine mercy, for

With that, we finish the description of this prologue [Proömiumms]. As we have seen, it contains much more than an introduction. Bengel called it a “compendium evangelicum;”<sup>162</sup> in any case, it is a compendium of the conception of Christianity presented in Ephesians, particularly of the basic Pauline ideas. In one short succession of sentences, it makes extremely clear what an unheard of revolution occurred in many hearts and minds in the first century; and what an impression [*Eindruck*]<sup>163</sup> these people must have received, Paul *and* the readers whom he thought capable of understanding such explanations. The perception of the incommensurable<sup>164</sup> which occurs here, as anywhere, is an unsolvable problem on the basis of history. Obviously, the subject in view, like the essence of any revolution or impression, eludes historical examination, no matter how many parallels one might offer by way of illustration. However, I hope that to some extent I have convinced you that it is possible not only to share this view but to *reflect* with Paul<sup>165</sup> in such a way that we become his contemporaries, to the point where the *subject*, the *incommensurable*, *Jesus Christ* himself speaks, where he himself must be his

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which every godly person will always feel himself unable to find adequate language. He will be more ready to utter, than other men will be to hear, the expression of praise; for the eloquence both of men and angels, after being strained to the utmost, falls immeasurably below the vastness of this subject.” CiE 154; CoE, 210. In the typescript, Barth’s translation of the Latin is provided in a parallel column, suggesting that he read it: “Not unnecessarily does he so often repeat the recollection of God’s glory. Because it is certainly impossible to say too much about such an infinite matter. Especially in regard to God’s mercy, no truly pious person will dream of attaining it with his own words. Precisely for this reason, pious lips must be just as eager to announce his praise as pious ears willing to hear it. Therefore both men and angels must remain in debt to this theme, even if they spend all their wealth.”

<sup>162</sup> “a compendium of the gospel,” *Gnomon of the New Testament*.

<sup>163</sup> Barth expresses a similar idea in a letter to Thurneysen on September 27, 1917 upon completing a section of Romans I: “Paul – what a man he must have been, and what men also those for whom he could so sketch and hint at these pithy things in a few muddled fragments!” “Paulus – was muß das für ein Mensch gewesen sein und was für Menschen auch die, denen er diese lapidaren Dinge so in ein paar verworrenen Brocken hinwerfen, andeuten konnte!” B-Th 236; RT, 43.

<sup>164</sup> “Die Anschauung des Inkommensurablen.”

<sup>165</sup> “nachzudenken.” Barth’s emphasis. For a discussion of the term, see Chapter Three.

own interpreter.<sup>166</sup> Since this passage offers such unusual possibilities in precisely this orientation, I am surprised that it has not been more prominent in the historic and systematic considerations of Christianity; and I hope you do not regret that we have devoted the majority of our lectures to it.

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<sup>166</sup> "wo der *Gegenstand*, das *Inkommensurable*, *Jesus Christus* selber reden, sich selber erklären muß." Barth's emphasis.



## Prayer

1.15-23

**15 Therefore, since I learned about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers – 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation to know him, 18 the illumination of the eyes of your heart so that you know what the hope is that is given to you through his call,<sup>1</sup> what the abundance of the glory of his inheritance is for his saints, 19 and what the surpassing greatness of his power is for us who believe in the exercise<sup>2</sup> of the power of his strength.**

**20 He exercised this<sup>3</sup> in Christ when he raised him from the dead and placed him at his right hand in the heavenly world: 21 over all origins and authorities and powers and dominions and over everything which can be named, not only in this world but also in the world to come;<sup>4</sup> 22 and he placed everything at his feet and made him the head of everything in the church, 23 which is his body, the fulfilling of which he fills all in all.<sup>5</sup>**

With the reminder of what is given to Christians, Paul ends by letting them know that he prays for them, that it might be given to them afresh and even more abundantly. Looking back, he says that he prays for them because the whole blessing of God is upon them, which he knows from what he has heard about them, and therefore communion in God exists between them; that is why he prays for them without ceasing. The solidarity which unites them is not something contingent but essential; therefore, it is not transient but permanent. When one has reckoned with *the* viewpoint of life whose summit is εἰς

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<sup>1</sup> "was für eine Hoffnung euch durch seinen Ruf gegeben ist." Here, and in the next two phrases, Barth uses "was für" or simply "was" to emphasize the nature of Christian hope, of the inheritance, and of God's strength.

<sup>2</sup> "Betätigung." Barth emphasizes this word, and the cognate, "betätigen," v. 20.

<sup>3</sup> "Diese hat er betätigt in Christus ." The definite pronoun refers to Betätigung in the previous clause.

<sup>4</sup> "nur in dieser, sondern auch in der zukünftigen Welt." Literally, "not only in this but in the world to come."

<sup>5</sup> "welche sein Leib ist, die Erfüllung dessen, der Alles in Allem erfüllt." The use of the genitive in the phrase, "die Erfüllung dessen," presents a puzzle for translating the German and for understanding Barth's translation of the Greek. English wants to say, "for whose fulfilling;" we expect the dative rather than the genitive.

ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ, then simultaneously one has reckoned with the bond which unites people, regardless of how tight or loose it may be in other respects. Paul gives thanks for what his readers are and have, but immediately amplifies what he says (εὐχαριστῶν - μνείαν ποιούμενος are parallel!) by praying for them. If we keep in view what he prays for, then immediately it becomes clear that he does not pray for an increase of what they already are and have; no, he goes with them right back to the beginning again and prays for them to have the Spirit and knowledge, as if he had not just described in detail how Christians *are* already blessed with everything. Not a word is taken back; it is not as if this blessing is incomplete; no, it is complete, it is given by God; certainly, nothing further is needed. But as soon as he turns his attention to his readers and to himself, he reminds himself and them that he was speaking about the blessing of *God*. It must exist as the blessing of *God*, completely new in every moment of time; it has not even begun; because nothing is already *coming into being*; certainly nothing already has being;<sup>6</sup> – “spiritualium bonorum satietate nihil periculosius”<sup>7</sup> (Calvin). There, *the human* creature stands before God with empty hands, needy, poor, and entirely dependent upon *God*; there, prayer must be offered. Anything that develops in the realm of nature does so inherently. Anything that the human creature begins must be developed. Here, praying *does not* come into consideration. Praying *does* come into consideration, however, when it is a matter of relationship with God and εὐλογία πνευματική. There,<sup>8</sup> it is a matter of

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<sup>6</sup> “da ist nichts schon im Werden oder gar im Sein.” He uses the language of being and becoming to say that nothing exists in and of itself; it has existence only in relation to God. Barth employs similar language in the John lectures when interpreting “*egeneto*” in John 1:3: “Everything that has come into being is completely different from him. . . This is how things are with all that is. It is related to God. It is something and not nothing. But it is something only as it is related to the Word. Its existence is conceivable only in the light of the Word.” WW, 34.

<sup>7</sup> “Nothing is more dangerous than a satiety of spiritual goods.”

<sup>8</sup> Barth contrasts two spheres: the place where the blessing of God is received and the place where natural and human life takes place. He uses “*da*” to designate both spheres. To clarify the contrast, I use “there”

seeking the relationship again and again at its source and origin. This origin is not in the world or in time. The world, including time, is the veil, which conceals it. This veil must be *torn* repeatedly. The human creature must *call upon* God as God repeatedly. If the truth is *not new*, then it is not the truth that comes from God. When redemption ceases to be the object of hope and becomes something we possess or consume, then it is no longer redemption. When the Spirit ceases to be a promise and becomes our possession, even the greatest possession, then it is no longer the Holy Spirit. That is the reason for this transition to intercession. Paul, the fighter for God, appears here.<sup>9</sup> A new day has dawned. Yesterday's discovery must be sought anew today. Yesterday's rich are today's poor; and only as the poor will they become rich again. No path is already completed; no goal or stage of an *ordo salutis*<sup>10</sup> is already achieved; no presupposition for human existence is already given. Here, unsparing truthfulness is absolutely essential, and its problematic nature must be enjoined again. Therefore, his prayer is: ἵνα ὁ θεὸς . . . δώῃ ὑμῖν, God must give! The presupposition of the prayer and the prayer itself is that what is true may *become* true; that God's name, which is truly holy [*heilig*] in itself, may *be hallowed* [*geheiligt werde*]; that his eternal unchanging will may *be done*; that his kingdom which is above all kingdoms may *come*.<sup>11</sup> If we consider this miracle, this event, and this coming to be superfluous; if we reduce it to simply a natural evolution, an extension, or mere continuation of what exists already, then it is obvious that we do not

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for the sphere of blessing and "here" for the natural and human realm. For a similar use of the repetition of "da," see "Not und Notwendigkeit," 73-74.

<sup>9</sup> "der Kämpfer um Gott." Barth uses "*Kämpfer*" and its cognates to describe someone who is faithful to the truth of the gospel. In RB, grace is described as that which "inevitably makes a person into a worker and a fighter (die den Menschen unweigerlich zum Arbeiter und Kämpfer macht)." He speaks of the "der Richtung des reformierten *Kampfes*" and of Zwingli's Geneva confession as a "*Kampf*document" (Barth's emphases). RB 136, 124; RC, 86,78.

<sup>10</sup> "order of salvation."

<sup>11</sup> Barth incorporates phrases from the Lord's Prayer, Mtt. 6:9-10, which Luther translates, "geheiligt werde dein Name. Dein Reich komme. Dein Wille geschehe . . ." BL, s.v.

yet know what we are saying when we say, "God." That is precisely what we must learn: to know what we are saying when we say, "God." Without knowing that, we cannot pray. And we must pray in order to know that. This insight evokes Paul's prayer, and he prays that he and his readers may have this insight. Yesterday and today, riches and poverty, having and not having join as one in the living movement which encompasses<sup>12</sup> a person who is actually in a relationship with God. And Paul prays for *the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation to recognize him*. If they did not already have this Spirit of wisdom and revelation, he could not pray like this. But precisely because they do, and because he really believes that this is the case with his readers, he prays for the Spirit as if they did not have him at all. σοφία refers to the matter from God's side; ἀποκάλυψις refers to the reality of God as it is accessible to us.<sup>13</sup> The two together constitute the knowledge of God.]

"*The enlightening of your eyes*" is what he hopes for them. Apparently, Paul is using an expression which his readers would recognize from the mysticism of the period. Why shouldn't he use it? The subject matter itself assures that no new mysticism can emerge here through its use. Luther also made use of the mysticism of his time. Mystical thoughts also seem to be at the heart of Grünewald's Isenheim Altar. It may well be that the truth of God somehow becomes the viewpoint in mysticism, pagan as well as Christian. The hermetical<sup>14</sup> expression identifies very clearly what Paul means here: their inner eyes must be opened, eyes for what no eye has seen, the conception of

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<sup>12</sup> "was nottut, ineinander in der lebendigen Bewegung ." For a discussion of the "ineinander" relationship of time and eternity, which appears frequently in *Romans I*, see McCormack's *Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 144-46.

<sup>13</sup> "Σοφία ist der Sinn für Gott, ἀποκάλυψις die Wirklichkeit Gottes, der sich diesem Sinn erschließt."

<sup>14</sup> In the margin, there is an illegible editorial comment about this term.

the inconceivable.<sup>15</sup> They must make repeated use of the ability which he praised earlier as their faith and love, and, proceeding beyond what is already theirs, catch up with the subject which is the source of all that they have received.<sup>16</sup> Paul says this, not as if they did not have these eyes, this conception, and this ability; but equally, not as if this potential were somehow already actuality. This actuality must always be the subject of prayer. . . . so that they *know*,<sup>17</sup> he continues: “*what the hope is that is given to you through his call.*” They have received God’s call; that is their position, their situation, and their possession – nothing more than this, but also nothing less. God’s blessing is the great possibility which is given to them. With the advent of this possibility, they have already begun a new day. At present, it is no more than a possibility. The ἐλπὶς τῆς κλήσεως, the consequences of their position must be understood; their position must be recognized for what it is, in order for the possibility to become a fruitful reality. In the second half of v. 18 and in v. 19, Paul develops this idea on two fronts. First, it is essential that we have an appreciation of *what we may hope for*, the riches of the glory of his inheritance among his saints; it is essential to learn the *full extent* of what we can expect from God; and it is essential to notice that *we truly are permitted to hope for it* (v. 19), thus actually to *expect* it. The profusion of expressions which Paul uses to describe this last idea shows how much he wanted to stress that to hope in God is a mighty act, an

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<sup>15</sup> "Die Anschauung des Unanschaulichen."

<sup>16</sup> "Ihr müßt die Fähigkeit gebrauchen, über dieses Eurige hinaus euch immer wider aufzuschleifen für den Gegenstand." Barth uses spatial metaphors ironically: on the basis of what they already have, they are to proceed; and yet any advance is toward the subject which is ahead of them. This idea is consistent with Barth’s overall theme that God’s blessings are the source and the goal of human existence.

<sup>17</sup> In the margin, the editor has written a comment and placed an asterisk above “*wissen*” (so that they *know*\*). Unfortunately, the comment is illegible, but it may be related to the ellipsis, which seems out of place here.

act ordained by God.<sup>18</sup> “When God creates faith in a person, it is a work as great as the recreation of heaven and earth . . . . Wherever God brings about faith, a person must be born again and become a new creature” (Luther). The ἐνέργεια, God’s activity which steps on to the scene, is *that* great. Do we know that somehow already? We know it on the basis of Christ’s resurrection and ascent into heaven.

[February 16] The meaning of vv. 20-23 and their relationship to the preceding verses is that here, Paul answers each of the *questions* raised in vv. 18 and 19: “*What* is the hope given to you?” (v. 18); and two additional questions that elaborate on the first one: “*What* is the glorious wealth of his inheritance for his saints?” and “*What* is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe?” (vv. 18-19). Paul prays that his readers might receive revelation and knowledge, the enlightening of the eyes of their hearts, a capacity to understand and to hope so that they may have an answer to this question, “*What?*” This for him is the central matter, the central problem of their Christian existence [*Christlichkeit*]. What does it mean that God has blessed us? What does it mean when we personally invoke God’s name upon our existence in this way?<sup>19</sup> What is given to people who have faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints (v.15)? What sort of power exerts such influence and effect on Christians? I have already pointed out how this problem is also raised in the famous resurrection chapter at the end of I Corinthians, at the conclusion of the apostle’s controversy with the congregation there. Resurrection faith [*Auferstehungsglaube*] versus resurrection doubt

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<sup>18</sup> “Auf Gott hoffen, das ist ein gewaltiges, gottesgewaltiges Tun.” Alternately, to suggest the word play, “To hope in God is a mighty act, a God-almighty act.”

<sup>19</sup> “Was meinen wir, wenn wir uns unterwinden, in Bezug auf uns and unser Dasein den Namen Gottes in dieser Weise?”

[*Auferstehungsleugnung*]<sup>20</sup> is not one religious or dogmatic question among others – that becomes clear in my opinion by the way Paul treats the matter in I Cor. 15 – it is the question about the *essence* of Christianity, to use the modern expression.<sup>21</sup> The question about the essence of Christianity is a response to the question about the meaning of the Christian existence<sup>22</sup> of Christians. If we answer this question in a short-winded fashion [*kurzatmig*],<sup>23</sup> out of disregard for the distances, then inevitably the essence of Christianity ends up becoming its insignificance, to speak as Overbeck does. Here, as in 1 Corinthians, Paul responds to this question with the theme of the *resurrection*. We understand him exactly if we say that he answers them with a new question; and the more we emphasize that it is not just *any* new question but *the* new question, the more correctly we understand what Paul intends to express in his answer. He is certainly not short-winded; it would be more accurate to say that his answer is breathtaking [*atemraubend*], in that the answer he *does* give is certainly not what we consider to be an answer – we are always short-winded when we answer – instead, right where *we ask* the *penultimate* question, he raises the ultimate question of what we are and have in relation to God. If we see the answer *there* – *Resurrection!* – the *new question*, which is truly the *last* question for us, then we see what Paul considers to be the meaning of our Christian existence and therefore the essence of Christianity as an historic phenomenon. In our passage, Paul gives the answer, or rather the new question, in three affirmations

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<sup>20</sup> The translation avoids the phrase, “faith in the resurrection,” so as not to narrow the focus to the empty tomb or the resurrection appearances. For Barth, resurrection faith encompasses our eschatological existence in the widest sense; the light of the resurrection is shining on us here and now.

<sup>21</sup> “Wesen des Christentums.” Another reference to Harnack. See p. 40, n. 16. The phrase stood for an approach to Christian faith, emerging from epigones of the Ritschlian school.

<sup>22</sup> Barth’s term, “*Christlichkeit*,” is central to his argument, namely, that there is no discussion of the essence of Christianity apart from the God-given existence of Christians. In other words, this is not a matter one can describe solely as an historical phenomenon.

<sup>23</sup> More idiomatically, “tongue-tied.”

[*Wendungen*]: (1) God raised Christ from the dead. (2) He has established him on his right hand side. (3) He has made him the head of God's activity, and by analogy (κατά, v. 19), of our own Christian existence. Christians should know *that* as the meaning of the hope given to them with their calling. And the apostle's prayer request is that they would desire to know it, know it as though they have never known it (because who could say here: *I have known?*).

When Paul mentions, first, *the rising of Christ from the dead*, he refers to an event that is more nearly impossible than possible, that is not so much historical as unhistorical. He means *the impossible, the unhistorical event* κατ' ἐξοχήν.<sup>24</sup> But I must put it more precisely: undoubtedly, he means an *event*. For him, the rising of Christ from the dead belongs to history.<sup>25</sup> It touches [*berührt*] what is possible, historical, temporal, and in this respect is itself possible, historical, and temporal. But it is still the case that in and of itself, it is the impossible, the unhistorical, the eternal event. He means the event that takes place precisely at the *boundary* between what is possible and what is impossible, what is historical and what is unhistorical, between time and eternity. Eternity is the present in time, in the time between the past and the future; because only the present constitutes time as the past and the future. And eternity is not in time, as the present is not in time between the past and the future; because this point which constitutes time is never between the past and the future.<sup>26</sup> The resurrection of Christ from the dead is eternity. Eternity is the present, God's present in time. Therefore, precisely here, the

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<sup>24</sup> "par excellence."

<sup>25</sup> "gehört für ihn der Geschichte an."

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of Barth's mature thinking on time and eternity, see George Hunsinger, *Mysterium Trinitatis: "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,"* in *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 186-209.



answer is the *question*, and the question is the *answer*.<sup>27</sup> Paul directs his readers to this point to inform them of the meaning of their Christianity.]

The essence of Christianity is seen at this point, we should add. Paul saw this point as *given* in Jesus Christ. It is given in *history*, not something given, distant, other, beyond,<sup>28</sup> not as idea as in the usual platonic misunderstanding of this term. But certainly in the correct sense of this term, it is the idea of *God*, the first of the *first*,<sup>29</sup> the distant in the *near*, the other in *this* life, the beyond of *this world*, therefore as an event in *history*. But it is to be understood as an *event* in history, as the *beyond* in this world and therefore not as contents [*Inhalt*] *within* history, alongside other contents *within* this world, but as its absolute boundary and origin. Anything that can be sought within history, within this world, even the absolutely unheard of, is *not* this boundary or this origin. For Paul and all of early Christianity, this point is *given beyond* Jesus Christ's history, *after* his death. The *life* and *death* categories that Paul uses to identify this point and which we would like to adopt, are *absolute* categories. Christ is raised from the dead; therefore, as Paul understands it, his resurrection life is the new life of God himself and is fundamentally incomparable to all other life. By using any of our categories of understanding, we necessarily understand something other than the resurrection.<sup>30</sup> Here, any interpretation is necessarily misinterpretation. Clearly, even early Christianity could only stammer here; how could they find words for *this* event? Clearly, our normal formulas contradict and cancel out each other; how could human calculation account for

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<sup>27</sup> The paradoxical nature of questions and answers is a frequent theme in Barth's writings of the period. For other examples, see "The Strange New World of the Bible," WG, 28-50; especially 32, 39, 43; and "Biblical Questions," 53: "The question we ask becomes a question asked of us . . ."

<sup>28</sup> "also nicht als ein Zweites, Entferntes, Anderes, Jenseitiges."

<sup>29</sup> "das Erste des *Ersten*, als Entferntes des *Nahen*, als Anders dieses Lebens, als Jenseitiges des *Diesseits*, also als das Geschehen in der Geschichte."

<sup>30</sup> "Mit Allem was wir hier begreifen können, begreifen wir notwendig etwas Anderes."

*this* event?<sup>31</sup> Clearly, later generations attempted to describe the inconceivable by the conceivable, but through these attempts, the inconceivability only became greater.]

In my opinion, the attempt to establish the most likely possibility on the basis of this welter of relations is wasted effort. If the relationship of this most likely possibility and the Pauline account of the resurrection in 1 Cor. 15 to is, let us say, 1000 to 1, it means that the relationship between the most likely possibility and reality is 1000 to  $\infty$  [infinity]! This reality is the appearance of the resurrected One, the fact that after Good Friday the disciples *found* an answer to the forbidden question,<sup>32</sup> that life *met* them, where according to human reckoning only death could be seen; this fact, which must be reckoned with, and which had not yet been made trivial or obvious by the creation of experiences, is according to Paul the absolutely improbable and implausible. Other than the probability and credibility of God himself, there is for him no probability or plausibility. Whoever speaks about the body of the crucified One who was placed in the tomb coming back to life [*Wiederbelebung*], and whoever speaks about the appearance of the transfigured Lord, whoever speaks about a miracle;<sup>33</sup> whoever speaks about a vision must know that he speaks about *God* in the same way; and if he speaks about *God*, the very words “miracle” and “vision” are sublated [*aufheben*]; because the miracle which witnesses to *God’s* reality is not one miracle alongside other miracles, but *the* miracle; and the vision, God appearing visibly, is not one vision alongside other visions, but *the* vision. In any case, anyone who would like to talk about it as an “experience” should

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<sup>31</sup> "Selbstverständlich, daß die uns überleiferten Relationen sich widersprechen und gegenseitig aufheben; wie sollte es in Bezug auf dieses menschliche Ubereinstimmung geben?" Barth is using mathematical language here.

<sup>32</sup> The editor has penciled: “verbotene [?].” It appears that the typist left a blank space, because Barth’s handwriting was illegible at this point; this is Stoevesandt’s tentative suggestion.

<sup>33</sup> The typescript places an em dash here, “Wunder—” where I use a semi-colon, to convey Barth’s characteristic sentence construction.

proceed with caution. *The* miracle that Paul refers to here we do not experience like we experience anything else. We are much closer to what he means if we say that that we do not really experience it.

We can only be *grateful* for historical research when it points out as incisively as possible that here all of the accounts and attempted interpretations contradict and cancel out each other;<sup>34</sup> that here, we are thrown into disastrous contradiction not only with our modern world view but any possible world view; that in every period, even the people who seek wonders, love visions, and crave experiences are irreconcilably offended;<sup>35</sup> that here, we are in fact confronted with what is improbable, implausible, unhistorical, and impossible; we will be even more thankful for historical research when it becomes aware and we are clear that even when it draws its most probable conclusions, they remain only the probability of what is completely improbable, so that we do not make any last minute peace which attempts to mask the conflict and enables pastors glibly [*armsdicke*] to say this or that about the resurrection, as if they knew what they meant by these words. In fact, the more meager [*magerer*] the positive role played by plausible historical explanations, the better and the more appropriate. Because here, everything that is positive historically is negative in reality. It would lead away from revelation and faith, not toward them. It would be as if God had failed in his word, precisely where he intends to carry out his own affair.<sup>36</sup> Here, whoever thinks that he knows this or that, is *precisely the one* who does *not* know. Here, whoever looks for analogies to *explain* it, whether from the history of religions, nature, occult sciences, or even his own experience only shows that he has not understood what Paul means by the resurrection. Paul thinks more

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<sup>34</sup> "sich widersprechen und aufheben."

<sup>35</sup> "wundersüchtigen und visionfreudigen und erlebnis durstigen."

<sup>36</sup> "seine Sache selbst führen will."

liberally than the liberals and with more faith [*gläubiger*] than the faithful believers [Gläubigen]. When he says “death,” he means death; when he says “life,” he means life; and in both cases, he means the whole, *God*. The whole of what we call “life” expires [*verfallen*] at death; and the whole of what we call “death” expires before life. The step from here to there, this unheard of step, which we could never take, *the* step which is the death of our life and the life of our death, is what he calls the resurrection. |

Of course, he means by this the *bodily* resurrection, because death is the death of the *body*; and the life which vanquishes this death is also the life of the *body*. Whoever says “*time*” says “the body;” and whoever says “*eternity* in time” says the “resurrection of the body.” Physical existence is material existence. Without material existence, there is no individual. Without an individual, without a subject, there is no relationship with God. Here, everything depends on taking utterly seriously and empirically<sup>37</sup> the individual’s relationship with God and God’s relationship with the individual, taking seriously God’s presence in time. And therefore, everything depends on our knowing that our interpretation about this presence of God never coincides with its reality. Everything depends on our hearing the final, comprehensive, radical answer, and hearing the answer as a question, nothing more than a question. Paul understood the resurrection of Christ as the point in history from which he could continually assure his readers *what* the hope is that was granted to them through God’s calling; *what* constitutes their Christian existence. Above all, it is for him the authentic interpretation of the historic appearance of Jesus Christ, it is *the* interpretation, and beside it there is absolutely no other interpretation. For him, everything in this appearance is seen and understood from the crucifixion of Christ, and therefore he preaches this crucified Christ and knows no

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<sup>37</sup> "ganz real genommen."

other; because all that Christ seems to be in addition to and besides that, Paul sums up and includes in this one thing [*diese Eine*]. If we ask what this one thing, the crucifixion, means, he would answer that it means (from God's point of view) the resurrection, eternity, God's absolute present, the present of the living with the dead, the eternal with the temporal, the immortal [*Unvergängliche*] with the mortal [*Vergängliche*]. And should we ask how this point is given to us, we are driven back to the answer that is an unsolvable question, *our* question, which would certainly not be *our* question if in Christ it were not an answer in the form of a question, a question which can become our question only as it is given in the light of Christ.

Second, Paul mentions the *appointment of Christ to God's right hand*. This is nothing other than a new expression of the theme of resurrection. It is the positive side, viewed from God himself, corresponding to the negative side, the riddle of rising from the dead. The resurrected One as such is appointed to God's right hand. Is this "only a picture"?<sup>38</sup> Certainly *not!* For Paul, God's right hand, meaning God's *power*, is as real and as vivid as he could possibly imagine. The step from here to there, taken through the resurrection, places Christ, the origin, God, directly facing us, as the One who is distinct, wholly Other, from beyond this world.<sup>39</sup> Here, the point which is reached is transcendent, eternal, divine, and therefore *ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις*, in heaven. But this must be formulated precisely. There is a beyond, a heaven which is merely an extended form of the earth, of this world. That would be our understanding if we had *not* understood Christ in his reality. We would still be thinking within the framework of the antitheses in which we ourselves stand. He would be the elevated man. Our relationship with him

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<sup>38</sup> Barth is referring to a lecture the previous day by his colleague, Walter Bauer. For a discussion, see Chapter One.

<sup>39</sup> "stellt Christus, den Ursprung, Gott, uns gegenüber als ein Zweites, Anderes, Nichtdiesseitiges."

would not be pure. The hope which we place in him would not be total. The ground of faith would not be reliable. Therefore *ὑπεράνω πάσης . . .*, means above everything which we can name, over every single particular. The one who determines all particulars is not himself a particular. The origin is not a *causa*. His name is above all names. His rule is above every rule.]

*οὐ μόνον*. . . Even the new aeon itself is expressed here as a second reality, transcending this world but not corresponding to ultimate reality. Paul indicates a point beyond all possible transcendences. It is the absolute transcendence. Therefore it is God's immanence: *πάντα ὑπέταξεν*. . . This is the unity of the world in him. That is our hope. It is the overcoming of the antitheses of our thinking and being here and now; it is the unity of heaven and earth. The *power* of God is the point which we should remember. It is the positive meaning of the resurrection: life swallows up [*verschlingt*] death as death swallows up all that we call life. But notice carefully – the world here is understood as a conquered realm. The reality of this rule depends on the resurrection. Unity depends on breakup [*Entzweiung*]. The answer depends on the question. Paul reminds his readers that God *does* all that and that *God* does it in Christ; *this* is the hope of their calling. The recollection of God's rule is therefore the recollection of the cross. Between us and the insight disclosed in this fact stands God's reality, the path which is *not* a path.

Third, Paul mentions that which brings the culmination [*Krönung*]: *God established Christ as the head of the Church*. That is the extraordinary thing, the distinguishing mark of the Christian existence of Christians, that he, the resurrected One who is seated at God's right hand, is *their* head. The "head over all" is *their* head. God

in his majesty is *their* God. The eternal origin is *their* beginning. That God became man is *their* mystery. (1) They are his *σῶμα*, that is, in their division, they are *one* in him. He is the divine meaning of their many individualities; *he* is the *one* in the many which they are as Christians; *he*, this one unique individual is *their* individuality. (2) They are his *πλήρωμα*, the filling of the empty form which *he* represents compared to all that is human and which in truth is the fulfillment of all that is human. That is how their life is hidden with him in God (Col. 3:3). Paul reminds them of this being-hidden-with-Christ-in-God.<sup>40</sup> *That* is the hope of their calling. Because they are in Christ, because they are the *ἐκκλησία* who are called together by him, they truly stand under God's blessing. Are you what you are?<sup>41</sup>

A great divine *Forward!* into time, history, and humanity is emphasized. Christ is that forward. But what does "Christ" mean? God alone truly lives. What we call life is swallowed up by death (v. 20); it is this and that (vv. 20-21); it is our life in isolation (v. 23). Our life itself must be found again. And in Christ, it *has* been found. But *that* it is found in Christ confronts us with a question. So let us have peace in this Forward! so that through it, we may be allowed no peace. We can ask for the unity of peace and unrest only as long as we know neither.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> "Verborgen-mit-Christus-in-Gott-Sein."

<sup>41</sup> "Seid ihr, was ihr seid?" Cf. ER, 207 where Barth quotes Godet: "' Be what thou already art in Christ!'"

<sup>42</sup> The "waiting that hastens" is a prominent theme in Barth's theology during this period. See ER, 157, 183.

## Summary of Chapters 2 – 6

Today, my task is to sketch the contents of the last five chapters of Ephesians for you.<sup>1</sup>

This can only be in the form of a series of hints. And it will not surprise you that the exegetical and systematic grounding for my understanding of the material cannot appear with it.

2.1-10. It is clear that this section is a continuation and inversion of the ideas in 1.20-23. That the readers might have and receive the widest viewpoint and survey of the blessings of God that they received in the gospel was his concern in the previous passage. To remind them that they are not dealing with just anything but with God, not with time but eternity, Paul spoke about the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Now we hear explicitly that anyone who speaks about the mystery of Christ speaks about the mystery of human life. We also were *dead*. Our life was a περιπατεῖν according to the direction of *this* world and *its* spirit. Our φύσις was synonymous with disobedience and therefore with God's wrath (vv. 1-4). However, God also has made us *alive with Christ, together with him*. ὄντας νεκροὺς συνεζωοποίησεν, συνήγειρεν, συνεκάθισεν (vv. 5 and 6). That is also the paradox of our existence. For us, this turn [*Wending*] remains absolutely hidden; its effects (v. 7) are in the future, temporally speaking; its grounding (vv. 8-10) is in God, to speak in terms of causation.<sup>2</sup> However, the relationship of our life to this hidden newness *really does exist*. In the most fundamental way, God, who makes alive and blesses, the powerful one, *is* the Lord and Savior of our entire existence, which is in

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<sup>1</sup> Marginal note indicating the date of the lecture, February 23.

<sup>2</sup> "in Gott allein liegt, menschlich kausal geredet, ihre Begründung (v. 8-10)."



Christ, as the past, on the one hand, as the future on the other.<sup>3</sup> The dividing mid-point,<sup>4</sup> which makes the past truly the *past*, the future truly the *future*, is Jesus, the power of his resurrection. The power of the resurrection is neither a contingent historical truth nor an inevitable rational truth,<sup>5</sup> as Lessing would say, but the truth of the divine action upon us, which is one with the divine will; it can in no way be called contingent; it is neither fact nor idea, but *revelation*.

2.11-22 introduces and develops an idea which is particularly close to the heart of our letter writer. In Christ, this world [*Diesseits*], humanly speaking, is so radically related to God's hereafter, [*Jenseits*], our entire known existence is brought so fully into the light of his eternal future, that the unavoidable consequence is a radical and complete *relativizing* of the distinctions and antitheses of every aspect of our here-and-now, known existence. What is the significance of the antithesis between gentile and Israel, between near and far, of this finite antithesis in view of the sublation [*Aufhebung*] of the infinite antithesis between God and humanity, revealed in Christ as the hidden will of God? The *great* antithesis is the fundamental sublation [*Aufhebung*] of all *smaller* antitheses. Its meaning, its significance is clear: there really is such a thing as being without promise, of

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<sup>3</sup> "Höchst grundsätzlich *ist* in Christus auseinandergertückt als *Vergangenheit* unser Dasein in seiner ganzen Breite auf der einen, als *Zukunft* God, der Lebendige, der Sieger, der Mächtige, der Herr und Erlöser unseres Daseins [auf der anderen Seite]."

<sup>4</sup> "Die scheidende Mitte." Cf. ER, 195 where Barth says that "*the life hid with Christ in God* (Col. 3:1) . . . is the invisible point of observation and of relationship, the judgment exercised by my infinite upon my finite existence; it is the threatening and promising which is set beyond time, beyond all visibility, beyond all the finite and concrete events of my life."

<sup>5</sup> "Weder eine zufällige Geschichtswahrheit ist die Kraft der Auferstehung noch eine notwendige Vernunftwahrheit." Barth makes a similar comment in RB, including a reference to, "Lessing's ugly ditch": "der böse Lessingsche Graben zwischen ewiger Vernunftwahrheit und zufälliger Geschichtswahrheit sich auftun." RB, 102. "Lessing's ugly ditch between eternal and rational truth and contingent historical truth had to open up." RC 64. For Lessing, see *Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft*, Lessings Werke, Part 23, Theologische Schriften 6,1, ed., J. Peterson and W. von Olshausen (reprint, Berlin and elsewhere, 1925), (Hildesheim/New York, 1970), 47, 49; ET G. E. Lessing, "On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power," in *Lessing's Theological Writings*, trans., H. Chadwick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), 55: "That, then, is the ugly, broad ditch which I cannot get across."

being without hope and without God in the world (vv. 11-12); but in as much as that describes the situation of individual, particular people, how could it be anything other than a parable, when it is clear in Christ that the situation of these individual, particular people is actually the situation of *all* people, and when now this situation of *all* people is seen in Christ, in the light of the promise? The universalism of the antithesis between the dead and the living, between past and future, between law and grace necessarily removes the fundamental acuteness from the antithesis between “them and us,” Gentile and Jew, Pharisees and worldlings, unbelievers and believers, outsiders and insiders. “For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility” (v. 14).<sup>6</sup> He created out of two *one new* man in himself (v. 15) and made those who were separated ones [*Getrennten*] into *one* flesh together and reconciled them with God through the cross. He, *himself* put to death the enmity (v. 16). He gives the separated ones access to the Father through *one* Spirit (v. 18). In him, even aliens and strangers are fellow citizens and members of God’s household (v. 19). Precisely *because* Christ is the living relationship of humanity with God, the cornerstone, the crisis, the basis of the existence of all people, the supposedly absolute antitheses within the human situation become relative; the various relative distinctions become building stones in *one* house; peace on earth becomes possible and necessary (v. 20-21).

3.1-13 Paul now calls this idea, or rather this discovery, that Gentiles and Jews are one in Christ, the distinctive feature of his own apostolic calling. He is emphatic that he is not a preacher in general but δέσμιος τοῦ Χριστοῦ “for you *Gentiles*” (v.1); as such, he is under obligation to say to the Gentiles *precisely this*: “You, the hopeless, now have

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<sup>6</sup> BL: "Denn er ist unser Friede, der aus beiden eines gemacht hat und den Zaun abgebrochen hat, der dazwischen war, nämlich die Feindschaft." Barth: "Er ist unser Friede. Er hat aus dem Getrennten eins gemacht und den Zaun, der dazwischen war, die Feindschaft, niedrigerissen."

hope; you, the God-forsaken, belong to God; you, the far away, are near.”<sup>7</sup> The sublation [*Aufhebung*] of the relative antitheses in light of what is absolute is the Pauline gospel, the *οἰκονομία τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι*, the specific commission granted to him through revelation (vv. 2-3). More than that, he sees in this discovery the specific feature of his time, the dawn of the Christian era, which distinguishes the time *after* the historic appearance of Christ from the time before – certainly not in the sense that the living relationship between God and man is created or made possible for the first time (2.11-22 shows quite clearly that Paul took into account the saving presence of Christ even in the Old Testament), but certainly in the sense that now, the Gentiles are *co*-heirs, *co*-partners of this promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (v. 6); they also have been *drawn into* that living relationship which has always been granted to Israel. That is the mystery, not recognized by previous generations as it is now (v. 5), the mystery of redemption, hidden from eternity in God, the creator of all things (v. 9). It is given to *him*, Paul himself, the least and the guiltiest among the saints,<sup>8</sup> to say *that* to the Gentiles, his brothers and fellow trespassers [*mitschuldigen Brüdern*]. That is what binds his message to his own life situation (v. 8). And that is what must now be preached through the existence [*Tatsache*] of the combined Gentile and Jewish congregations of Christ on earth to the powers and authorities of the heavenly world, to every relative absoluteness [*relativen Absolutheiten*]; all of these are called into question by the reconciliation of *all*

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<sup>7</sup> "ihr, die Hoffnungslosen, habt nun Hoffnung, ihr, die Gottlosen, seid Gottes, ihr die Fernen, seid nahe." This awkward construction conveys Barth's emphatic statement that each side of the contrast remains true: the far away are near. Consequently, to translate the last phrase, "you who *were* far off *are* near" would obscure Barth's point, even though it would be better English and closer to the grammar of the Greek text.

<sup>8</sup> "der Geringste, der Schuldigste unter den Heiligen." There is both a play on words and a biblical allusion here that cannot be rendered in English. With the first word, Barth alludes to 1 Cor. 15:9, "I am the least of the apostles (den geringsten unter den Aposteln)." The second word, "Schuldigste," means the most guilty or greatest sinner. Thus, in Barth's paraphrase, Paul is "the *least*" [of the apostles] and "the *most* guilty" among the believers.

men and the consequent peace *among* men (v. 10-11). That is Christianity: the end of all “-isms,”<sup>9</sup> the complete reversal of the usual conception and normal thought process, so that all forms of mediation [*Mittelbarkeiten*] are called into question by what is unmediated [*Unmittelbarkeit*] – God drawing near to every man in Christ. This direct, unmediated drawing near [*unmittelbare Nahetreten*] of Christ to every man, the universalizing of the promise, the relativizing of all historically given antitheses, is for Paul what is new, what is essential in the historic appearance of Jesus as such. The history of religions fundamentally comes to an end with the beginning of *this* history. From now on, “Gentile” and “God-forsaken” can be spoken about only in quotation marks, only in hope and love, and no longer with the tragic, harsh and exclusive emphasis which these words had in the Old Testament. Gentiles are future Christians; God-forsaken people are hidden children of God; because the wisdom of God in Christ and in his church is revealed πολυποίκιλος, as infinitely diverse, flexible [*beweglich*], and strong (v. 10). Human righteousness does not unite a person to God, and human unrighteousness does not separate a person from God. No, God’s righteousness is both, that which separates and that which unites, to express the same ideas within the framework of Romans.<sup>10</sup> This is what Paul, as the messenger of salvation to the Gentiles, intends to recall to his readers.

3.14-21 can just as easily be understood as the conclusion of what goes before as the introduction to what follows. It is the resumption of the apostle’s prayer for his readers that commenced in 1.15-19. Paul bows before the One who is the fatherly

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<sup>9</sup> "das Ende aller -tümer und -ismen." The English equivalent for the first suffix is, "-doms" as in , "kingdoms." But since English does not use the idiom, it is omitted.

<sup>10</sup> “For if we have been united (verbunden) with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” Rom. 6:5.

[*Väterliche*] in all father relationships in heaven and on earth, the reality of God's "beyond"<sup>11</sup> in every relationship of cause and effect, of creator and created in this world. He is the origin of their names. They are merely parables and images of him.<sup>12</sup> *He* must give what is needed to his readers, so that their inner man may become strong; so that Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith; so that they may be so grounded in love that whatever disturbs this human community in Christ, any claims about what is "mine" and what is "yours" may disappear (vv. 15-17); so that they come to understand that truth has more than two dimensions; that Christ's love is greater than the individual, direct, discursive knowledge that comes from things or people (vv. 18-19); that God gives and desires to give beyond all that human beings can ask for or understand. The precise place where God gives this insight and where it is understood, where God appears, saying: "I am!" and where the immeasurable *risk* is taken to understand the sinful, lost world exclusively through its connection with God, is the ἐκκλησία, Christ Jesus himself, enfleshed in the thron<sup>13</sup> which is called together by him (vv. 20-21). This conclusion of chapter three is clearly the high-point of the entire letter.

In 4.1-16 the prayer becomes an *admonition*, an admonition to keep, to preserve the peace which is given to humanity in Christ; to place the relative human antitheses, human existence of whatever type [*So-- und Soseins*], in the reconciling light of the absolute antithesis between God and humanity. "Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (v. 3). This admonition should not be detached from its context. Paul does not urge peace out of a love of peace but for the sake of God's honor, as a consequence of the *calling* which is granted to Christians. This calling is a calling to

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<sup>11</sup> "das jenseitige Prinzip."

<sup>12</sup> "Seine Gleichnisse und Abbilder."

<sup>13</sup> "Christus Jesus selbst verkörpert in der Schar."

*one* hope. *That* is the bond of peace. The εἰς, μίαν, ἓν, etc. in vv. 4-6 should not be emphasized to the exclusion of the accompanying nouns, which deserve equal emphasis. That we are one *body* and one *Spirit*, called to one *hope*, that we have been called to one *Lord*, one *faith*, one *baptism*, one *God* and *Father* is the positive basis of the admonition; in Christ, we have dealings with the incomparable new *reality of God*. This reality of God as such, which makes us so small and so great, which abases us so profoundly and restores us so powerfully, *is* the peace, *is* the one reality which cannot depart from us in our relative human antitheses. If we did not believe in one *God*, it would be pointless for us to affirm belief in *one* God. Indifference has always been a bad path to tolerance. But unity in *God* is the basis of the freedom of the *individual*, in his place and in his way. It means to belong to God. The way of Christ leads from life in death to life; it comprehends all of existence in the most glaring distinctions we can imagine and therefore comprehends whatever relatively smaller antitheses that might exist among us (vv. 7-10) (You find the same basis for freedom and unity in Rom. 14.7-11). The personality and situation of every individual as such, in distinction from others, is merely *preparation* for service; for the up-building of the body of Christ (v. 12), precisely what each person is to be must be “given” by Christ (v. 11). The service itself is something else; it is the work which must be done within the limits of our individuality; the complete manhood of Christ sublates [*aufhebt*] this limit, revealing that the uniqueness is also the eternal (v. 13). But here and now, we are not there. We can only look there and anticipate from our “here and now;” we can avoid all sectarianism (v. 14), honor the truth in love (v. 15), and mature in Christ, until we come to the unity of the faith in the knowledge of the Son of God (v.13) – not the end of this maturing, but the fulfillment

that is beyond all of *our* growing. This goal beyond our present life [*jenseitige Ziel*] determines and characterizes our path in this present life [*diessetigen Weg*]. May our hope be our peace. Peace is upon the mountains. We are not yet upon the mountains. But we can lift our eyes to the hills, from whence comes our help.<sup>14</sup>

4.17-24 applies the admonition itself to the overall realm of ethics. Paul does not preach morals; he bears witness (v. 17) that the great antithesis whose light falls upon Christians, the crisis between this world and beyond that is revealed in Christ and has overtaken them, has consequences. God's revelation is an attack upon the human creature. Real Christianity is dangerous. But Christians have already been overtaken by this danger. They have already listened to Christ; they have already learned how things stand in Jesus (v. 21). Paul does not hold out to them the overcoming of evil as something good that should be, [*ein Seinsollendes*] but as something which necessarily follows [*ein Selbstverständliches*], as he does in Rom. 6.1-14. They cannot go backwards any longer. The decisive step is already taken. The new light already envelops them. They have God's promise. How could anyone who has God's promise want to be and remain the old man? To have God's promise means to lay aside the old man, to put on the new (vv. 22-23). So the admonition is analytic, not synthetic, meaning: Be what you are! Do not be what you are not! But it is a continual task for the human creature to be what he is; that is something he must *remember*, again and again during the time he lives. So admonition is necessary: Be renewed by the Spirit in your *thinking* [*Denken*] (v.23); repent! so that God's reality *may become* your transformation, may become the reality of

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<sup>14</sup> BL Ps. 121: "Ich hebe meine Augen auf zu den Bergen. Woher kommt mir Hilfe? Meine Hilfe kommt vom Herrn, der Himmel und Erde gemacht hat." The translation attempts to convey Barth's rhetorical device of merging his sentences into the psalm. Barth employs the same verse and imagery in the lectures on John's Gospel to describe the work of biblical interpretation, paraphrasing Augustine. WW, 2.

your life. The knowledge of God must begin ever again so that we understand that we are sinners, that we are the same as all other people; it must continue this way ever again so that we understand that we cannot remain sinners, that we cannot be like other people. The striding forth from here to there, which always remains a striding forth and could never be an arriving, is the *vita christiana*.<sup>15</sup>

4.25 – 5.20 now develops the insight positively and negatively from all sides, from the great shadow which falls upon our life from God, from the difficult attack, from the great war that we are in. It is impossible to explore the details of the passage, even in the form of a sketch. I can only comment briefly, in my own words, about its general orientation. Whoever has understood God becomes conscientious [*sorgfältig*] and attentive. Such a person has been entrusted with something that cannot be destroyed. He learns to respect the supreme necessity of the kingdom of God; and step by step, he receives new insight and freedom, relinquishing the old methods, even though his own action remains merely piece work [*Stückwerk*] and preparation, training and struggle. Life becomes difficult for him, but that is a sign of the mercy of God that has been granted to him. The seriousness of the divine command oppresses only those who stand in grace. Knowing God takes place only in fear and trembling, and we do not want to avoid it. Precisely for this reason, we have a mobility which is given by the Spirit, who makes us obedient and directs,<sup>16</sup> that is, the newness of the Christian ethos. Again and again, it will be a question of whether we have ears to hear, whether we believe the light so that we may become children of light. Apart from this question, no form of Christian zeal can help us. If this question oppresses and disquiets us on the basis of the

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<sup>15</sup> "the Christian life."

<sup>16</sup> "den folgsamen, lenksamen Geist der Beweglichkeit."



presupposition of the Christian ethos, we can and should write Paul's admonitions in our conscience, because they apply to us in every situation.

5.21- 6.9 occupies a place of particular importance in this admonition. It deals with the natural relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, master and slave. Luther referred to these statements as "a rule for the Christian household" [*"Christliche Haustauffel"*]. But it should be noted that neither Paul nor the rest of the New Testament places any importance on the human forms of community as such and that this passage in no way constitutes an early instance of social ethics. It is not the establishment, maintenance, and welfare of the family that Paul is concerned about but rather that even a person's family life, this most important and concrete part of his life, might be seen in the light of the great antithesis. This happens so that the relationships of dependence that exist one-sidedly in the world are seen to be images of the human creature's great dependence on God, established through Christ; the more meaningful and more Christian these relationships are, the more we honor the likeness of the divine<sup>17</sup> to which they point. Precisely for that purpose, complete obedience is appropriate all along the line, but for that purpose only. What justifies these relationships, the fear of Christ (5.21), is also the guarantee that they are not absolute relationships. Marriage is a mystery (5.32), that is, a necessity which carries within it its own contradiction as well as the promise of a future transformation. Likewise, the meaning of relationships between parents and children is training and admonition unto the Lord (6.4); and the meaning of societal orders is that there is only *one* who orders all things only one Lord, namely God.<sup>18</sup> We should be careful not to interpret this passage as conservatively and

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<sup>17</sup> "daß Gleichnis des Göttlichen."

<sup>18</sup> "Societal (Überordnungen) . . . one who orders (Übergeordneten).

romantically as it sounds on the basis of these few verses. They are more revolutionary than they first appear, but it is certainly the revolution from above which is announced in them; precisely because this revolution is radical, it has a conservative sound. The restoration of the original, of the orders of creation in human life attacks the existing relationships indirectly – not from without, but from within and from below.<sup>19</sup> It attacks them by allowing them to remain!!

6.10-24, the conclusion of the letter, makes us acutely aware that, on the human side, Christianity is necessarily always a matter of beginning, taking up, and struggle and in each moment anew, doing so with new and *utter* seriousness as if it were the first moment.<sup>20</sup> True theology is and remains *theologia viatorum*.<sup>21</sup> But if being pilgrims is all that we *can* be, then being pilgrims is what we should *be* and desire to be. You know the famous picture, drawn from the πανοπλία, of the armor of Christ (6.10-17). Christians should take their stand as fighters for God in the dark night, just as Jacob, precisely as those who stand in the dawn of the new day, saying: “I will not let you go unless you bless me!”<sup>22</sup> Pray and keep watch! is the watchword which Paul commends to his readers and which he commends to himself.<sup>23</sup> He needs consolation himself; and precisely because of this need, he can comfort others. The familiar questionableness of our existence is the precise correlate of the living hope which we have; and this in turn, the ground and possibility of existence without illusion, but also without indolence, forms God’s honor. To love the Lord Jesus Christ ἐν ἀφθαρσία (v. 29), in his imperishable being as the One who carries out God’s own business beyond heaven and precisely in

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<sup>19</sup> “Schöpfungsordnungen.”

<sup>20</sup> "Ansetzen, Ergreifen, Kämpfen."

<sup>21</sup> "theology for pilgrims."

<sup>22</sup> Gen. 32:27.

<sup>23</sup> Mark 14:38: "Wachet und betet;" Luke 21:36: "wach und betet."

doing that, our business – that is grace. That, once more in conclusion, is what Paul hopes for himself and for his readers.

## Appendix A

### Barth's Translations of Ephesians 1

#### Academic Lectures 1921-1922

1 Paulus, Apostel des Christus Jesus durch den Willen Gottes an die Heiligen und Gläubigen in Christus Jesus. 2 Gnade sei mit euch und Friede von Gott unserem Vater und dem Herrn Jesus Christus.

3 Gelobt sei der Gott, der der Vater unseres Herrn Jesus Christus ist, der uns gesegnet hat mit dem ganzen geistlichen Segen, im Himmel, in Christus. 4 Nämlich: In ihm hat er uns *erwählt* vor der Erschaffung der Welt, zu unserem Heilig- und Makellossein vor ihm. 5 In Liebe hat er uns dazu bestimmt, durch Jesus Christus seine Söhne zu sein nach dem Wohlgefallen seines Willens 6 zum Lob der Herrlichkeit seiner Gnade, mit der er uns begnadigt hat in dem Geliebten.

7 In ihm haben wir die *Erlösung* durch sein Blut, die Vergebung der Sünden nach dem Reichtum seiner Gnade, 8 in welcher er freigebig gewesen ist gegen uns an vollkommenen Wissen und Besonnensein: 9 Wissen ließ er uns das Geheimnis seines Willens, nach seinem Wohlgefallen 10 (zur Durchführung in der Fülle der Zeiten nach seinem Vorsatz) Alles in Christus wieder zusammenzufassen, das Himmlische und das Irdische in ihm.

11 In ihm sind wir auch *Erben* geworden, wir, die wir dazu bestimmt waren (nach dem Vorsatz dessen, der Alles nach seines Willens Ratschluß bewirkt), 12 zum Lob seiner Herrlichkeit die zuerst Hoffenden zu sein in Christus.

13 In ihm seid auch ihr, die ihr das Wort der Wahrheit gehört, die Heilsbotschaft von eurer Errettung, in ihm glaubend seid ihr versiegelt worden mit dem heiligen Geist der Verheißung, 14 der das Angeld unseres Erbes ist, bis es unser Eigentum sein wird, zum Lob seiner Herrlichkeit.

15 Darum, nachdem ich vernommen von eurem Glauben an den Herrn Jesus und von eurer Liebe zu allen Heiligen, 16 höre auch ich nicht auf, euret wegen zu danken, euer zu gedanken in meinen Gebeten – 17 daß der Gott unseres Herrn Jesus Christus, der Vater der Herrlichkeit, euch gab den Geist der Weisheit und der Offenbarung, ihn zu erkennen, 18 Erleuchtung der Augen eures Herzens, daß ihr wißt, **w a s** für eine Hoffnung euch durch seinen Ruf gegeben ist, **w a s** der Reichtum der Herrlichkeit seines Erbes ist für seine Heiligen 19 and **w a s** es ist um die überragende Größe seiner Kraft für uns, die wir glauben, in der Betätigung der Macht seiner Stärke.

20 Diese hat er betätigt in Christus, indem er ihn von den Toten erweckte und ihn zu seiner Rechten setzte in der himmlischen Welt: 21 über alle Anfänge und Gewalten und Kräfte und Herrschaften und über alles, was nur einen Namen haben kann nicht nur in dieser, sonder auch in der zukünftigen Welt, 22 und hat ihm Alles zu Füßen gelegt und hat ihn als Haupt über Alles der Gemeinde gegeben, 23 welche sein Leib ist, die Erfüllung dessen, der Alles in Allem erfüllt.

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the saints and believers in Christ Jesus. 2 Grace be with you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, in heaven, in Christ:

4 In him, he *chose* us before the creation of the world to be spotless and blameless before him. 5 In love he determined us through Jesus Christ his Son, according to his good pleasure, to exist 6 for the praise of the glory of his grace, which he lavished upon us in the Beloved.

7 In him we have *redemption* through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he has generously given us in perfect wisdom and insight: 9 to make known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure 10 (to accomplish in the fullness of time according to his intention) to gather together everything in Christ, the heavenly and the earthly in him.

11 In him we have also become *heirs*, having been determined (according to the intention of him who accomplishes everything according to the purpose of his will) 12 to the praise of his glory to be the first to hope in Christ.

13 In him, you also, having heard the word of truth, the message of your salvation and believing in him, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 the downpayment of our inheritance, until it becomes our own possession, to the praise of his glory.

15 Therefore, since I learned about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers – 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation to know him, 18 the illumination of the eyes of your heart so that you know what the hope is that is given to you through his call, what the abundance of the glory of his inheritance is for his saints, 19 and what the surpassing greatness of his power is for us who believe in the exercise of the power of his strength.

20 He exercised this in Christ when he raised him from the dead and placed him at his right hand in the heavenly world: 21 over all origins and authorities and powers and dominions and over everything which can be named, not only in this world but also in the world to come; 22 and he placed everything at his feet and made him the head of everything in the church, 23 which is his body, the fulfilling of which he fills all in all.

## Sermons of 1919

Paulus, ein Apostel Jesu Christi durch den Willen Gottes, an die Heiligen in Ephesus und Gläubigen in Christo Jesu. Gnade sei mit euch und Friede von Gott, unserem Vater, und dem Herrn Jesu Christo.

Gelobt sei Gott, der Vater unseres Herrn Jesu Christi, der uns mit dem ganzen geistlichen Segen der himmlischen Welt gesegnet hat in Christo.

In ihm hat er uns erwählt, ehe der Welt Grund gelegt war, daß wir sollten sein heilig und untadelig in ihm. In Liebe hat er uns dazu ausersehen, daß wir durch Jesum Christum seine Kinder sein sollten nach dem Wohlgefallen seines Willens zum Lob der Herrlichkeit seiner Gnade, mit der er uns begnadigt hat in seinem Geliebten.

In ihm habe wir die Erlösung durch sein Blut, die Vergebung der Sünden nach dem Reichtum seiner Gnade, welche uns reichlich geschenkt ist als vollkommene Weisheit und Klugheit. Er hat uns wissen lassen das Geheimnis seines Willens, nach seinem Wohlgefallen zur Durchführung in der Fülle der Zeiten, wie er es sich vorgenommen, alle Dinge in Christo wieder zusammenzufassen, die himmlischen und die irdischen in ihm.

In ihm sind wir Erben geworden, wir, die wir dazu ausersehen waren nach dem Vorsatz dessen, der Alles nach seines Willens Ratschluß bewirkt, so daß wir zum Lob seiner Herrlichkeit zuerst auf Christum hoffen durften.

In ihm seid auch ihr, die ihr das Wort der Wahrheit gehört, das Evangelium von unserer Errettung, durch den Glauben an ihn versiegelt worden mit dem Geist der Verheißung, der das Angeld unseres Erbes ist, zur schließlichen Einlösung unseres Eigentums zum Lob seiner Herrlichkeit.<sup>24</sup>

Darum, nachdem ich vernommen von dem bei euch vorhandenen Glauben an den Herrn Jesus und von eurer Liebe zu allen Heiligen, höre ich nicht auf, zu danken für euch und euer zu gedanken in meinem Gebeten, daß der Vater unseres Herrn Jesu Christi, der Vater der Herrlichkeit, euch gebe den Geist der Weisheit und der Offenbarung in der Erkenntnis Gottes, die Erleuchtung der Augen eures Herzens, daß ihr wisset was für eine Hoffnung euch durch seine Berufung gegeben ist, was der Reichtum der Herrlichkeit seines Erbes ist für seine Heiligen und was es ist um die überwältigende Größe seiner Kraft für uns, die wir Glauben in der Betätigung der Macht seiner Stärke.

Diese hat er betätigt an Christus, indem er ihn von den Toten auferweckte und ihn zu seiner Rechten setzte in der himmlischen Welt über allen Ursprüngen und Gewalten und Kräften und Herrschaften und über Alles, was nur einen Namen haben kann nicht nur in dieser, sondern auch in der zukünftigen Welt, und hat ihm Alles zu Füßen gelegt und hat ihn als Haupt über Alles der Gemeinde gegeben, welche sein Leib ist, die Erfüllung dessen, der selbst Alles in Allen erfüllt.

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<sup>24</sup> *Predigten 1919*, 173.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus and the believers in Christ Jesus. Grace be with you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Praised be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing of the heavenly world in *Christ*.

*In him* he chose us before the foundations of the world were laid that we might be holy and blameless in him.<sup>25</sup> *In love* he chose so that we might be his children through Jesus Christ according to his good pleasure<sup>26</sup> to the praise of the glory of his grace<sup>27</sup> which he lavished upon us<sup>28</sup> in his beloved.

*In him* we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the abundance of his grace, which is amply given to us as complete wisdom and insight. He has let us know the mystery of his will, to carry out according to his good pleasure<sup>29</sup> the reuniting of all things<sup>30</sup> in Christ in the fullness of time as he planned, things heavenly and things earthly in him.

*In him* we have become heirs and were chosen for this according to the purpose of the one who accomplishes everything according to the intention of his will, so that we might be the first to hope in Christ to the praise of his glory.

*In him* you also heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation and were sealed with the Spirit of promise through faith in him, who<sup>31</sup> is the pledge of our inheritance until at last it becomes our possession<sup>32</sup> to the praise of his glory.

Therefore, since I learned about the faith which exists among you in the Lord Jesus and about your love for all the saints, I have not ceased to give thanks for you and to remember you in my prayers, that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of God, the illumination of the eyes of your heart, that you may know how great the hope is that is given you through his call, the abundance of the glory of his inheritance for his saints, and the inestimable greatness of his power for us who believe in the exercise of the power of his strength.

He exercised this [power] upon Christ when he raised him from the dead and placed him at his right hand in the heavenly world over all origins and authorities and powers and dominions and over everything which can be named, not only in this world but also in the world to come;

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<sup>25</sup> Beginning the verse with “In him” produces a clumsy sentence in English, but the translation conveys an important feature of Barth’s handling of the Greek text. He makes a point of beginning each verse with this prepositional construction (except v. 15), emphasized by italics: “*In ihm . . . In ihm* hat er uns erwählt . . . *In Liebe* hat her uns anesehen . . . *In ihm* haben wir die Erlösung durch sein Blut . . . *In ihm* sind wir Erben . . . *In ihm* seid auch ihr. . .”

<sup>26</sup> “nach dem Wohlgefallen seines Willens,” literally: “according to the good pleasure of his will.”

<sup>27</sup> “zum Lob der Herrlichkeit seiner Gnade,” more idiomatically: “to the praise of his glorious grace.”

<sup>28</sup> “. . . seiner Gnade, mit der er uns begnadigt hat in seinem Geliebten,” alternately: “the grace, in which he pardoned us in his beloved.”

<sup>29</sup> “das Geheimnis seines Willens, nach seinem Wohlgefallen,” the same use of “Willen” and “Wohlgefallen” as in v. 5.

<sup>30</sup> “alle Dinge in Christo wieder zusammenzufassen,”

<sup>31</sup> The pronoun refers to “the Spirit of promise.”

<sup>32</sup> “zur schließlichen Einlösung unseres Eigentums.”

and he placed everything at his feet and made him the head of everything in the Church, for whose filling he fills all in all.



## Appendix B Deleted Portion

From page 50 (see note 50)

ATTENTION LATER DELETED

The καθώς in v. 4 is equivalent to a colon, which introduces what follows; and I would certainly relate it to the entire passage, vv. 4-14, even though grammatically it is part of only vv. 4-6. God has blessed us with all the complete blessing of the Spirit, in heaven, in Jesus Christ, that is: he has chosen us in him, etc.; we have redemption in him; we are heirs in him; in him you also are blessed by it.

[15 December, 1921] **ἐξελέξατο**. When Paul seeks to give an account to himself and his readers about the extent to which and the sense in which the human creature is the one who blesses God, he directs his attention first to the mystery of *predestination*. I said to you two lectures ago that I would outline the entire passage as follows: There is a mystery of God, from which we *come*: that is ἐκλογή (vv. 4-6). There is a mystery of God in which we *stand*: that is ἀπολύτρωσις, the forgiveness of sins (vv. 7-11), and there is a mystery of God toward which we are heading, and that is the ἐλπίς, , the future κληρονομία, presented in two different expressions.

ATTENTION ADDENDUM WRITTEN OFF THE TOP OF THE HEAD, POSSIBLY DESCRIBED ON P. 13 NOT AS CLEAR AS OTHER LECTURE?

The first answer of [ ? ? ? ] begins with a powerful *negation*, which opens up before us. Directly behind the negation, a *position* is found, filling up each crater that has been created, a position which is infinitely far, because of the negation lying in-between. As can happen in the mountains, one sees a summit just ahead. But hold on! – there is a precipice of over 100 meters between us and the summit. It is clear that there is no direct path from here to there.

## Chapter Two Humanity in Christ: “von Gott her . . . auf Gott hin”

The key to Barth’s interpretation of Ephesians in the Göttingen lectures is the central role played by Eph. 1:3: “Blessed be God who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” This verse functions as the hermeneutical lens through which Barth looks at all of the details in the doxology, Eph. 1: 3-14. On the basis of this verse, he identifies a single material theme, the concept of the spiritual blessings of God in Christ. This biblical *Denkform* provides the framework for his exposition of the passage.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, Barth depicts the doxology as three circles proceeding from a common center: the spiritual blessings in the form of election (vv. 4-6), redemption (vv. 7-10), and hope (vv. 11-14). This procedure resembles his later proposal to interpret 1 Corinthians on the basis of chapter 15, on the grounds that the resurrection is the material center of the epistle.<sup>2</sup> In the Ephesians lectures, he adopts a similar strategy, but the unifying motif is spiritual blessings in Christ.

According to Barth, Eph. 1:3 witnesses to the divine action, which proceeds from God, sets the creature in motion, and directs the creature to the glory of God. He summarizes this movement in the claim that we have *come from* God and are *moving to*

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<sup>1</sup> This move is a good example to organize diverse textual details under a single theme or concept. For a thorough analysis of Barth’s use of the *Denkform* CD, see Wolfhart Schlichtling, *Biblische Denkform in der Dogmatik: Die Vorbildigkeit des biblischen Denkens für die Methode der kirchlichen Dogmatik Karl Barths* (Zurich: TVZ, 1971), and in particular, p. 265 for his discussion of Barth’s use of the phrase, “von Gott her.” Schlichtling concludes that the *Denkform*, “*Das Sein in Christus*” is the basis of Barth’s dogmatic thought (276-90). I discuss the matter in Chapter Three.

<sup>2</sup> There is an important difference, however. Barth claims that the resurrection chapter is not only the key to 1 Corinthians but to Pauline theology as a whole, indeed, of the entire New Testament, a more comprehensive claim. Bultmann noted that on this basis, Barth succeeded in moving beyond mere historical description of 1 Corinthians to the letter’s theological content. Nevertheless, he claimed that Barth’s exegesis lacked precision, because he failed to give sufficient attention to the historical background. “Barth’s *Resurrection of the Dead*,” 66-67; 86.

God (“*von Gott her . . . auf Gott hin*”).<sup>3</sup> In the following paraphrase of Eph. 1:3, he states the exposition’s main theme:

We are created *by* God, from whom we come [*von Gott her*] and *for* God, towards whom we are moving [*auf Gott hin*]. We *are standing* on the ground of the *benepiacitum Dei*; we *are moving* toward the goal of the *gloria Dei*. The knowledge of God is the *presupposition* and the knowledge of God is the *goal* of all human being, having and doing, including our present speaking and hearing of divine things!<sup>4</sup>

This theme reflects two of Barth’s chief theological concerns during the early period: first, to establish divine prevenience as the basis for the creature’s encounter with God;<sup>5</sup> and second, to map out the relationship between divine sovereignty and human freedom. In both cases, he was concerned to speak properly about human existence in relation to God’s being and action. The dialectical theology of *Romans II* was criticized on the grounds that it precludes creaturely action and the possibility of a relationship with God. On the basis of this theology, Paul Althaus complained, “no relationship with God is possible.”<sup>6</sup> Barth on the other hand regarded dialectical theology not as a negation of the divine-human relationship but rather as its proper grounds. As a protest against the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s “turn to the subject,” he sought “to restore a theology of divine prevenience as the ground of the encounter of God and creatures.”<sup>7</sup> In light of this concern, he reads Ephesians 1:3 as an indication of the movement from divine action to creaturely existence. The exposition is an attempt to trace this movement.

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<sup>3</sup> For a substantial discussion of this phrase and what it reveals about Barth’s theological development, see Maquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus*, chapters 4 and 5, and particularly pp. 181ff. My discussion draws on Maquardt’s presentation of this central tension in Barth’s early theology, although my conclusions are somewhat different. For a more recent discussion, see Boer, “‘Bedrängnis muß groß sein. . .,’” 9-10.

<sup>4</sup> EE, 35; my emphasis.

<sup>5</sup> John Webster, “Barth’s Lectures on the Gospel of John,” 21.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of this complaint, see Jüngel, *Legacy*, chapter 2.

<sup>7</sup> Webster, “Barth’s Lectures on the Gospel of John,” 21.

This chapter examines Barth's proposal to interpret Ephesians on the basis of Eph. 1:3, and in particular, his attempt to establish God's being and action as the ground of human existence. It is guided by two primary questions. First, how does Barth construe the relationship between the being and action of God and creaturely existence? Second, does he give an intelligible account of the relationship between divine and human existence, so that when he speaks about God, he also speaks about humanity? The first section consists of a close reading of his exegesis of Eph. 1:3, including his discussion of the concepts of doxology and the phrase, "in Christ." The second half of the chapter examines Barth's depiction of human existence in each section of the doxology, and particularly, of the creature's movement *from* God and *to* God, "*von Gott her . . . auf Gott hin.*"

These questions take us to the heart of the Ephesians lectures and Barth's early theology. As he made the transition from pastor to academic theologian, Barth was concerned to coordinate God's presence in the world with a theology grounded in Scripture. The former is reflected in his early emphasis on the kingdom of God and ethics, which were deepened and transformed by contact with the Blumhardts in 1915. The latter is seen in his turn to the Bible in 1916 and the writing of *Romans I* the following year. How these two concerns should be related was central to Barth as he moved from *Kanzel* in Safenwil to *Katheders* in Göttingen. The Ephesians lectures, therefore, are a particularly good place to examine Barth's configuration of divine and human existence.

## I Barth's Exposition of Ephesians 1:3

### *Doxology*

Commentators routinely refer to Eph. 1:3-14 as the “doxology.”<sup>8</sup> For Barth, however, “doxology” not only describes the text, it functions as a leading theological and hermeneutical category in the exposition. This section, he says, “is a *doxology*, in which the apostle praises God, clearly intending to invite his readers to join him and thereby to orient them in the direction from which he intends to address them.”<sup>9</sup> Praise, according to Barth, is the fundamental posture of the believer. In this act, the creature acknowledges that God is God and recognizes “the infinite qualitative distinction” between Creator and creature.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Barth makes an important hermeneutical observation when he claims that Paul’s act of praise is intended to orient his listeners to his message. This text is a form of *proclamation* as well doxology. Therefore, the apostolic *kerygma* is heard and understood in the act of praise, Barth says. The implication is that doxology is both the necessary posture for hearing the message as well as the message itself.

The Ephesians lectures contain Barth’s most complete exposition of the concept of doxology. In his earlier lectures, Barth employs doxology and the related concept of glory to refer to a variety of matters, including God’s otherness, the content of the Bible, and the preacher’s task. For example, in “The Christian’s Place in Society,” he notes that

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<sup>8</sup> For examples among Barth’s sources, see Bengel, *Gnomon*, 97 and Dibelius, *Handbuch*, 97.

<sup>9</sup> EE, 33-34.

<sup>10</sup> ER, 10.

the phrase, “to live for the glory of God” refers the Christian life as Calvin described it.<sup>11</sup> The final thesis in “The Word of God and the Task of the Ministry” states: “We should speak of God and yet cannot, and by that very recognition give God the glory.”<sup>12</sup> Finally, he appeals to the concept of divine glory to address the problem of the varied content found in the books of the Bible. Barth concludes that there is no unifying content, except concern for the glory of God.<sup>13</sup> In the Ephesians lectures, the concept of doxology is significantly expanded to include two new elements. First, Barth establishes the connection between doxology and revelation. Praise is a form of knowledge, which occurs when something is “opened” in the creature and blind eyes are enabled to see: “He has found light where human eyes can only detect darkness. He has made the most important discovery of all. He has found *God*; and he has *found* God.”<sup>14</sup> The veiling and unveiling of revelation occurs in the act of praise, as noted in the last chapter. Second, the concept of doxology in the Ephesians lectures refers to the divine-human relationship in its entirety. In the act praise, the creature is called into relationship with God. This comprehensive notion of doxology is evident in the following description of praise.

Paul’s aim in the doxology, Barth explains, is:

to jolt them out of the forgetfulness they are constantly lapsing into; from the irrelevant matters in which they are constantly becoming lost; from false subjectivity and equally false objectivity when the creature is confronted by the fundamental questions of his existence and the answer that is already given by God; Paul calls them from the posture of spectators and observers into a relationship with the subject, to a vocation – a movement, an upheaval, a sublation [*Aufhebung*] of time and everything temporal through eternity, in which the human creature regains consciousness and walks before God.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> WG, 324.

<sup>12</sup> WG, 21.

<sup>13</sup> WG, 75-74.

<sup>14</sup> EE, 39.

<sup>15</sup> EE, 35.

In his description, the act of praise includes a *subjective dimension* – the creature is shocked and then gladdened by the discovery of the unknown God; an *existential dimension* – the person is confronted with the fundamental questions of existence; and an *ethical dimension* – the creature “comes into consciousness and begins to walk before God.” The seismic tremor which evokes the praise of God reaches every domain of the creature's existence, both "religious life" and the ethical realm.

*The Play on Words: “Blessed be God who has blessed us”*

Next, Barth draws attention to the "untranslatable word play," which is achieved in Greek by exploiting various meanings of the word, “bless.” He notes that the same term is used to refer both to the divine action of blessing and corresponding human act of praise. Praise, Barth concludes, is an echo of what God has done first:

The phrase in v. 4, “Praised be him who has blessed us,” contains an untranslatable word play, which does not derive its meaning from aesthetic affect but from the nature of the human act which enables the readers to understand the writer of the letter and in which he invites them to participate; an act which he describes as an echo of what God has done first, not only temporally but *before* in the fundamental sense of the eternal divine priority, an echo which *necessarily follows* immediately from this divine act.<sup>16</sup>

In this highly compressed description of worship, Barth emphasizes both the *correspondence* between the divine and the human action as well as the *priority* of the divine blessing: "'God blesses one way, the creature another'."<sup>17</sup> The divine blessing is prior, both in the temporal sense and “in the fundamental sense” of divine sovereignty. Although Barth passes over this point rather quickly, the distinction is crucial for understanding what follows. By *temporal priority*, he means that God’s action always

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<sup>16</sup> EE, 34. Barth erroneously cites v. 4; he refers here to v. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.; Quoting Bengel.

precedes the creature's and therefore is the basis for the creature's response. This dimension can refer both to God's agency in the life of an individual as well as to the divine economy in its cosmic dimensions. For example, Barth makes much of the temporal order of Paul's conversion. Paul was not in Christ because of what happened on the road to Damascus, Barth argues, "he experienced Damascus" because he was in Christ.<sup>18</sup> There is also a temporal dimension to the divine economy – the divine economy is expressed as eternal election, present forgiveness, and future inheritance. By *fundamentally prior*, Barth means that God's blessing is a sovereign act which compels the creature's response, as expressed in Paul's exclamation, "I am under constraint -- woe to me if I do preach the gospel."<sup>19</sup> This dimension is present, moment by moment, whenever God breaks in "vertically from above."

Barth depicts the action in the doxology as a movement between the two poles – divine grace on one side and divine glory on the other. Human existence is found in the force field which exists between these two poles: the "εὐδοκία, the *beneplacitum* of God, on the one hand, and the ἑπαινος, the *glorificatio* of God through the human creature, on the other."<sup>20</sup> Although Barth speaks of the *creature's* movement "von Gott her . . . auf Gott hin," this movement occurs in response to *God's* prior action, which sets the

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<sup>18</sup> EE, 38.

<sup>19</sup> EE, 39. Barth makes a similar point in his 1919 sermon on this text; however, there he speaks of change in human existence: "The living word of God and living faith in this word bring about a *change* in human existence. We *can neither* comprehend nor express how fundamental, extensive, and portentous this change is," Sermon 1, 106.

<sup>20</sup> Frequently, Barth combines the fundamental and the temporal priority, as he does here, where the terms *beneplacitum* and *glorificatio* of God refer both to the movement from election to final glory (temporal) and to the priority of grace, which sets in motion a series of events, culminating in the creatures' praise (fundamental). The matter is further complicated by the fluid temporal boundaries in Barth's thinking. For example, the phrase, "before the foundation of the world," is stripped of any temporal reference and refers to God's sovereign action in the moment. The matter is discussed below in the section on election.



creature in motion. On the basis of this observation, Barth concludes that “the knowledge of God is the presupposition and goal” of human existence.<sup>21</sup>

This basic movement from divine action to creaturely existence is reflected in a pattern or exegetical logic which pervades the lectures. Barth routinely moves from statements about God’s being and action to corresponding statements about human existence, from the objective to the subjective. This pattern is evident, for example, in his exegesis of grace and peace. Grace points to “God’s unheard of, strange conduct with the human creature.”<sup>22</sup> Peace refers to “the human creature’s equally strange and unheard of conduct with God. χάρις and εἰρήνη . . . correspond to each other; Paul sees them as the two endpoints of the relationship between God and the human creature.”<sup>23</sup> The explication of the concepts of holiness and grace displays the same pattern. Holiness refers to God’s action toward the creature, creating a relationship.<sup>24</sup> Peace “denotes the subjective state” when the creature exists in an ordered relationship with God.<sup>25</sup> This pattern is most striking in Barth’s Christological statements. For example, he claims that the Christological formula expresses the essence of human life. After tracing the concept of Messiah in Israel’s history, he concludes that “Jesus of Nazareth, *is* this Χριστὸς. . . . A man is *the* man. All others are shadows of him. As they wait longingly for him, they wait for their own fulfillment.”<sup>26</sup> The content of Christology, Barth suggests, has two coordinates or reference points – one is the historic appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, the other is the consequence of his appearing for present creaturely existence. The second

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<sup>21</sup> EE, 35.

<sup>22</sup> EE, 25.

<sup>23</sup> EE, 27.

<sup>24</sup> EE, 16.

<sup>25</sup> EE, 20.

<sup>26</sup> EE, 8.

coordinate is evident in the statement that we now wait for him, who is “the fulfillment of our humanity.” Barth explicates the text by tracing the divine movement of revelation, which is not complete until the present readers are confronted with God’s questions and God’s answer, that is, with the reality of human existence in Christ. This exegetical logic is consistent with his claim that “[w]hen we speak about this God, we are speaking about *ourselves*, our fundamental *existence*.”<sup>27</sup> According to Barth, to speak about God is to speak about humanity.<sup>28</sup>

To sum up, Barth regards the wordplay in Eph. 1:3 as a witness to the divine movement which creates and sustains human existence. His exposition is an attempt to trace the trajectory of this divine action, which graciously precedes the creature, follows the creature, and therefore encloses human existence in Christ.

### *Barth’s Interpretation of “in Christ”*

Barth regards the phrase, “in Christ,” as the “formal key” to the doxology – it must be vigorously used to “unlock the meaning of the passage.”<sup>29</sup> The designation, “formal key” is significant. In Barth’s treatment, the phrase, “in Christ” is not a discrete concept which can be interpreted on its own. Unlike most commentators, he does not assign an independent meaning to this motif or discuss the interpretive and theological problems associated with it.<sup>30</sup> Rather, “in Christ” serves as a modifier of specific divine and human actions; its meaning depends on how it is used at a given point in the

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<sup>27</sup> EE, 31.

<sup>28</sup> Sometimes, Barth reverses the direction, beginning with an observation about human existence, then pointing to the source in God.

<sup>29</sup> EE, 36.

<sup>30</sup> For a good discussion of the various proposals to interpret “in Christ,” see Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1974, 1986), 69-70.

doxology. Barth frequently discusses the phrase in connection with the subjective, human recognition of the divine blessings – for example, it often appears in conjunction with “*Erkenntnis*” and its cognates – but he also uses the motif when referring to objective divine action, such as eternal election in Christ. This approach gives suppleness to Barth’s interpretation and accords well with the variety of ways in which “in Christ” is used in Ephesians.<sup>31</sup> The closest he comes to a definition is the statement that “in Christ” refers to “God's existential address to the creature.”<sup>32</sup> Here and throughout the exposition, the phrase is equated with divine revelation in both its objective and subjective dimensions.

Throughout the exposition, the phrase, “in Christ,” is used to orient the interpretation to the *Sache* or subject matter of the text. For example, Barth’s decision to organize Eph. 1: 3-14 into four shorter sentences beginning with the phrase, “in Christ” or “in him” is not merely to establish syntactical markers for linguistic clarity. Rather, through the repetition of this phrase, we are “called to the subject.” In short, the phrase, “in Christ” relates all of the individual words in the text to the Word. Barth concludes: However we outline the doxology,

let us be sure that we are repeatedly reoriented to the subject by the constantly appearing Ἐν ᾧ and the equivalent ἐν Χριστῷ. What is expressed here is not truth in general, and therefore cannot be expressed directly, rationally or irrationally, speculatively or experientially through the vagaries of the “pious consciousness;” the truth expressed here is expressed existentially, indirectly from God and by God, not as individual words in themselves, but with every single word in relationship to *the* Word, which is not exhausted by any individual word. Because *that* is what is meant by the phrase, ἐν Χριστῷ, it constitutes the formal key to the section.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For a good discussions of the preposition, ἐν, and its implications for interpreting “in Christ,” see C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 54-63.

<sup>32</sup> EE, 35-36.

<sup>33</sup> EE, 37.

This use of "in Christ" as the formal key is evident in Barth's survey of the contents of the doxology. "In Christ," the veiling and unveiling of revelation takes place – God draws near, even in his sovereign distance. "In Christ," election, redemption, hope, and sealing are proclaimed by Paul and understood by the readers as a single movement of divine redemption, expressed in three temporal frameworks. "In Christ," we are blessed by God for the purpose of giving him the glory. In his summary of the doxology, the phrase refers to *the event* of human recognition, *the means* by which God effects our election, and *the grounds* of the divine-human relationship. For Barth, "in Christ" refers comprehensively to the divine movement as it encloses human existence and establishes a relationship between the Creator and the creature.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, he interprets the phrase dialectically, that is, "in Christ" points to the sovereign divine action as the basis of human existence. It refers to "the *presupposition* and *goal* of our human being, having, and doing . . . not the human creature's own being, having or doing" The only way to understand the doxology, Barth claims, is to keep the order straight:

Paul would never have understood his conversion at Damascus as the cause of his being ἐν Χριστῷ. He is not ἐν Χριστῷ because he experienced Damascus; he experienced Damascus because he is ἐν Χριστῷ. If we reverse this order for purposes of clarity, we sever the nerve, depriving ourselves of the *unique* possibility of understanding the words which sound and soar from beginning to end: κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ – εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ."<sup>35</sup>

This passage sums up the role played by the motif in Barth's exegesis. The phrase, "in Christ" is not a discrete concept which can be analyzed but the means for viewing everything else in the doxology. By applying this phrase to the interpretation of the

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<sup>34</sup> Therefore, his interpretation of this Pauline theme resists categorization under a single approach, such as spatial, existential, or ontological.

<sup>35</sup>EE, 40.

doxology, Barth attempts to trace the divine movement which encloses human existence and establishes an eternal relationship with God.

Barth's approach to Eph. 1:3 as the interpretive key to the doxology is the most distinctive feature of his interpretation of Ephesians. Although he credits Calvin for this reading of the text, the verse plays a far more central role in Barth's exposition and he exploits the interpretive possibilities of the word play far more extensively than the Reformer.<sup>36</sup> Here, we can see indications of the role this verse will play in his later reconstruction of the doctrine of election. Although previous studies discuss the centrality of this verse in the *Church Dogmatics*, we are now in a position to understand Barth's exegetical logic and the reason for the centrality of Eph. 1:3 in his theology.<sup>37</sup>

Our present concern, however, is the function of Eph. 1:3 in Barth's configuration of divine and human existence. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter analyzes Barth's account of humanity in Christ in each of the circles of the doxology.

## II Eternal Election Eph. 1:4-6

Barth's discussion of election occupies the first circle of the doxology. Because election exalts God's sovereign freedom, Barth's challenge is to give an intelligible account of the human, subjective dimension resulting from the divine action in Christ. Therefore, this section of the exposition is a particularly good place to examine how Barth coordinates divine action and human existence. The following examines Barth's account of the

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<sup>36</sup> For Calvin's discussion of Eph. 1:3, see SoE, 14-48.

<sup>37</sup> Cunningham, *What is Theological Exegesis?* Unfortunately, because she does not discuss Barth's previous work on Eph. 1:3, her study gives the impression that the juxtaposing of this verse with John 1 is more of a literary device than a carefully reasoned exegetical decision. In fact, Barth arrived at an understanding of the phrase, "in him" and "in Christ," after the extensive work done on Ephesians in the sermons and lectures.

divine action to the creature in election and the consequences for human existence. I am particularly concerned with how effectively Barth depicts election as the basis for a genuine *relationship* between creator and creature, as well as for human activity and ethics.

Barth begins this section with a critique of interpretations of election dominated by anthropological concerns. Calvin's doctrine of double predestination suffers from just this problem, Barth observes. He asks the wrong question, which Barth paraphrases as follows: "Can there be, may there be, must there be *human creatures* chosen for condemnation along side those chosen for blessedness?"<sup>38</sup> By contrast, Barth insists that "the actual significance of predestination" is not found in this anthropological question; rather: "For Paul, the statement: God chooses! is primarily a statement about God, indeed, a statement about God's relationship with the human creature."<sup>39</sup>

This emphasis on the objective dimension of election comes as no surprise. As early as the 1919 lecture, "The Christian's Place in Society," Barth refers to Calvin's doctrine of election in connection with his own concept of God.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, election emerges as a central hermeneutical and theological category in "Biblical Questions, Insights, and Vistas:" "When we ask the Bible what it has to offer, it answers by putting to us the fact of election."<sup>41</sup> As early as 1920, a constellation of themes appears in Barth's thinking – he links election with divine aseity, the glory of God, and the hermeneutical principle that the word creates its own hearers. The latter is frequently expressed through the repetition of the phrase, "He who has ears, let him listen." What is

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<sup>38</sup> EE, 54.

<sup>39</sup> EE, 55.

<sup>40</sup> For a good discussion of election in Barth's hermeneutic, see Kirchstein, *Der souveräne Gott*, 74-79.

<sup>41</sup> WG, 58-59

noteworthy in the Ephesians lecture, however, is the emphasis on election as the basis for the eternal relationship with the creature, evident in the second half of the following statement: "God chooses! is primarily a statement about God, indeed, *a statement about God's relationship with the human creature.*"<sup>42</sup> Barth has his eye on the movement from God's reality to human existence, from the objective to the subjective. The existential value of election, so to speak, is assurance. "When [Paul] attempts to give an account of himself in the presence of Christ, asking: Who am I? Where do I, who am blessed by God, come from?, he answers: I am chosen by God!"<sup>43</sup> The difference between Calvin's account and his own, Barth argues, is the starting point: Whereas Calvin begins with the anthropological question, in his own account the creature is already in Christ's presence when he asks the question, "Who am I?" In the end, Barth says something very much like Calvin. Election is the basis for assurance of the eternal relationship: When God is "recognized in election in his unfathomable freedom, sovereignty, and majesty," this doctrine effectively humbles the creature and brings genuine assurance of salvation."<sup>44</sup>

So far, this interpretation is unexceptional. It is only when Barth attempts to explain Christ's role in election that the distinctiveness of his approach becomes clear. Who is Christ in this event, Barth asks? Christ is "God's grasp upon the human creature . . . In him we recognize God as *our* God who turns to us in complete freedom:"

*God's choice upon these particular people in all of their individuality and uniqueness, just as Christ is not a generic term for humanity, church, a people group, or corporation, but the Individual, Unique One. He is, however, the Individual, Unique One in his individuality and uniqueness before God, the historical one who is eternal, the Son of Man who is the Son of God. In him we*

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<sup>42</sup> EE, 55.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> EE, 56.

recognize God as *our* God who turns to us in complete freedom, because in him God *himself* is given and able to be recognized as such.<sup>45</sup>

Barth suggests that as we look at the incarnate Christ and see how God has chosen him, we recognize our own election. The emphasis, therefore, is the creature's recognition in the present rather than the divine choice "before the beginning of the world." Here, the contrast to Calvin's interpretation is striking. In Calvin's account, God looks at Christ and sees us as in a mirror. In Barth's account, *the creature* looks at Christ and sees a reflection of God's choice upon the individual. Furthermore, he makes no place for Christ's pre-existence in the event of election. When describing Christ's agency in election, he is conspicuously silent about the phrase, "before the foundation of the world." Rather, he understands election as an event which occurs moment by moment as the creature recognizes the divine choice. The exegesis of Eph. 1:4-6 is clarified by his account of election in the *Göttingen Dogmatics*:

If in the event of revelation, we hear only foolishness, then we are passed over by God. If by the Holy Spirit, we respond with faith and obedience, then we participate in the grace of God. In either case, the possibility of our response is grounded in God. . . . In the either-or of this twofold possibility which is actual for each of us at this moment, God's glory triumphs no matter how the decision goes.<sup>46</sup>

Barth interprets election "actualistically:" election "expresses the freedom of the living God in relation to human begins at every moment rather than referring to a divine decision in the distant past."<sup>47</sup> There is a clear correlation between the Ephesians exposition and the *Göttingen Dogmatics*, suggesting that this is the point at which Barth laid the exegetical groundwork for the account of election in his first dogmatic cycle.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> EE, 57-58.

<sup>46</sup> GD, 440.

<sup>47</sup> Daniel Migliore, GD, xlvii.

<sup>48</sup> GD, 466-68. I discuss this correlation below and in the Conclusion.



Barth's interpretation of election founders at several points, largely because of an inadequate Christology. The problem is evident in his treatment of the phrase, "before the foundation of the world," which is stripped of any temporal reference. In the lectures, he interprets the phrase dialectically to mean that the eternal relationship is grounded in divine rather than human reality.<sup>49</sup> In the *Göttingen Dogmatics*, the phrase refers to divine sovereignty, moment by moment. Consequently, Barth appeals to the Incarnation to explain how the individual is related to Christ in the event of election and its continuing effects. However, the lineaments of his mature doctrine of election can be seen in his description of Jesus as "the Individual before God." Here, he anticipates his later exegesis of Romans 5 in *Christ and Adam*,<sup>50</sup> where he claims that human identity is incorporated into Christ's identity: "Such then is the status of this human individual. He is an individual in such a way that others are not only beside Him and along with Him, but in their most critical decision about their relationship to God, they are also and first of all *in* Him." The most striking point of similarity between the lectures and this later formulation is the claim that Jesus is the "individual" before God in such a way that we are also before God in him. In this earlier interpretation, however, he simply asserts that humanity "lives in God" as well as in time without explaining how the creature is related to Christ:

the event that takes place in Christ and is revealed in him is that man, who lives in time, lives in God, the One who lives and remains in eternity. God turns to the human creature only as the God who elects in absolute freedom, but in this way,

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<sup>49</sup> "We should not confuse any causality in the κόσμος with *this* causality, because this causality is the causality through the uncaused causality. Its ground πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου must be sought yesterday, today, tomorrow, and ever again. God is living, not a stiff, lifeless material concept; his election is not natural law, but the law of freedom; that is what is conveyed here," EE, 59.

<sup>50</sup> "*Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5*, tans., T. A. Smail (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1956), 25.

he truly turns to the creature. God elects in sovereign freedom, but he truly elects.<sup>51</sup>

The central problem is that Barth does not explain what it means for the creature "to live in God who lives in eternity." Later in the lectures, he describes the sealing of the Holy Spirit as the point in the creature where the objective and the subjective meet, where human life in time meets eternal life. But a coherent interpretation of the passage requires an account of Christ's pre-incarnate existence, in order to make sense of his agency in election. It is worth noting that Calvin's exposition of this section of Ephesians is replete with Christological references, particularly to Christ's pre-incarnate existence. Although space does not permit a complete discussion, the difference can be seen in his rather different treatment of the phrase, "before the foundation of the world." Christ is depicted first as the mirror in which God sees us and then the register in which our names are written. God had pity on us because he "must have had before him his pattern and mirror in which to see us, that is to say, he must have first looked on our Lord Jesus Christ before he could choose us and call us. . . . Jesus Christ serves as a register. It is in him that we are written down and acknowledged by God as his children."<sup>52</sup> The specificity and vividness of the Christological references in Calvin's interpretation contrasts strikingly with the vagueness in Barth's account. A more substantial Christological foundation must await Barth's 1925 lectures on the Gospel of John.<sup>53</sup>

In his discussion of sanctification, Barth is more successful correlating the objective dimension of election with the subjective dimension of human existence. Our election to sonship is a reflection of the one, unique Son of God, he says, a variation on the earlier

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<sup>51</sup> EE, 58.

<sup>52</sup> SoE, 33.

<sup>53</sup> Barth's exposition of John 1:3 in the 1925 John lectures represents a substantial development in this regard. WW, 29-35.

description of praise as “an echo of what God has done first.”<sup>54</sup> In the following, Barth describes election as the basis of the creature’s holiness:

The divine act that is described here as ἐκλέγεσθαι is directed to the being of the human creature determined by God: to be holy and perfect before him – for this, he has chosen us. Our being before him as the elect, summarized in the expression, εἰς υἰοθεσίαν, in v. 5, is the next, temporal purpose willed and achieved by God in Christ for the accomplishment of his final eternal purpose, εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ (v. 6).<sup>55</sup>

It should be noted that Barth describes election to holiness as the first stage of a movement which culminates in the creature giving glory to God. As this passage demonstrates, Barth perceives the divine action as “a self-enclosed circle,” with the creature in the middle, that is, as the scene of the divine action. Barth’s concern for ethics and sanctification is evident here, as it is throughout the exposition.

To sum up: Barth’s exposition of Eph. 1:4-6 fails to connect Christ’s agency in election with human existence, chiefly because he lacks an adequate Christology. He is considerably more successful describing election as the basis for the creature’s sanctification. At the end of the section, he poses the following question: “How does God’s freedom become our freedom, his goal, which is himself, our salvation?” The question indicates his concern to follow the trajectory which begins in election and encloses creaturely existence. He answers by appealing to the cross and resurrection, and specifically, by establishing a link between election and redemption via his theology of the word. We know that God’s action in election is directed toward our existence in Christ, he says, because “God becomes *word* in an unprecedented way on the cross of Christ, but becomes *word as God* in his resurrection.”<sup>56</sup> This move makes sense

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<sup>54</sup> EE, 34.

<sup>55</sup> EE, 59.

<sup>56</sup> EE, 68.

exegetically, because election is not described in the doxology as an isolated event but as part of the divine economy. By pointing to the cross and resurrection as the place where “God’s freedom become[s] our freedom,” Barth indicates that he still has his eye on the divine movement, “*von Gott her . . . auf Gott hin.*”

### **The Knowledge of God Eph. 1:7-11**

The exposition of Eph. 1:7-11 considers redemption and forgiveness, that is, the spiritual blessings in the present. Accordingly, Barth begins this section by drawing attention to the verb ἔχομεν (“we have”) in v. 7. However, he cautions against speaking glibly about what we have or possess, lest we domesticate Paul’s message. What can it possibly mean to say that “we have” redemption or the unity of all things in Christ, since these are realities possessed by God alone?<sup>57</sup> The attention which Barth devotes to this ἔχομεν reflects a recurrent theme in the lectures, namely, his determination to accord a minimal role to experience or psychologically verifiable realities as the basis of faith. In his discussion of election, Barth had Calvin in his sights. Now, he has Schleiermacher in view: “I must issue a warning about identifying this feeling [of peace] with what Schleiermacher called ‘the feeling of absolute dependence’ by which he meant the ultimate human possibility.<sup>58</sup> What feeling that we know or can imagine is adequate to grasp this matter?”<sup>59</sup> Likewise, Dibelius draws criticism for claiming that adoption to

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<sup>57</sup> EE, 69. Here, the familiar diastasis from *Romans* is clearly in view. Although it might appear as though Paul is touching on “the familiar ground of human being, having and doing,” Barth argues, this passage calls into question our present existence just as radically as the previous passage about divine election. God’s sovereign freedom is the ground of human existence.

<sup>58</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 16.

<sup>59</sup> EE, 29.

sonship can be experienced: “How could we have an experience of the Son of God, of the Resurrected One, the experience of being new, of the man who is begotten by God for us, except on the basis of promise, since none of these occur in our greatest experience?”<sup>60</sup>

Barth’s determination to accord a minimal role to experience creates a tension in his interpretive approach. He intends to speak about the divine movement which envelops the creature and sets the creature in motion. However, he effectively denies any role to experience.<sup>61</sup> He argues that to desire “a material, direct, and visible presence of God” is “to desire *heathen* fullness.”<sup>62</sup> But is it possible to speak about faith in Christ without acknowledging a role for experience? Bultmann did not think so. In opposition to Barth, he argued that although faith is a divine reality, it must be located within the creature’s psyche, emotions, and memory. Otherwise, it is not faith. He challenges Barth on the point in his review of the third edition of *Romans*:

Is faith, when it is divorced from every psychic occurrence, when it is *beyond consciousness*, then anything at all real? Is not all talk of this faith only speculation and at that an absurd one? What is the meaning of the talk about my “ego” that is not my ego? What is the point of this faith of which I am not conscious and of which I can at most believe that I have it?<sup>63</sup>

This disagreement reveals a fault line in early dialectical theology, and a vigorous debate about the proper role of experience in theology continues into the present.<sup>64</sup> For the purposes of this study, it is important to note the source of this tension in Barth’s exegetical theology: he attempts to describe God’s action in the creaturely realm while

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<sup>60</sup> EE, 64.

<sup>61</sup> Many commentators see a subjective or experiential dimension in the doxology. For example, Markus Barth notes that God is the subject of most of the sentences until Eph. 7; 11-13, where there is a shift “from objective to personal application . . . . An appeal is made to their experience and awareness.” *Ephesians*, p. 98.

<sup>62</sup> EE, 46.

<sup>63</sup> “Barth’s *Romans*,” in *The Beginnings of Dialectical Theology*, 110.

<sup>64</sup> Moltmann’s emphasis on experience in theology can be understood as a protest against this aspect of Barth’s theology. See “Trinitarian Experience of the Spirit,” in *The Spirit of Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 58-77.

maintaining the diastasis between creator and creature. Barth resolves this tension by appeal to the knowledge of God.

How do we "have" redemption and the forgiveness of sins through Christ's blood, Barth asks? The answer given in Ephesians, he argues, is knowledge.<sup>65</sup> The grace of God purchased for us through the shedding of Christ's blood "is poured out to us in all wisdom and insight." Ephesians equates redemption with knowledge, Barth concludes: "To know of forgiveness is to have forgiveness."<sup>66</sup> He acknowledges the contrast with Paul's major letters, where the emphasis is on πίστις and notes the dangers of intellectualism when grace is described in terms of knowledge. Barth argues that the concept of *gnosis* plays that same role in Ephesians as *pistis* plays in Romans. Paul used the different term, because "*pistis*" had begun to lose the "ring of objectivity" for his listeners that it once had: "Everything has its time, πίστις and γνῶσις. . . . A theologian must be able to speak occasionally as a thoroughgoing gnostic."<sup>67</sup>

Behind this provocative statement is a nuanced argument about the relationship between knowledge and faith. Barth argues that when the concept of knowledge is used to describe God's position vis-à-vis the creature, it highlights his position *opposite* (*gegenüber*) the creature as the Other. However, the Pauline *gnosis* includes the idea that

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<sup>65</sup> Barth offers two answers to the question of how we possess forgiveness. Before speaking of knowledge, he appeals to the classical Reformed theology of the cross. Redemption is interpreted as freedom from the bondage of sin (recognizably Lutheran in emphasis). The reference to the blood of Christ points to the Old Testament background of the day of Atonement and speaks of Christ as "the place where our lot turns, where we pass over from one side to the other, where our sins are forgiven" (recognizably Calvinist and Lutheran). This section is notable for the emphasis Barth places on the resurrection for our understanding of the cross: "What would the blood of Jesus, his suffering and action in his passion be, without the resurrection which reveals their meaning? The resurrection however is revealed to us only on the cross, in Jesus' blood" (73). This statement calls to mind Barth's conclusion that the resurrection is the center of Pauline theology, the result of his study of 1 Corinthians in 1919. In order to establish a link between the past event of Calvary and the present existential effects, Barth introduces the language of time and eternity. The event of Good Friday, Barth explains, is manifestly God's affair, a moment in which every mouth is shut. Therefore, we can say that we have redemption "only by relating time to eternity."

<sup>66</sup> EE, 75.

<sup>67</sup> EE, 77.

God stands *in relationship* with the creature and must be interpreted in light of this dialectic:

When one speaks about the *knowledge* of God, the emphasis is on God *facing* us as the great *Other*. That this God not only faces us, but is also in relationship with us in the sense of πίστις, that he becomes our possession and we his, is not excluded but rather included, if our description of this relationship emphasizes that God *reveals* himself, that we *recognize* him.<sup>68</sup>

The passage expresses Barth's theological objectivity, the claim that God stands as an object "opposite" the creature (*gegenüber*). In this way, he opposes and confronts the creature as he stands in relationship with the creature, that is, even in his opposition.

Busch clarifies his position as follows:

God is the Opposite, who does not merely evade the human grasp in passing, but who permanently obstructs and counters that grasp in his revelation . . . . The object envisaged is to be seen in *relationship*, but in one that he himself constitutes . . . . The term objectivity carries the thought not only of confrontation but also of *encounter*.<sup>69</sup>

In the *Epheserbrief*, Barth's account of the knowledge of God includes the relational dimension found in the Lutheran concept of faith. "The Pauline concept of γνῶσις is just as living and powerful a thing, a concept proceeding just as much from the *whole* and oriented just as absolutely to the *reality* of God as the Lutheran concept of faith."<sup>70</sup> In this regard, it is significant that his exegesis of Ephesians coincided with his preparation of the Calvin lectures, in which the Reformed understanding of the knowledge of God is particularly prominent. Calvin signifies the "second turn of the Reformation," because of his concern for Christian life in the world, leading to the particular Reformed emphasis on the knowledge of God.<sup>71</sup> In 1921-1922, Barth's biblical work and historical theology

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Busch, *The Great Passion*, 73.

<sup>70</sup> EE, 76.

<sup>71</sup> *The Theology of John Calvin*, 387.

converged, resulting in a theologically full and nuanced account of the knowledge of God.

To sum up: Barth attempts to speak about human existence in Christ while denying any significant role to feelings or psychologically verifiable realities. The resulting tension in his interpretive approach reveals an apparent conflict in his theology: he wants to demonstrate the correlation between divine and human existence while maintaining the diastasis between God and the creature. While this tension is not unique to the Ephesians lectures, it is particularly noticeable in light of the exposition's central theme, the knowledge of God as the presupposition of human existence. Barth attempts to resolve the tension by appealing to a theology of the knowledge of God that combines the Lutheran concept of faith with the Calvinist emphasis on objectivity. It is here, perhaps as much as anywhere in the exposition, that we see the outlines of Barth's mature theology. The exposition displays fundamental elements of the theological objectivity which comes to full expression in CD I/1. What is at stake for Barth is the question of how God can become the object of human knowing while remaining God, the sovereign subject.

Barth's Ephesians course expresses exegetically what he will later express in dogmatic terms, that God is the object of theology: "Biblical faith lives upon the objectivity of God"<sup>72</sup> In KD, his preferred term is *Gegen-Ständlichkeit*, which expresses the opposite of "an 'object' that one can have in one's hand and manipulate. This 'Objectivity' is not at humans' disposal, opposes them, and moves towards the human for

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<sup>72</sup> CD II/1, 13.



the purpose of encounter.”<sup>73</sup> Busch offers the following summary of the Barthian objectivity:

God is the Opposite, who does not merely evade the human grasp in passing, but who permanently obstructs and counters that grasp in his revelation . . . . The object envisaged is to be seen in *relationship*, but in one that he himself constitutes . . . . “His *objectivity* is always *grace* even in His revelation” (II/1, 232 = 206) . . . . The term objectivity carries the thought not only of confrontation but also of *encounter*. If theology views God as object in this two-fold sense then its effort stands under the promise that in it *God* is known and God is *known*.<sup>74</sup>

For an understanding of Barth’s theological development, it is highly significant that he uses the term, *Gegenstand*, or “object” in the Ephesians exposition to refer to Jesus Christ. Barth’s description of the interpretative event, discussed in Chapter Three, refers to Jesus Christ as “the object (*Gegenstand*) in view” who also becomes the speaking subject.<sup>75</sup> Theological objectivity is also expressed in the frequent claim that the imperceptible (*unanschaulich*) becomes perceptible (*anschaulich*) in the interpretive event. Behind this claim is the understanding that “the ‘object’ connotes perception and comprehension,” and therefore “God becomes perceptible and comprehensible to us only indirectly, not directly as he is perceptible and comprehensible to himself, that is, as he is an ‘object’ to himself.”<sup>76</sup> Therefore, in the exposition he insists that objectivity is always indirect, “existential,” that it, as the words of the text are related to the Word:

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<sup>73</sup> Busch, *The Great Passion*, 72. Barth’s concept of objectivity presents considerable problems for English readers, because there is no single word in the English language to convey this combination of subject and object. Busch notes the Translators’ Preface of CD I/1, viii: “There appears to be no appropriate English translation for Barth’s distinctive usage of *Gegen-Ständlichkeit* . . . quite often the best English rendering of *Gegenstand* would be ‘subject’ rather than ‘object,’ but since this lays itself open again and against to serious ambiguity in English, we have kept consistently to the rendering ‘object,’ while making it evident that this cannot be taken in an ‘objectifying ‘sense.’”

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>75</sup> EE, 100.

<sup>76</sup> A central emphasis of Ephesians is that God is found in the diverse relations of human life. This is indirect, however, because, as Busch notes that, “we cannot perceive and comprehend God unless he allows us to participate in that knowledge by which he sees and grasps himself . . . . God lets us participate in such a way that the permits certain earthly “objects” to represent him, in which he desires to become perceptible

the truth expressed here is expressed existentially, indirectly from God and by God, not as individual words in themselves, but with every single word in relationship to *the* Word, which is not exhausted by any individual word. Because *that* is what is meant by the phrase, ἐν Χριστῷ, it constitutes the formal key to the section.<sup>77</sup>

God “comes within the field of human perception” in the act of revelation, as he makes himself known through the medium of the biblical text.

### **Christian Hope Eph. 1:11-14**

Barth reads this section of the doxology as a description of blessings in Christ seen from the vantage point of the future. Accordingly, the exposition emphasizes Christian hope and the creature’s eschatological existence:<sup>78</sup> “One *can* appeal to human hope, to eternal hope; it is the great possibility of relationship and communion with God.”<sup>79</sup>

Eschatological existence, Barth says, is life under the sign of promise. As we hear God making promises to us, the future becomes present. However, an existence oriented to the future is inherently problematic, because hope is threatened in two fundamental ways. First, we can mistake our own human hopes for the one great eschatological hope, and thereby “lose the infinite passion of eschatological expectation.”<sup>80</sup> Second, there is always the possibility that we will lack the faith which is necessary for living hope. The first is the threat of arrogance, the second, faintheartedness. In light of these threats, God

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and comprehensible to us . . . . The indirectness means that he may be perceived and comprehended by us only as he is concealed in earthly objects.” *The Great Passion*, 75.

<sup>77</sup> EE, 37.

<sup>78</sup> Fergusson claims that in *The Resurrection of the Dead*, Barth is reticent to say anything very specific about resurrection life and suggests that further research is needed to explain this curious juxtaposition of “inflation of eschatology” with reticence to speak about the believer’s eschatological existence. “Barth’s *The Resurrection of the Dead*,” 71. In EE, Barth has quite a bit to say about the believer’s eschatological existence, however, the emphasis is on the future which is already present in the believer through the Holy Spirit: “In Christ, a real *relationship* of humanity to the truth originates and exists; a real *expectation* of salvation, in which we participate already.” EE, 100.

<sup>79</sup> EE, 97.

<sup>80</sup> EE, 89.

gives certainty that our relationship with God has been foreordained before the beginning of the world. Here, Barth sounds an earlier theme, that knowledge of election brings certainty, but now, election is applied to eschatological existence.

Barth's integration of eschatology and ethics effectively correlates divine existence and human action. Knowledge of God's plans for the future, he claims, fundamentally alters our relationship to this present world: "To hope is the act of fundamental partisanship with God, with all the risk which this partisanship involves; it is a declaration of war against the reality of this world."<sup>81</sup> In this posture of hope, the believer finds "courage to wait for eternity *in time* . . . completely bound and therefore completely free, completely expectant and therefore completely flexible – the Christian praises the glory of God."<sup>82</sup> The believer's relationship with God, therefore, is a matter of waiting, an active waiting, a waiting that hastens. As he says in his 1919 sermon on this passage, "God waits; you must hurry."<sup>83</sup>

Barth presents the sealing of the Spirit, vv. 13-14, as the necessary means by which Christians hope. The Spirit of promise creates eschatological existence. The first threat to hope is still in view here: "To have the Spirit is to be content in God," to feel blessed.<sup>84</sup> This is one of the first places in the lectures where he makes a positive statement about feelings. However, familiar qualification follows quickly. This feeling of blessedness is not to be confused with pietistic enthusiasm. It can just as easily come about sober thought as through ecstatic utterances.<sup>85</sup> The sealing of the Spirit is then

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<sup>81</sup> EE, 91.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Sermon 1, 118; a reference to Blumhardt.

<sup>84</sup> EE, 95.

<sup>85</sup> EE, 96. Barth had dealings with Otto Lautenburg, a pietist preacher, while preaching the series on Ephesians. See B-Th I, 329.

applied to the second threat, faintheartedness, by the claim that the ἀρραβών is "the guarantee of the eschatological existence." God offers himself, Barth says, as the pledge of the coming inheritance. God vouches for himself; he is own security. Two aspects of Barth's pneumatology are notable. First, he places the emphasis on the Spirit as the means by which time is related to eternity: "The future is already present for those who are sealed with the Spirit; they can be addressed directly on this basis."<sup>86</sup> Second, and more important for the current argument, the Spirit is the point in the believer where the objective and the subjective meet: "[Paul] indicates *the precise point* where the objective εὐλογία πνευματική (v. 3) is revealed as subjective. One *can* appeal to human hope, to eternal hope; it is the great possibility of relationship and communion with God, regardless of what its expression and manner might be."<sup>87</sup> Concretely, this occurs through the call to remember. Barth draws attention to Paul's preaching as a reminder. "In Christ, the hope of eternity actually became the presupposition of humanity." There is the objective side. Barth points to the act of remembering as the subjective side, continuing: "Looking at him, we can be certain each moment that we remember: we have heard; we have believed; we have understood; we have found the immovable point. In him, the non-given is given; God is revealed." In this way, the logos of truth is "the entry of God's promise into human existence."<sup>88</sup>

## Conclusion

Barth sees in the grammatical details of Eph. 1:3 a clue to the divine movement which establishes a relationship with the creature and sets the creature in motion. I am

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<sup>86</sup> EE, 96.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> EE, 98.

not aware of any commentator who exploits this verse to the same extent.<sup>89</sup> On the basis of this reading, he gives a lucid and eloquent account of the divine economy described in the doxology. We are now in a position to answer the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter. Does Barth give an intelligible account of the relationship between divine and human existence, so that when he describes God he also describes the creature? Throughout the exposition, he maintains his emphasis on the divine movement which encompasses the human creature and leads him to his final destination, the movement from eternal election to final glory. For the most part, he maintains traction with the text when describing God's redemptive purpose as "a self-enclosed circle" surrounding creaturely existence:

Our being before him as the elect, summarized in the expression, εἰς υἰοθεσίαν, in v. 5, is the next, temporal purpose willed and achieved by God in Christ for the accomplishment of his final eternal purpose, εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ (v. 6). It is thus a self-enclosed circle that Paul has in view: God's intention for us proceeds from the mystery of his own counsel and will and goes forth to us known, perceptible human creatures who are utterly finite; as soon as it does, it also goes beyond us and returns to the mystery itself.<sup>90</sup>

Admittedly, at certain points his concern to maintain the divine-human diastasis conflicts with his attempt to speak about creaturely existence. The two places where this tension is most evident are his interpretation of election, which founders because of an inadequate Christology, and his attempt to describe human existence without granting a significant role to experience. He addresses the latter problem in part by his account of the knowledge of God, which incorporates the subjective and relational elements in the Lutheran concept of faith. In this regard, the exposition of *gnosis* and the resulting account of the knowledge of God is one of the highpoints of the exposition.

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<sup>89</sup> The closest example is Gnllka, who sees regards Eph. 1:3 as thematic center of the chapter. *Epheserbrief*, s.v. Eph. 1:3, pp. 8-11.

<sup>90</sup> EE, 59.

Barth's early theology is frequently criticized on the grounds that it leaves the creature in the air, with no place to stand. The Ephesians lectures, however, reveal a different picture. He describes human existence as the stage upon which God's redemptive action unfolds. The movement of the creature "*von Gott her . . . auf Gott hin*" is embedded in the deep structure of his exegetical theology.

### Chapter Three Hermeneutical Orientation and Exegetical Procedures

Barth and Thurneysen did not set out to find a new method of exegesis in 1915 but to re-establish theology on the basis of the Bible. Methodological considerations were secondary, and even Barth's apologia for his exegetical method in the preface to *Romans II* is couched in the language of deliberate understatement.<sup>1</sup> His so-called method, Barth avows, is nothing more than the application of Kierkegaard's "infinite qualitative distinction between God and humanity," the "relentless, elastic application of the dialectical method" until the Word is revealed in the words.<sup>2</sup>

This downplaying of exegetical method can be misleading, however. By the time of *Romans* and the Ephesians lectures, Barth had a number of working hermeneutical principles and corresponding reading strategies, which proceeded from his understanding of revelation. These include, among others, a hermeneutic of "simultaneity," that is, an understanding of the essential continuity between the questions of Paul and those of the modern reader, and the subordination of the historical-critical method to divine revelation.<sup>3</sup> As John Webster observes, "Barth's exegetical and interpretive practices are

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<sup>1</sup> Thurneysen urged Barth to offer an explanation for his hermeneutical approach in *Romans I*, resulting in the short but provocative appendix. Responses to the first edition, however, convinced him to offer a lengthier explanation, and in light of reviews by Jülicher among others, to attempt "a knockout punch" in the preface to *Romans II*. B-Th II, 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> ER, 8.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase, "hermeneutic of simultaneity," is Jüngel's. See *Legacy*, 70-71. For a discussion of Barth's theological hermeneutic based on statements in "Strange New World of the Bible," see Donald Wood, "'Ich sah mit Staunen: Reflections on the Theological Substance of Barth's Early Hermeneutics.'" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58 (2005): 184-98. The literature on Barth's relation to the historical-critical method is vast. In addition to Jüngel, good discussions are found in Bruce L. McCormack, "Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis of the New Testament," in *Biblical*

complex and varied, and are bound up with theological convictions – sometimes explicitly formulated, but often instinctual – about the nature and function of the Bible and the calling and responsibilities of its readers.”<sup>4</sup> His exegetical discoveries following 1915 led to a series of theological conclusions about the nature of Scripture, and these in turn led to specific hermeneutical principles and exegetical practices. Barth’s description of Zwingli and Calvin’s discovery of biblical authority bears a strong resemblance to his own path. Referring to the events leading up to the Zurich Disputation, he observes that they discovered the “new path” simply by preaching – Zwingli on Matthew, Calvin on Romans: “Based on the *preaching* that they had already been risking as they moved along this path, they were now persuaded of the rightness of this path whatever its further implications might prove to be.”<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Barth was first overwhelmed by the torrential power of the word through his exegetical explorations and then proceeded to think through the theological and hermeneutical implications for his exegetical method.

Chapter Three examines the hermeneutical orientation of the Ephesians exposition and the corresponding exegetical procedures. The first section is a close reading of a passage at the end of the exposition of the doxology where Barth offers a series of hermeneutical observations about the nature of the biblical text and the activity of the interpreter in relation to God’s revelatory action.

The second section considers the particular hermeneutical orientation of the Ephesians lectures. Although Barth’s basic reading strategy is consistent throughout the Göttingen period, each exposition has a specific hermeneutical viewpoint or “sightline,”

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*Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective*, ed. Mark S. Burroughs and Paul Rorem (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 332-38; and Baxter, “The Movement from Exegesis to Dogmatics.”

<sup>4</sup> BET, 69.

<sup>5</sup> RC, 44.



(*Blickrichtung*), the consequence of his attempt to align himself with the author's point of view.<sup>6</sup> The hermeneutical orientation of the Ephesians exposition is determined by the doxological nature of the text. The Pauline doxology is "an echo" which continues to reverberate in the present and is properly heard and understood only as it sets in motion a corresponding act of praise in the listener.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, it is an echo "of what God has done first," therefore, the interpretation of the text occurs within the movement of God's revelatory action in Christ. Finally, the redemptive activity in the doxology is described as a speech-act, according to Barth. Consequently, his hermeneutic reflects the theological objectivity identified in Chapter Two.

The final section examines Barth's exegetical procedures. In accordance with his distinction between historical and theological exegesis, I begin by identifying the role played by the historical-critical method in the exposition, then analyze three reading strategies which exhibit Barth's theological exegesis. The aim throughout the chapter is to demonstrate the relationship between Barth's theological hermeneutic and his specific exegetical moves.

## I

### **Barth's Account of the Interpretive Situation**

At the conclusion of his exposition of Eph. 1:3-14, Barth pauses to reflect on the task of biblical interpretation. He offers the following compressed, theologically loaded account of the nature and goal of *Erklärung*:

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<sup>6</sup> John Webster's translation, in BET, chapter 5.

<sup>7</sup> EE, 34.

With that, we finish the description of this prologue. As we have seen, it contains much more than an introduction. Bengel called it a “*compendium evangelicum*,” in any case, it is a compendium of the conception of Christianity presented in Ephesians, particularly of the basic Pauline ideas. In one short succession of sentences, it makes extremely clear what an unheard of revolution occurred in many hearts and minds in the first century; and what an impression these people must have received, Paul *and* the readers whom he thought capable of understanding such explanations. The perception of the incommensurable which occurs here, as anywhere, is an unsolvable problem on the basis of history. Obviously, the subject in view, like the essence of any revolution or impression, eludes historical examination, no matter how many parallels one might offer by way of illustration. However, I hope that to some extent I have convinced you that it is possible not only to share this view but to *reflect* with Paul in such a way that we become his contemporaries, to the point where the *subject*, the *incommensurable*, *Jesus Christ* himself speaks, where he himself must be his own interpreter.<sup>8</sup>

The passage begins with a description of the nature of the biblical text in relation to revelation. It should be noted that Barth emphasizes the human attributes of the text. The doxology is a compendium of Paul’s “basic ideas” and of his “conception of Christianity.” No unusual qualities are attributed to the text *qua* text.<sup>9</sup> However, when describing the *subject matter* associated with the text, Barth uses the language of revelation. The doxology affords a “perception of the incommensurable,” a signature phrase in *Romans* to describe God’s veiling and unveiling in revelation.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, the passage points to the “unheard of revolution” which occurred in the hearts and minds of Paul and his hearers, another Barthian expression for God’s revelatory action.<sup>11</sup> Again, the subject matter to which the text refers is inaccessible on the basis of historical knowledge: “the subject in view . . . eludes historical examination,” and is “an unsolvable

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<sup>8</sup> EE, 100-01.

<sup>9</sup> This is consistent with Barth’s practice throughout the exposition. He never refers to the text as “Scripture” or with other theologically weighty language

<sup>10</sup> For Barth’s use of this phrase in *Romans*, see Chapter One, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> The term refers to “the inbreaking of the living God, the point where the creature knows that ‘God is God,’” Jüngel, *Legacy*, 96-97. For an extensive discussion of Barth’s concept of “revolution,” see Marquardt, *Sozialismus*, chapters 3 and 5.

problem on the basis of history.”<sup>12</sup> Finally, Barth uses the same word, (*Gegenstand*), to refer to the text as an object of study, as well as to Jesus Christ, who becomes the speaking subject at the conclusion of the passage. This juxtaposition of the text’s human qualities with the subject matter to which it refers reflects Barth’s understanding of the Bible as a medium of revelation. The text functions in this capacity, not because of its inherent qualities but because of its relation to the *Sache* or subject matter.<sup>13</sup> The *kerygma* is human speech about the *Sache*. Because the text has an *indirect* relationship to this subject, the individual words must be related to the Word through the activity of the interpreter and ultimately by the action of divine revelation.

From this description of the text, Barth turns to the activity of the interpreter: “I hope that to some extent I have convinced you that it is possible not only to share this view but to *reflect* with *Paul* in such a way that we become his contemporaries.”<sup>14</sup> Here, he uses two concepts which are prominent in the prologue to *Romans*, “*Nachempfinden*,” and “*Nachdenken*,” or “reflection.”<sup>15</sup> *Nachempfinden* is a matter of discovering Paul’s view point; *Nachdenken*, of penetrating to the *Sache*. Both practices are examples of the “freedoms” which the interpreter exercises in relation to the Scripture, as Barth explains

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<sup>12</sup> At this point in the passage, Barth is still thinking in terms of general hermeneutics. The revolution witnessed to in the text “eludes historical examination” “like the essence of any revolution or impression,” EE, 100; my emphasis.

<sup>13</sup> As Kirschstein demonstrates, Barth’s understanding of the *Sache* of the Bible evolved considerably between 1919 and 1922. It appears that he continued to rethink the definition of the *Sache* as well as the precise relationship between the text and the reader in relation to the Bible’s subject matter. Consequently, his use of the term must be evaluated in the context of each exposition. See *Der souveräne Gott*, 56-60; 83. Good discussions about Barth’s understanding of the *Sache* in relation to interpretation are also found in Burnett, *Theological Exegesis*, 74-76 and McCormack, *Philippians*, xv-xx. For a discussion of Barth’s understanding of the text as medium in CD, see Trevor Hart, “Revelation,” chapter 3 in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed., John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> EE, 100.

<sup>15</sup> Dilthey’s hermeneutical theory appears to be in the background here, although Barth these “nach-“ words within his particular theological framework. The matter is discussed in Burnett, *Theological Exegesis*, 43-45 and Busch, *Beginning*, 76-81.

in the *Göttingen Dogmatics*.<sup>16</sup> There, he argues that we necessarily understand a text on the basis of what we already know; we grasp what is new by bringing our conceptual framework to the reading. However, by submitting our thoughts to those of the biblical author's, our concepts begin to conform to his. As he says in the *Romans* preface, he seeks to identify with the writer so thoroughly that he can speak in his name.<sup>17</sup> At this stage, interpretation moves "from the reflective sphere to the existential sphere."<sup>18</sup> We become contemporaries with the writer: "The author crosses my threshold and I cross his."<sup>19</sup> It should be noted, however, that this process conforms to the rules of general hermeneutics. Everything which Barth says about the Bible could be said about the interpretation of any text.

The decisive element in biblical interpretation, therefore, is God's revelatory action. Barth signals a shift of focus from human to divine activity by referring again to the "*Gegenstand*," or object; only now the word refers not to the text as object but to Jesus Christ, the speaking subject. The goal of exegesis occurs at "the point where the *subject*, the *incommensurable*, *Jesus Christ* himself speaks, where he himself must be his own interpreter." Barth understands biblical interpretation as an event in which Jesus Christ is no longer spoken *about* but actually *speaks and interprets* the text.<sup>20</sup> This understanding of God as the speaking subject drew fire from Bultmann in his review of *The Resurrection of the Dead*.<sup>21</sup> He agrees with Barth's statement that "God always

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<sup>16</sup> "Various Freedoms in Relation to Scripture," GD, 257-62.

<sup>17</sup> ER, 7.

<sup>18</sup> GD, 261.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Brevard Childs' description of biblical exposition is a modern restatement of Barth's position. Exposition takes place as the expositor "awaits in anticipation toward becoming the interpreted rather than the interpreter. The very divine reality which the interpreter seeks to grasp is the very One who grasps the interpreter," *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, 86.

<sup>21</sup> Bultmann, *Barth's Resurrection of the Dead*, 69.

remains subject in the relation created by" the biblical witness (the particular phrase in view "from God") but argues that, "when we speak, when we are obliged to try to speak, therefore even when we are speaking in order to validate the 'from God,' God is the object." By contrast, here Barth speaks about the *text* as object and about Jesus Christ as the subject.<sup>22</sup> If human speech is truly *about* God, then it is God himself who is speaking.

In sum, Barth describes interpretation as an event of divine revelation, involving the text, which serves as a medium for the *Sache*, and the activity of the interpreter, who penetrates to the subject matter. Both the text and the activity of the interpreter conform to the laws of general hermeneutics. Exegesis only becomes exegesis when the object of study becomes the speaking subject – Jesus Christ becomes his own interpreter. This hermeneutical framework is largely consistent with Barth's description of interpretation in the prologue to *Romans*. However, in addition to this basic framework, the exposition has a particular hermeneutical orientation, based on Barth's reading of Ephesians, as the next section demonstrates.

## II The Hermeneutical Orientation of the Exposition

The specific hermeneutical orientation of the Ephesians exposition is the consequence of Barth's interpretation of Eph. 1:3. The divine action of blessing in this verse refers to speech, Barth argues. Consequently, all of the action in the doxology should be understood in light of the divine speech-act.<sup>23</sup> Divine speech initiates the relationship

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<sup>22</sup> The German term, "*Gegenstand*" permits this dual meaning.

<sup>23</sup> For a recent discussion of the hermeneutical implications of the divine speech act, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture, and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

with the creature and creates the conditions in which the creature understands and responds:

We should note that the *divine* act that is the basis of this human act is described simply as *speech*. God blesses. He *speaks* a *word* of promise and a *word* of grace . . . it is not an *act* of creation but a *word* of creation, just as in Genesis. He *speaks*, and it happens, he *commands*, and it appears. The word *alone* accomplishes it. Every conceivable act is included in the word as the *Word*.<sup>24</sup>

The eternal relationship with God is based on the speaking and hearing of the divine word. God “speaks us” into a relationship based on faith, as in the Pauline concept of λογίζεσθαι:

If it is not *the* possibility that we can only *believe*, it is not *God’s* possibility for the human creature. In the New Testament, at any rate, λόγος does *not* mean a superior form of mediation or any material *hypostasis*; λόγος refers to God confronting the human creature as *God* indirectly – as in λογίζεσθαι, or in this context, εὐλογεῖν – a divine act which is non-contingent, unexpected, and free . . . the word calls the human creature out of himself and into the world of the Father of Jesus Christ, into the world of freedom.<sup>25</sup>

This word-centered relationship contrasts with infused grace. Barth explicitly rejects any form of mediation suggestive of a static relationship, a bridge from heaven to earth that the creature can occupy, possess, or control. Rather, the eternal relationship is dependent on God’s continuous proclamation. A relationship based on the speaking and hearing of the divine word preserves the diastasis between God and the creature, in Barth’s account.

This understanding of the divine speech-act also has three important hermeneutical ramifications. First, divine proclamation is the means by which the historical events attested to in Scripture have present efficacy, according to Barth. For example, the historical event of Good Friday as well as its present meaning are the direct result of divine proclamation. Barth’s understanding of the matter can be seen in his

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<sup>24</sup> EE, 42.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

explication of the phrase, “redemption through his blood.” The passage refers to “the suffering and action of Jesus in his passion, where . . . God’s acquittal of the creature is named . . . that claim of our new Lord . . . *is proclaimed.*”<sup>26</sup> In the first instance, proclamation refers to Good Friday, when “peace between God and his people *was proclaimed* through sprinkling with blood.” In the second instance, divine proclamation gives this past event present tense significance: “and consequently the place where our lot turns . . . where our sins are forgiven.”<sup>27</sup> God himself proclaims the message of the cross: “Only God himself *can say that it is so*, that in Jesus God intends to be our Lord and our Father anew; only God *can say this* freely and continuously through his Spirit.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, Barth presents God as the preacher of the good news, anticipating his later emphasis on Christ’s prophetic ministry, where the emphasis is on the preaching of Jesus Christ.

This understanding of divine proclamation has profound consequences for Barth’s theology of the word. It means that for Barth, revelation is grounded in soteriology. Moreover, it means that divine proclamation is the means by which past and present are correlated. Here, we approach the heart of Barth’s hermeneutical manifesto. He locates the reading and interpretation of Scripture within the activity of God’s speech-act, which encompasses election, redemption, and future glory. The sightline of Ephesians, therefore, is:

wide enough to encompass time and eternity, law and grace, earth and heaven – both, in their distinction from each other as well as in their relationship to each other. Today we are probably only beginning to realize how much we lack this

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<sup>26</sup> EE, 72. My emphasis.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.; my emphasis. Cf. ER, 104-05.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.; my emphasis.

point of view. No wonder that what we preach as the word of God rarely approaches the heights of Ephesians' spirit, contents, or truth.<sup>29</sup>

In light of this emphasis on proclamation, it is noteworthy that Barth's pneumatology in the exposition is closely coordinated with the word. This is a point at which Barth coordinates the objective with the subjective. The Holy Spirit is God's logos, "God's act of creation in us," as effective as the original event of creation. Barth continues, "The command to Halt!, which is given to our action, to ourselves, must be given from the outside. God must face man in order to say to him, *I am your Lord!*, in order to set him free from himself"<sup>30</sup>

A second hermeneutical ramification of the divine speech-act, as Barth understands it, concerns the nature and ground of the human act of praise. Barth argues that if the election, redemption, and establishment in hope constitute *the divine act* of blessing, then *the human act* praise must include the creature's new standing in a restored relationship, facing God:

*Human* εὐλογεῖν must mean that in this act, man *actually* faces God, that he places himself in the position where this God draws near him. Think about what this means! It is to be taken out of oneself, far beyond anything that we typically describe as psychological ecstasy; it is an act in which the human creature categorically transcends all known human possibilities.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, hermeneutical orientation of the exposition is grounded in the central material theme. Barth describes God's action as a "sphere" which encloses the creature, so that the divine freedom becomes the creature's freedom:

*His* freedom is the sphere in which the human creature acquires freedom for his own act. *This* possibility for the creature is incommensurable with and radically

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<sup>29</sup> EE, 18.

<sup>30</sup> EE, 70.

<sup>31</sup> EE, 41.



different from all other human possibilities and occurs at the point where God himself emerges from all other gods.<sup>32</sup>

Third, Barth applies the efficacy of divine speech to the interpretive event.

Biblical interpretation occurs within the sphere of power in which the creature is seized and human cognition commandeered in the service of the divine word.<sup>33</sup> This sphere encompasses Paul's preaching as well as the contemporary reader's hearing, the echo of the *kerygma* in the present. Indeed, the two events cannot be separated, for *Erklärung* is essentially a matter of tracing the reverberations of the original revelatory event into the present. Paul's service of the divine word occurs within "the sphere where the word seizes the creature."<sup>34</sup> Likewise, the hearing of the word occurs in Christ: "In him, one can hear what no ear has heard and can believe the utterly unbelievable."<sup>35</sup> Barth uses "sphere" and "domain" language to convey God's sovereign self-attestation in Christ. The knowledge of God is possible, because "God, who cannot be known, surrounds, besieges storms and determines the domain of [the creature's] knowing."<sup>36</sup>

Consequently, to hear this text as Paul intended it is to be assaulted by the divine word:

[The contemporary listener] is attacked and wounded right at the core of his life, namely in his subjectivity, in his existence. Existentially, he is no longer his own. He himself no longer lives. He resembles a wheel which no longer revolves around its own center. As God first appeared to Abraham, God appears at his dwelling like a stranger, making a promise and demanding obedience.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, this sphere of power is a fundamentally personal encounter in which God appears, making demands and promises, and it is described *Christologically* – the word is spoken and heard in Christ:

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<sup>32</sup> EE, 41-42.

<sup>33</sup> Barth adds that this event takes place without negating creaturely activity.

<sup>34</sup> EE, 13.

<sup>35</sup> EE, 98.

<sup>36</sup> EE, 46.

<sup>37</sup> Gen. 18:1-10.

The promise is heard only when people recognize God in Christ Jesus as the Lord of life and death, the Lord of lords, the sure foundation and the unfailing hope of those who put their trust in him. But only in Christ Jesus. In him, the incomparable promise is spoken.<sup>38</sup>

In short, biblical interpretation occurs in Christ.

In Barth's account, biblical interpretation is determined by the divine speech-act, which produced an echo in Paul's doxology and reverberates in the present. This hermeneutical orientation reflects the central material theme of the Ephesians exposition, namely, that divine action is the basis for human existence. Human interpretive activity is enclosed within the action of God's self-attestation in Christ. Likewise, the utterly human text functions as an effectual sign or medium of the divine action in the present.<sup>39</sup>

The knowledge of God, therefore, is the presupposition of genuine exegesis.

### III Exegetical Procedures

Barth's approach to Ephesians is governed by a basic distinction between historical and theological exegesis, formulated in the preface to *Romans* and maintained throughout the early period, albeit with certain modifications.<sup>40</sup> This distinction leads to the three stage

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<sup>38</sup> EE, 18.

<sup>39</sup> Sacramental language is frequently the best way to convey Barth's understanding of God's presence through the word. Occasionally, he uses such language himself. See for example his discussion of Beck's "Biblical Realism" which he compares to a crude sacramentalism, in which the sign is more important than the object to which it points. EE, 72-74.

<sup>40</sup> As for the ongoing debate about whether Barth's exegesis is inimical to historical study, the following observation by Bultmann is significant: "The question of the relation between historical and theological exegesis, so much discussed in connection with Barth's Commentary on Romans, need not be interjected here," "Barth's *Resurrection of the Dead*," 68. Although critical of Barth's use of historical analysis, Bultmann does not reject his exegesis on the grounds that he is "an enemy of the historical study of the Bible" (the frequently quoted phrase in the preface to *Romans* 2). In this regard, his analysis is more nuanced than Julicher's polemical statements about *Romans* I. His complaint is not that Barth disregards historical analysis but that he does not read critically enough and specifically, that by failing to engage in a *Sachkritik*, he does not evaluate Paul's statements on the basis of the apostle's own theology. Barth uses historical exegesis to arrive at what might be called the plain sense of the text, although he never uses this term in the lectures. The important point is that for him, the text has a discernable meaning, namely, the author's intended meaning, which the interpreter must determine. On other hand, the text speaks differently to different situations. Determining how it speaks to the contemporary situation is the work of interpretation. For a discussion of the plain sense in Barth's exegesis, see Katherine E. Greene-McCreight, *Ad Litteram: How Augustine, Calvin, and Barth Read the "Plain Sense" of Genesis 1-3* (New York: Peter

reading strategy. In the first stage, he submits his thinking to the text, using historical study. In the second stage, he reflects on the text, introducing dogmatic paraphrase, philosophical concepts, and parallels from the contemporary situation. At this point, he exercises considerable interpretive freedom, leading to the familiar accusations that he places a dogmatic “lid” over the text, so that its distinctive voice cannot be heard.<sup>41</sup> Finally, he re-expresses the content of the passage in the form of direct address. In the following, I examine the role of historical-critical study in the exposition, first by examining his statements about the historical-critical method, then by analyzing three specific ways in which he deploys historical resources in the exposition. The second part identifies three reading strategies which exemplify Barth’s theological exegesis.<sup>42</sup> The concern in this section is to observe how Barth moves through the text to arrive at the interpretation, and in particular, to note the role of dogmatics in his interpretive approach.

### *Reading Strategies Based on “Historical Exegesis”*

It is important at the outset to distinguish between Barth’s *statements about* the historical-critical method in the lectures and his actual use of historical resources. On the one hand, the lectures contain frequent polemical statements, such as the comment with which he begins the lectures, that “the period of ‘historical critical research’ of the Bible . . . has

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Lang, 1999). Barth's most irenic and measured presentation of the relation between historical and theological exegesis is in the preface to the third edition of the Corinthian lectures. There, he concedes that theological exegesis cannot replace historical exegesis but is a necessary corrective "in view of the defective state of affairs," *The Resurrection of the Dead*, v ff. He maintains the basic distinction between historical and theological exegesis, however, over time, he becomes less combative and places greater emphasis on their complementary nature.

<sup>41</sup> Bultmann’s complaint. *Karl Barth-Rudolph Bultmann Letters 1922-1966*, ed., Bernd Jaspers, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 83.

<sup>42</sup> Here, I use the term, “theological exegesis,” in the specific sense that Barth uses the term to describe the second stage of biblical interpretation.

certainly not yet run its course”<sup>43</sup> or the claim that, when it comes to the resurrection, “everything that is positive historically is negative in reality.”<sup>44</sup> On their own, these statements give the impression that Barth is in fact an “enemy of historical criticism.”<sup>45</sup> However, they must be understood in light of Barth’s polemic against the *Neuetestamentler* and in particular, what Jüngel calls his “meta-criticism,” the claim that biblical content itself has a critical function – more critical than anything produced by the historical critics. The Bible confronts the reader with its own questions and answers.<sup>46</sup>

In actual practice, Barth consults a range of critical commentaries and New Testament introductions, including works by Jülicher and Weiß, who were at the center of the controversy reflected in *Romans*.<sup>47</sup> Four types of critical scholarship are evident throughout the exposition: (1) New Testament introduction, (2) textual criticism, (3) philological-grammatical analysis, and (4) intertextual relationships.

(1) New Testament introduction.<sup>48</sup> Barth devotes the first lecture to the question of authorship, which he reduces to two issues – the similarity between Ephesians and Colossians<sup>49</sup> and the elements in Ephesians that are uncharacteristic of Paul’s major epistles: (a) the unusual vocabulary, such as *μυστήριον*, *γνώσις*, and *ἀνακεφαλαίωσις*,

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<sup>43</sup> EE, 1.

<sup>44</sup> EE, 112. In other words, any certainty about this event that can be established on the basis of historical knowledge is a contradiction of faith, since resurrection means miracle.

<sup>45</sup> ER, 6. Barth obviously considered his selective use of historical-critical resources as evidence that he did not intend to abandon the critical dimension of history. However, it would be hard to find an example of a procedure here that was not employed by Calvin before the advent of modern critical study. The debate concerns the definition of “historical-critical study,” for one thing, and more generally, Barth’s philosophy of history. He denies that the interpreter can attain an objective or neutral point from which to analyze the text, e.g., by using parallels from the history of religions.

<sup>46</sup> *Legacy*, 70-71.

<sup>47</sup> The incorporation of material from these critical commentaries and introductions indicates a measure of common ground between Barth’s approach and theirs.

<sup>48</sup> He consults Fritz Barth and Jülicher’s New Testament introductions, among others.

<sup>49</sup> The first point leads to the conclusion that Ephesians and Colossians must be interpreted by analyzing their parallel passages. In fact, Barth spends relatively little time doing so in the lectures, though presumably, his earlier work on Colossians is in the background. We know from allusions to Colossians

(b) the presence of different material themes, such as Christ's cosmic reign and the centrality of the church, and (c) the conspicuous absence of debates about the law and references to the imminent *parousia*. Barth defends the epistle's authenticity on the grounds that Ephesians is the work of the later Paul and therefore reflects his mature thinking. Although his conclusions are unexceptional, the way he makes use of New Testament introduction reveals a determination to focus on theological content rather than academic debate. For example, the discussion of the letter's authenticity begins, not with theories of authorship, but the text itself:

Παῦλος. The first word of the epistle has attracted more attention and certainly more interest than all the other words in the letter put together, during the period of "historical critical research" of the Bible, which has certainly not yet run its course.<sup>50</sup>

On the basis of this simple move, Barth focuses the discussion on a single issue and signals his intention to let the text, rather than the discipline of New Testament introduction, direct the discussion. Likewise, rather than considering historical background and the *Sitz im Leben*, Barth expounds the Pauline theology of apostolic service, holiness, and faith. Moreover, when addressing the allegedly un-Pauline elements, he offers an overview of the epistle's central theological themes. In short, although Barth consults critical resources, he maintains an intentionally non-critical posture in the sense that he accepts the text's canonical form.

His theological hermeneutic is particularly evident in his emphasis on the continuity between Ephesians and Paul's undisputed letters:

We will not be quite so astonished by things which seem strange or which seem to be missing (here, I am thinking expressly about *parousia* expectation) if we

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that this epistle was important to him. His next exposition following James was on Colossians, and he expounded this epistle on four separate occasions; he devoted more expositions to this epistle than any other.  
<sup>50</sup> EE, 1.

follow the thread which leads from the former letters to this one; if we discover the new in the old and rediscover the old in the new.<sup>51</sup>

Barth's understanding of the nature of the text is in the background here. Because biblical language is "relativized by the *Sache*," it points to the subject which transcends particular textual differences. Likewise, he concludes that the uncharacteristically Pauline elements in Ephesians testify to the force of divine revelation: "There was truly an even greater revolution than that which we expect from Paul if we can accept him as the writer of Ephesians."<sup>52</sup> As these comments reveal, Barth's hermeneutic is fundamentally centripetal rather than centrifugal – he views textual differences in light of a higher unity, which transcends these differences.<sup>53</sup>

(2) Textual criticism is used to address questions about the authenticity and correct placement of the phrases, ἐν Ἐφέσω (v. 1) and ἐν αὐτοῖς (v. 10).<sup>54</sup> In his discussion of the former, he navigates a considerable body of technical material, consulting a range of ancient and modern commentators. In the end, his conclusions are relatively insignificant for his interpretation, however, because the historical background of the letter's recipients does not figure in his interpretation.<sup>55</sup>

(3) Barth relies heavily on philological-grammatical analysis. Words are usually defined by their use in Colossians and Paul's major letters, though deutero-Pauline texts

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<sup>51</sup> EE, 5.

<sup>52</sup> EE, 5.

<sup>53</sup> I use "centripetal" and "centrifugal" in the sense which Childs uses the terms: "The coercion of Scripture also functions critically in relation to Christian dogmatics to fragment and shatter traditional dogmatic structures. Especially in the Reformers' attack on the scholastics one sees how Scripture exerted not only a centripetal, but also a centrifugal force in subjecting all human traditions to radical criticism in the light of the gospel." "Theological Exegesis," 17. Barth's argument here is that the unusual style and vocabulary testify to the power of revelation, which continued to reshape Paul's his thinking. Barth's theory of authorship also emphasizes human elements: Paul expressed similar content but drew on a different range of ideas, much as anyone might do who delivers the same material in diverse places over a long period of time.

<sup>54</sup> He is sufficiently conversant with the issues to challenge the Nestle edition at these points.

<sup>55</sup> Apparently, he went into the matter in such detail because of a discussion which occurred in the previous *Besprechungsstunde* or seminar. B-Th II, 12-15.

and non-biblical literature are also consulted.<sup>56</sup> Occasionally, the precise definition of a word determines the interpretation, as in the exposition of v. 13, where there is a debate as to whether the change in pronoun from “we” to “you” signals a deliberate reference to the Gentiles. Barth argues against this position, partly on the basis of his definition of προηλπικότηας.<sup>57</sup>

(4) Intertextual relationships. Barth devotes considerable attention to the interrelationships of words and phrases in the text, and frequently makes important interpretive decisions based on how various textual units relate to each other. Each section begins with a detailed structural analysis. The following passage is cited at length to show how doggedly he examines every possible syntactical parallel:

We turn to the third circle of the prologue in vv. 11-14 in which the εὐλογία πνευματικῆ of v. 3 is described from the dominant point of view of the *future* as the subject of hope. This is undoubtedly Paul’s intention, in light of the dominant position which προηλπικότηας occupies in the first half of this paragraph and which ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐσφραγίσθητε τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας occupies in the second. Notice the dialectical subtlety with which Paul achieves his intention here. To continue with what is said in v. 7, we must now ask what the future is, when it is about God’s future and about the future which we have already, even if we have it only as future. Is it not clear that *this* future could just as easily be called “past” or “present”? And in fact, as the concepts of υἰοθεσία and χάρις, which are understood as *present* relationships, stood at the mid-point of the explanation in vv. 4-6; and as the *eschatological* terms, “forgiveness of sins,” “the fulfillment of time,” and ἀνακεφαλαίωσις, stood at the mid-point of vv. 7-10; so now at the mid-point of vv. 11-14 stand, paradoxically, not a future being and having, but rather the aorists ἐκκληρώθημεν and ἐσφραγίσθητε, emphasized by the theme of election in v. 11 . . . . Such a turn is evident, however, as soon as we pay attention to the material *meaning* of those aorists and what they say about the nature of the Christian’s existence . . . . One must pay attention to these mutual intersections in order to do justice to the content of the prologue, even though they do not contribute to what we normally call “clarity.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> For example, he traces the etymology of “apostolos” in classical Greek and post-apostolic writings. EE, 6-7.

<sup>57</sup> The pronoun shift from “we” to “you” is taken by most interpreters to mean that Paul is speaking of the inclusion of Gentiles in the covenant.

<sup>58</sup> EE, 86-87.

This argument is tendentious at points. For example, Barth does not explain why forgiveness is an eschatological concept, and he assumes that the aorists express past tense.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, this passage is tour de force in structural analysis. He notes parallel construction within each circle and across all three sections of the doxology. Syntactical as well as linguistic similarities are exploited. And he draws attention to the fluid time boundaries in the doxology, incorporating this observation in his interpretation. In short, grammatical, syntactical, and structural details are used effectively to determine the text's content.

These four reading strategies demonstrate the significance of historical exegesis in the exposition and a measure of congeniality between Barth's approach and the critical commentaries. However, Barth's historical exegesis differs fundamentally from the approach of most *Neuetestamentler* in that he devotes relatively little attention to historical background. He says little about Paul's situation and nothing about the historic Ephesus or the original recipients. He interprets the Pauline concept of *gnosis* without discussing the possible Gnostic influences.<sup>60</sup> Although this aspect of Barth's approach is typically cited against him, it also points to one of his strengths, namely, his ability to exploit the text itself to determine its theological content. Whereas the "critical" commentaries consult material *outside* of the text, e.g. historical background and parallels from history of religion, Barth concentrates on material *within* the Bible.<sup>61</sup> He attempts to

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<sup>59</sup> The global aorist, for example, makes sense in this passage and does not imply past action.

<sup>60</sup> The approach is taken by Dibelius, for example, one of the commentators whom Barth consults regularly.

<sup>61</sup> As Bultmann explains in the preface to *The Gospel of John*, the text comes to us in a different language and different time. The only way that we can grasp the meaning of a particular biblical term or concept is by knowing the range of possible meanings available to the writer. The interpreter must study the original culture.



interpret Scripture by Scripture. In the Ephesians lectures, he uses three procedures to that end.

First, Barth uses a biblical phrase or *Denkform* to create a snapshot of the passage, that is, a simultaneous view of the whole text as well as the individual parts.<sup>62</sup> For example, he summarizes the doxology as "God's spiritual blessings in Christ in the form of election, redemption, and hope," or later, "Because we are ἐν Χριστῷ, God has blessed us so that we might praise him."<sup>63</sup> Both of these paraphrases rely on the words of the passage or cognates; however, Barth rearranges them to summarize the doxology in light of his particular interpretive interests. He uses a variation of the same strategy in his description of the third "circle" of the doxology (vv. 11-14), which he summarizes under the heading of "hope." Here, he unifies the disparate details of the passage by establishing a connection between the phrase, "the Spirit of promise," and the meaning of "inheritance," both of which have a future orientation. Thus, he interprets the entire passage on the basis of the single concept or *Denkform* of hope. It should be emphasized that this move is a ramification of his understanding of the text as a unified *kerygma*. A unified *kerygma* calls for a corresponding reading strategy, which permits us to hear "all the parts" of a text "simultaneously, in their relation to each other:"

In early Christianity, the whole matter could be expressed and received as *one* sentence, *one* thesis, *one* whole and rounded truth, because it was regarded as completely integrated and flexible. We must understand the text the same way, as integrated and flexible; not as a collection of dogmatic *loci*, but as a single *kerygma*, hearing all the parts simultaneously, in their relation to each other, each part equally important.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> This procedure is not to be confused with dogmatic or dialectical paraphrase, in which he introduces second order discourse in the reflective stage

<sup>63</sup> EE, 38.

<sup>64</sup> EE, 36.

Second, he reads the whole text on the basis of the parts.<sup>65</sup> According to Barth, the interpreter can approach the text by emphasizing any one of the three circles and achieve a survey of the whole:

In view of the one act of God, we can emphasize the blessing of God from which we come, so that predestination is expressed (following Calvin). We can emphasize the blessing of God in which we stand, the forgiveness of sins (following Luther and many others). Finally, we can emphasize the blessing of God for which we are headed, so that eschatology comes to expression (following Blumhardt, for example). In each case, the decisive thing is that we know what we are doing and why, namely, that with the perceptible, temporal truth by which we express any one of these emphases, we actually mean the one imperceptible eternal act of God.<sup>66</sup>

Because of the unified nature of the *kerygma*, Barth argues, the interpreter is authorized to adopt a one-sided approach to the text, as long as he then moves to a survey of the whole. But, he adds, the exegete must carefully follow the words of the text in order to gain Paul's viewpoint: "Our actual viewpoint of the divine blessing in Christ will include only a small sector of the circle described here. However, let us read Paul, so that through such anticipation we can at least be sure that our small sector is truly part of a *circle*."<sup>67</sup> In short, the text is unified by virtue of the direction in which it points; therefore, the interpreter has the freedom to emphasize any single sector of the passage as well as the responsibility to survey the whole.<sup>68</sup>

Third, he uses the *lectio continua* format to draw out the meaning of a word or phrase from the surrounding text. As he works his way through a passage, each new phrase receives meaning from the preceding textual unit, until a cumulative meaning begins to emerge. A good illustration of this procedure is the exposition of the phrase,

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<sup>65</sup> For a discussion of Barth's "part-whole" reading, see Burnett, 78ff.

<sup>66</sup> EE, 52.

<sup>67</sup> EE, 53.

<sup>68</sup> A related strategy is Barth's practice of reading into individual passages on the basis of the Bible as a whole.

“[his grace,] which he poured out for us in all wisdom and insight,” the passage considered in the previous chapter in connection with the knowledge of God. Barth begins by situating the phrase between within its textual boundaries – the previous description of the blood of Christ and the motif which comes after “wisdom and insight,” namely the clause, “which he made known to us.” This move effectively places the idea of wisdom and insight within the conceptual framework of grace and knowledge:

Regarding this grace of God that is turned to us in Jesus’ blood, the text adds: ἡς ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς ἡμᾶς, ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσει; this phrase forms the transition to γνωρίσας ἡμῖν, at the beginning of the next phrase, in which Paul describes what we have . . . .<sup>69</sup>

On the basis of this move, Barth concludes that wisdom and insight are a form of grace and therefore the way in which we possess forgiveness:

And so our possession of deliverance is described as σοφία and φρονήσις . . . . We have deliverance and the riches of God’s grace because such knowledge is poured out and flows to us from what is described as an overflowing vessel. Only knowing? . . . . σοφία and φρονήσις identify the crisis in which we stand . . . . God’s idea is our relationship with God’s reality. To know of forgiveness is to have forgiveness.<sup>70</sup>

This approach contrasts with commentators who argue that Gnosticism is the conceptual background for the concepts of “wisdom and insight” and that the writer adapted this vocabulary for his own purposes. The point here is not to defend either approach but to demonstrate Barth’s exegetical procedure and its relation to his theological hermeneutic. Barth determines Paul’s meaning “interpreting Scripture by Scripture” rather than consulting first century religious parallels.

To sum up: the historical-critical method plays an important but subordinate role in the Ephesians exposition. On one hand, critical study is important, because the *Sache*

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<sup>69</sup> EE, 75.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

of the Bible is apprehended through the words of the text. Therefore, it is crucial to understand “what stands in the text.”<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, the role of critical study is subordinate to theological exegesis, the stage where interpretation properly occurs. These reading strategies can be explained by his theological hermeneutic. He exploits the text itself rather than historical background, because he regards the text as “self-interpreting,” or to be precise – he holds that the interpreter helps the text to interpret itself. In short, Barth is confident that text, when properly observed, conveys Paul's meaning and the text’s theological content.<sup>72</sup> Text fitly renders content.<sup>73</sup>

### *Reading Strategies Based on Theological Exegesis*

Having created a preliminary picture of the text on the basis of historical exegesis, Barth creates a “second picture” using a different set of reading strategies to re-express the content of the text, using his own conceptual framework. Three characteristic interpretive moves in the exposition include (1) intra-textual allusions, (2) dogmatic paraphrase, and (3) objective reading strategies.

(1) Intra-textual allusions. Barth frequently constructs a web of intra-textual associations and allusions in order to relate a particular word or phrase to God’s

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<sup>71</sup> ER, 7.

<sup>72</sup> For this reason, Calvin’s exegesis is preferable to Luther’s, according to Barth. While he may lack Luther’s liveliness, he grapples systematically with the details of the text. See *The Theology of John Calvin*, 390. Barth places a great emphasis on determining authorial intention, currently a major topic of debate. Stephen Fowl makes a helpful distinction in this regard when he speaks about the author’s “communicative meaning, that is, how the writer intends to be understood. Stephen Fowl, “The Role of Authorial Intention,” ch. 4 in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

<sup>73</sup> See Hans Frei’s observation about Calvin and the Reformers’ exegesis. *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 18-37.

Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*.

redemptive plan in Christ.<sup>74</sup> The exposition of the phrase, "according to the riches of his grace," contains the following "densely allusive"<sup>75</sup> reiteration of Paul's meaning:

God in his grace is rich beyond all asking and understanding, beyond human grasping and ability, so rich, that he has set this wonderful light in our night, so that there, where by human reckoning only sin's triumph could be detected, where even the Son of God is reckoned under sin and allows himself to be so reckoned, precisely there in his blood, God's grace and truth triumph. So great is his grace; so deep is his truth.<sup>76</sup>

This statement is a compact summary of the Pauline theology of grace, as Barth understands it. In one sentence, he moves from an allusion to Eph. 3:20, to a summary of the passion narrative, and concludes with allusions to the Pauline concept of justification in 2 Cor. 5 and Romans 5. This web of textual associations can best be seen schematically:

God in his grace is rich beyond all asking and understanding, beyond human grasping and ability . . .	Eph. 3: 20: "beyond all asking and understanding"
. . . so rich, that he has set this wonderful light in our night, so that there, where by human reckoning only sin's triumph could be detected, where even the Son of God is reckoned under sin and allows himself to be so reckoned, precisely there in his blood, God's grace and truth triumph. So great is his grace; so deep is his truth.	Passion narrative 2 Cor. 5:17-19 Romans 5

This procedure re-expresses Paul's meaning, using "scripturally saturated theological language" in order to relate the text to the *kerygma* as a whole.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, Barth frequently establishes intra-textual associations which do not conform to standard

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<sup>74</sup> R. R. Reno, "Biblical Theology and Theological Exegesis," Address at Conference on Biblical Hermeneutics, University of St Andrews, 2002, 9. This strategy could also be considered a version of interpreting Scripture by Scripture, discussed above.

<sup>75</sup> Reno, 9.

<sup>76</sup> EE, 74.

<sup>77</sup> Reno, 11.

exegetical practice. For instance, to explain the act of worship which is evoked by God's blessings, he cites as a parallel passage 1 Cor. 9:16: "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel," a text, which, on the face of it, has nothing to do with worship.<sup>78</sup> Here, the common element is the compulsion which accompanies both worship and the preaching of the gospel: recognition of the unknown God compels worship just as the hearing of the gospel compels proclamation. Barth establishes intra-textual links on the basis of the texts' entailments rather than on surface linguistic meaning.

On the face of it, this exegetical move does not appear explicitly theological, inasmuch as he uses no explicitly dogmatic language. The commentary consists in rearranging various textual elements to draw out a larger meaning, but it is precisely this "integrated array of exegetical statements" which qualifies it as theological exegesis.<sup>79</sup> In this regard, Barth's approach resembles patristic exegesis, in which interpretation often consists of creating a "skein of intratextual associations" to express the economy of salvation.<sup>80</sup> Thus, he avoids the theological abstraction which plagues many modern projects of theological exegesis. According to R. R. Reno, many so called theological commentaries make "theological comment as gloss or epitome" at some distance from the text. By contrast, Barth, like much patristic exegesis, offers "a theologically ramified exposition of what the text says, and that *constitutes* [his] conclusion."<sup>81</sup>

(2) Dogmatic paraphrase. To interpret the text Barth employs a range of dogmatic and philosophical concepts to re-present Paul's message as a contemporary word. For example, to explicate the sealing of the Spirit in v. 13, he uses the language of time and

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<sup>78</sup> He often established intra-textual connections on the basis of the entailments of texts rather than strict linguistic meaning.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>80</sup> Reno, "Theological Exegesis," 9.

<sup>81</sup> Reno, "Theological Exegesis," 29.

eternity: "The future is already present for those who are sealed with the Spirit; they can be addressed directly on this basis."<sup>82</sup> To emphasize both the objective and subjective dimensions of the Holy Spirit, he uses dialectical interpretation, that is, he points to the diastasis between the Spirit's divinity and creaturely finitude. The Spirit lives in us, Barth says, but is not to be confused with human knowledge and feeling: "No, *this* point in us, the Spirit of God, is not accessible by either rational or irrational paths. The Spirit is not accessible at all; he is absolutely beyond us; He is God's act of creation in us . . . God's *word*, God's *logos*, God's own Spirit, meaning and ground."<sup>83</sup> He explains the meaning of Christian hope by relating it to the exposition's central theme, Jesus Christ is the basis of human existence: "In Christ, the hope of eternity actually became the *presupposition* of humanity . . . In him, every promise whose fulfillment God guarantees by offering himself as surety, enters human existence."<sup>84</sup>

As these passages demonstrate, the boundaries between dogmatics and exegesis are porous.<sup>85</sup> Barth uses dogmatics to interpret the biblical text, and this interpretation is itself a form of theological discourse. Bultmann criticized Barth for investigating the text "according to the formula of dogmatics," because the text is not allowed to "speak with its own voice."<sup>86</sup> The comment expresses a separation between dogmatics and exegesis: dogmatics is a "formula," to be applied; the text has a voice which speaks. For Barth, however, dogmatics is also a form of speech about the text. The lectures contain some of Barth's earliest attempts to articulate dogmatic method, and particularly, the relation

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<sup>82</sup> EE, 96. Likewise, the reference to Jesus as the fullness of time is paraphrased as follows: "Jesus *is* the Christ. In the unobservable mid-point between past and present *appears* the πληρώμα των καιρών, the eternal present," 83-84.

<sup>83</sup> EE, 47..

<sup>84</sup> EE, 97. He is explicating the phrase, "the redemption of our inheritance."

<sup>85</sup> John Webster, in a private conversation, University of Aberdeen, June, 2005.

<sup>86</sup> *Barth- Bultmann*, 83.

between dogmatics and Scriptural exegesis. In these statements, he tends to emphasize the similarities between the text, the exegete, and the dogmatic theologian. To refer to a passage cited above, he notes that all three express the one invisible and eternal truth using various visible, temporal truth forms. Dogmatics is "the attempt to form an ordered relation of the various truth forms," that is, of being "Calvin, Luther, and Blumhardt simultaneously." Exegesis emphasizes one of these biblical forms, but tries to express the whole on the basis of one segment of the circle. Scripture, exegesis, and dogmatics, therefore, blend into one another, or exist along a continuum, a trajectory which begins with the text and becomes dogmatics. Conversely, dogmatics is applied to understand and interpret the text.<sup>87</sup>

(3) Objective reading strategies. Proper exegesis, according to Barth, is a matter of reading "objectively," that is, reading the text in such a way that we are reoriented to the Bible's subject matter – God revealing himself in Christ.<sup>88</sup> In Christ, God takes up a position vis-à-vis the creature and enables the creature to be "*sachlich*" before God. This is achieved not only formally, by enclosing each major section of the doxology within this phrase, but materially, by the description of the God who draws near to the creature while remaining wholly Other. In the exposition, Barth deploys a number of reading strategies which allow the text to be heard "objectively." Although not unique to Ephesians, they are particularly prominent here, because of the text's "sightline," as Barth understands it.

For example, he frequently performs a subject/object shift in the middle of the sentence without calling attention to it, as in his use of *Gegenstand* to convey the

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<sup>87</sup> The interpretive role of philosophical language in the exposition is essentially the same as in *Romans I* and is discussed in Chapter One.

<sup>88</sup> God is recognized as the acting subject.



movement of Jesus Christ into the interpretive event, discussed above. In the following passage, he is at pains to emphasize that Paul's apostolic vocation is the result of divine commission rather than human capacity. He begins with a negation of the human subject, that is, he defines Paul's contribution to apostleship negatively:

The apostolic vocation splits the person, so to speak. He is an apostle apart from what *he* is, on the basis of something which *he* absolutely is *not*. A demand of a very *different* order is made on him, and a demand of a very different order directs him to his fellow human creatures. There is something exceptional and astonishing about him; but it is not his genius, his experience, his unmediated knowledge [*Unmittelbares*], or anything that can be accounted for psychologically as greatness or character.<sup>89</sup>

The passage concludes with a subtle subject/object reversal to signal the divine action:

What makes him an apostle is his mission, instructions, and the service he is to offer. Psychologically, these are not even *his own matter* but the matter which *has him* and sends him.<sup>90</sup>

The claim that his mission is not his own matter but the matter which *has him* takes us to the heart of Barth's objective reading. We are known before we know anything about the Scriptures or about God.

## Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates what is *theological* about Barth's theological exegesis. Barth has a theological account of the interpretive situation, and particularly, of the nature of the text and the work of the interpreter in relation to God's revelatory action in Christ. It is precisely here that dogmatics plays the most decisive role in his approach to exegesis. Barth's hermeneutic and exegetical procedures are based on the confidence that the distance separating the reader from the event witnessed to in the text is overcome

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<sup>89</sup> EE, 7.

<sup>90</sup> My emphasis.

in the event of revelation. A theological description of the nature of the biblical text in relation to the *Sache* of the Bible is central to his hermeneutic. Childs notes that biblical theology is possible only on the basis of theological reflection “which moves from description of the biblical witnesses to the object toward which these witnesses point, that is, to their subject matter, substance, or *res*.”<sup>91</sup> This is good restatement of Barth’s theological hermeneutic. In his account, the text is a medium which conveys the movement of revelation from the originating event to the present. Therefore, “to interpret the text is to interpret the *Sache*.”<sup>92</sup> Here, we find the explanation for Barth’s determination “to stay close to the text, to follow with tense attention to what is actually there,” evident in the first stage of his reading strategy.<sup>93</sup> However, he avoids identifying the words of the text with the reality to which they point. Rather, the Bible serves as an effectual sign, to use a sacramental analogy. God is present in and under the text in the interpretive event, when Jesus Christ speaks and becomes his own interpreter.

Barth’s hermeneutic includes theological reflection on the relation of the interpreter to the *Sache*. As Werner Jeanrond points out, for Barth, “the hermeneutical question . . . entails the ultimate material question of theology, namely: who is God and who am I?”<sup>94</sup> Biblical interpretation is possible, because God identifies himself with the words of the biblical author and the interpreter alike. This is the explanation for Barth’s confidence that the thoughts of the interpreter can conform to the thoughts of the biblical author, after carefully “thinking after” him. His hermeneutic is grounded in the confidence that God graciously uses the human media of text, interpretive activity, and

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<sup>91</sup> *Biblical Theology*, 80.

<sup>92</sup> Geense, *Aufersteckung und Offenbarung*, 14.

<sup>93</sup> *The Theology of John Calvin*, 389.

<sup>94</sup> Jeanrond, “Karl Barth’s Hermeneutics,” in Nigel Biggar, ed., *Reckoning with Barth: Essays in Commemoration of the Centenary of Karl Barth’s Birth* (London: Mowbray, 1988), 84.

proclamation. Summarizing Barth's mature understanding of revelation, Trevor Hart observes that the efficacy of the "media" depends on "God's dynamic activity" or what Barth calls, "God's secondary objectivity:"

God takes objects, events, words, ideas and other this-worldly entities and bestows upon them a capacity which in and of themselves they do not possess . . . Objects which in and of themselves serve only and precisely to veil God (for they are, in themselves, not God) are taken up into a relationship with God where their natural capacities are wholly transcended and where they are rendered transparent with respect to God"<sup>95</sup>

Here, we find the explanation for Barth's interpretive freedom, evident in the second stage of his reading strategy, and particularly, his use of dogmatic paraphrase in Scriptural interpretation. The biblical writer, the exegete and the dogmatic theologian all use "visible truth forms" to convey the one eternal truth about God. Therefore, Barth does not conceive of dogmatics as an alien language which must somehow be reintegrated with the text. Rather, dogmatic discourse and exegesis exist along a continuum. This explains why historical exegesis and dogmatic reflection flow into one another throughout the exposition.

This theological hermeneutic explains the concreteness in Barth's exegesis. Interpretation is a matter of following the text, of redescribing it in the interpreter's own words. The matter of relevance is not up to the interpreter. God alone must create "the addressee of the word," Barth says in his 1922 debate with Hirsch about the proper use of the Bible. What I read in the Bible cannot be "directly a norm for me," because God alone can reveal this norm. For genuine appropriation of the word from the Bible, what matters is not "my concrete (or abstract) perception but the perception of God himself

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<sup>95</sup> "Revelation," 46.

that makes the divine action and revelation a reality for me.”<sup>96</sup> “God alone is concrete,” Bonhoeffer says in a similar vein.<sup>97</sup> The interpreter does not make the text relevant by appeal to something outside of the text. Rather, the *Sache* itself makes the text relevant. Barth therefore is free to stick close to the text rather than arching away from it into theological abstraction. The question of concreteness is resolved theologically.

Barth’s exposition proceeds by continually reorienting the text and the reader to the subject matter of the New Testament. His remarkable freedom as an expositor of the Bible is found here, in his understanding of the nature this subject, the speaking presence of God. “We are known by God before we know him.”<sup>98</sup> His exegesis is a bold wager that Lessing’s ugly ditch is overcome.

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<sup>96</sup> RT, 84-85.

<sup>97</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Worldly Preaching: Lectures on Homiletics*, ed. and tras., Clyde E. Fant (New York: Crossroads, 1991), 114.

<sup>98</sup> RC, 64.

## Chapter Four

### Barth's Existential Interpretation in the 1919 Sermons

Barth's approach to theological exegesis cannot be properly understood apart from his theology of proclamation. The "critical situation" of the preacher, he said, became for him "an explanation of the character of all theology." When the preacher ascends the pulpit, the pressing question is: "*Was nun?*" "Now what?"<sup>1</sup> Consequently, he brings to the exegetical task a series of questions arising from the congregation's existence in relation to the word of God.<sup>2</sup> He has a dogmatic account of the preaching situation, just as he does of the interpretive situation, examined in the previous chapter. To be precise, Barth understands the preaching situation to be determined by the reality of God's promise, on the one hand, and the crisis of human existence on the other. In this situation, the creature's longing for reality is confronted with God's reality; the creature's questions are called into question by God's questions and answer. Much can be learned, therefore, about Barth's theological exegesis as well as "the characteristic lines of [his] thinking and utterance" by considering his 1919 sermons on Ephesians.<sup>3</sup>

Barth's 1919 sermons on Ephesians 1 are particularly valuable for this study, because they provide an opportunity to compare his interpretive approach to the same passage of Scripture at two different points in his development and in two different genres. In this way, certain shifts in his interpretive approach can be demonstrated.

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<sup>1</sup> "But it simply came about that the familiar situation of the minister on Saturday at this desk and on Sunday in his pulpit crystallized in my case into a marginal note to all theology . . . this critical situation itself became to me an explanation of the character of all theology." "The Need and Promise of Preaching," WG, 104.

<sup>2</sup> An additional benefit is that certain recondite passages in the lectures become clear when we see the same idea expressed in the sermon. For example, the statement in the lectures that "we are everything that [Christ] is" only becomes clear in the sermon, where Barth explains that "we are the new people in him." EE, 47; S2, 117.

<sup>3</sup> *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, 3. Barth's comment about Schleiermacher's sermons.

Accordingly, this chapter consists of a comparative analysis of Barth's two sermons on Ephesians 1:1-23 with the exegetical lectures on the same text. After discussing the sermons' context and basic contents, I demonstrate areas of continuity and discontinuity between the sermons and the lectures. Section two examines the role which Barth accords to experience in the sermons and offers an explanation for Barth's different handling of the matter here in comparison to the lectures. In section three, I analyze Barth's homiletical moves and draw a series of conclusions about his interpretive approach, which can be described as "existential" in Barth's specific use of the term.

## **I Background and Summary of Contents**

Barth preached serially through the entire Epistle to the Ephesians between May 4 and September 7, 1919.<sup>4</sup> The concluding sermon on Eph. 6:21-24 was repeated at the Tambach conference.<sup>5</sup> The series began two weeks after Easter, following several briefer series on John 14, Matthew 9, and Matthew 26,<sup>6</sup> and Barth acknowledges the liturgical calendar by referring to Ascension Day and Pentecost, which occurred during the period. The sermon of May 29 includes a postscript on the legacy of the elder Blumhardt, who had died the previous week. Barth preached on pericopes as long as 14 verses (Eph. 1:1-14) and as short as three verses (Eph. 6:18-20). He prepared an original translation from

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<sup>4</sup> On two occasions, the sermon was delivered in another congregation. The sermon of May 18 on Eph. 2:1-10 was preached at this brother's church, "Peter's vernischem Tempel in Madiswil," because a missionary preached in Barth's place in Safenwil. B-Th I, 238. He was on vacation from July 20 to July 31 and did not preach on July 27. The sermon of Aug. 10 on Eph. 6:1-4 was preached both in Safenwil and Madiswil, where his brother, Peter, was serving as pastor. On August 17 and 24, he delivered the sermon on Eph. 6:5-9 and 6:10-17 respectively in both Safenwil and in Ürkheim.

<sup>5</sup> He also repeated a sermon on Psalm 103. These were first delivered at Safenwil on September 7 and 14 respectively. B-Th I, 324, letter of September 2.

<sup>6</sup> He preached four sermons on John 14, between January 5 and January 19, 1919 and 11 sermons on Matthew 9 and Matthew 26, between January 26 and April 26 of the same year.

the Nestle text prior to the beginning of the series and wrote out each of the sermons in full, an indication of the care which Barth devoted to his preaching.<sup>7</sup>

The summer of 1919 was marked by conflicts in the congregation and change in Barth's political activities. A series of expositions on the political situation in early 1919, including a sympathetic analysis of the Bolshevik Revolution, provoked protests from certain members of his congregation who attempted to have him removed.<sup>8</sup> The affair came to a head in the week prior to the sermon delivered on August 17, and Barth alludes to it in the sermon.<sup>9</sup> This conflict coincided with Barth's increasing disenchantment with Swiss religious socialism, leading to diminished political activity during this transitional year.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Sermon of May 4, 1919 on Ephesians 1:1-14*

In the opening sentence, Barth offers a succinct summary of his theme: "The living word of God and living faith in this word bring about a *change* in human existence."<sup>11</sup> Our normal view of life, however, turns things completely upside-down.<sup>12</sup> We associate change with the creaturely realm and regard the word of God as inert and innocuous:

Life is a storm, driven and impelled by a thousand rushing waves, and we swim along, often with enthusiasm, often laboriously. . . . If what we consider 'life' is the *storm*, the movement, and the change, then the word of God must be *stillness*, motionlessness, and inertia.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Each sermon is roughly 3,000 words, and the entire series amounts to 161 pages in the GT. At the conclusion of the series, he edited the sermons for subsequent use in an adult Bible study. See p. 2, n. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Busch, KB, 109.

<sup>9</sup> *Predigten 1919*, 296, n. 2.

<sup>10</sup> McCormack identifies this year as the point of his new beginning. *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 216-40.

<sup>11</sup> Sermon 1, 109 (hereafter, S1).

<sup>12</sup> I use "we" and "our" here and throughout the chapter for economy of expression.

<sup>13</sup> S1, 111.

One discovers, however, that the world's life, which appears to be so lively, is in fact "a vast stillness," and that the Bible, church, and faith, which appear inert, are "earthquake, fire and storm."<sup>14</sup> Once a person makes this momentous discovery and meets God, it becomes clear for the first time that "things do *not* remain the same. There is progress, renewal, and an about-face of all things. Most importantly, there a change in the person himself – so profound that even our most extravagant hopes and expectations fall short of it."<sup>15</sup>

In the second half of the sermon, Barth contrasts the "stillness" of the world's life with the great transformation in human existence which is promised in Eph. 1:3-14. At this point, he summarizes the entire passage as a description of change in human existence: "When we hear the word of truth through [Christ], and are awakened to faith through him, ***the change*** in us is as thorough as it could possibly be. We have *a new place to stand*. . . . We are *restored*. . . . We receive a *new goal*."<sup>16</sup> In this context, Barth presents the phrase, "in Christ," as a condensed summary of the entire passage. Everything which Paul says, "is *contained* concisely and simply and briefly in the two little words which are repeated over and over, *in him*. The change is in him, in Christ."<sup>17</sup> Barth concludes by observing that "these two little words . . . express ***the great question and the great answer*** of our life."<sup>18</sup> The great answer, because we truly hear and believe; the great question, because we are asked every day "if we truly hear and believe what Christ has told us about God and his world."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> S1, 114.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> S1, 116.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> S1, 117.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



We can certainly do *nothing better* than to repeat these two little words, “in him” thankfully and humbly and to reflect attentively and honestly about everything which they entail, always with the desire and the longing to say Yes – Yes to the new man *in him* – even as *we also* are new people in him. And *through* the new people in him and in us, the entire blessing of the heavenly world enters our life!<sup>20</sup>

*Sermon of May 11, 1919 on Ephesians 1:15-23*

The second sermon begins: “*God lives*. And God is the one who rules.”<sup>21</sup> Barth elaborates on this theme in a series of affirmations about God’s life and the consequences for human existence. God is our beginning, therefore we cannot think or even doubt apart from him. “The **world exists through God** and in God, comes from God and belongs to God.”<sup>22</sup> Therefore, anytime we speak, “we always speak about God first whether we know it or not, whether we intend to or not.”<sup>23</sup> This phrase translates literally, “We always say ‘God’ first.” Barth means that God is encompassed in any reality which we can name; therefore anything we say perforce presupposes the reality of God. That God lives and that we live in him is beyond question. What *is* in question is “how we *proceed* from our beginning, whether we say *Yes or No* to God.”<sup>24</sup> Finally, God chooses us. In this sense, too, he is “our beginning. When God is *no longer new* for us; when we already have our own assurance that we are in God's presence and get used to the idea that he is in us; when we are certain that, ‘I know already,’ ‘I am already,’ ‘I have already,’ then we are mistaken about God and change the truth into untruth.”<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the first part of the sermon, the Ephesians text is in the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Sermon 2, 118 (hereafter, S2).

<sup>22</sup> S2, 119.

<sup>23</sup> S2, 120.

<sup>24</sup> S2, 121.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

background; in the second half, however, Barth hews more closely to the passage, beginning with the following observation:

**Here is the strange thing in our text:** Paul writes that *he thanks* God continually for their faith and love. But then he goes on to say that he remembers them in his prayers, that the Father of glory may *give them* the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. It is as if their faith and love *were nothing*, as if, along with the great and beautiful things which they already have, they must receive something entirely new and *different*. And in fact, that is precisely what he means. Paul *means God*, to be precise.<sup>26</sup>

Paul does not pray for more love or for maturity in faith, Barth claims. There is no question of progress here. Rather, Paul suggests that their faith and love are *nothing* and that they must receive something new. Barth's point is that as it is *their* faith, that is, something which they *already possess*, then it is no longer from God. It is already old, and God is "new every morning." Consequently, Paul prays for the Spirit of knowledge and revelation, so that the congregation may be able to distinguish between "what is human and what comes from God."<sup>27</sup> "God is the one who says to us each morning: 'I, I alone, not you!' What we are flows from this, 'I alone!' What we will become must flow again from this source."<sup>28</sup> Were he present in Safenwil, Paul would say the same thing to the congregation, Barth claims. He would see much which is authentic and lively:

He would probably say to us that our *Christianity*, our Church, our piety, our *behavior* in other areas, our morality, and our progressive convictions are exactly right. Our *sermons*, school system, welfare system, *associations*, our Salvation Army, our *cooperatives*, and our socialism – all of that would be recognized.<sup>29</sup>

However, the apostle would be surprised that we are content to continue the course already begun; that we seem to have so little desire "to ask about God himself, about the

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<sup>26</sup> S2, 122.

<sup>27</sup> S2, 123.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> S2, 124.

Spirit of wisdom and revelation, about this new and different thing which is given to us from God.” Paul would ask:

*Do you know* the hope which you have received through God’s call, the glorious riches of his inheritance, and the inestimable greatness of his power to us who believe? *If you know*, why isn’t it not more evident in the Church or Chapel, either to the children of God the children of the world? Why, despite all your Christianity, are you so lukewarm, unhappy, uncertain, indecisive, rigid, and lacking trust? Why does your Christianity no longer take the lead in this dark world? And *if you do not know*, why don’t you not notice? What is missing? Why do you stay in the same rut so obstinately? Why don’t you allow yourselves to be taken farther? Why don’t you ask more earnestly, more honestly, and with greater hunger and thirst for God himself, for that living beginning of life, the one thing which could help you today?<sup>30</sup>

Barth ends the sermon by linking the theme of the knowledge of God with the promise of life in Christ. Christ is the “the great Forward” beyond human progress, the great Yes spoken to God on our behalf. “In Christ, the power of God is active. . . . Through him, sin, suffering and death have encountered a contradiction which can no longer be forgotten. . . . In him, God himself has stepped in among us.”<sup>31</sup>

## II Continuity and Discrepancies

There are obvious formal differences between the sermons and the lectures. Barth devotes two sermons Ephesians 1 compared to 12 lectures. As we would expect, the exegetical scaffolding, which is prominent in the academic course, does not appear in the sermons, and he avoids technical theological or philosophical vocabulary. For present purposes, however, it is the material continuity and discrepancies rather than formal matters which are most illuminating, because they signal shifts in Barth’s theology and approach to exegesis.

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<sup>30</sup> S2, 125.

<sup>31</sup> S2, 126.

Significant material continuity between the sermons and the lectures is evident in four areas. First, the phrase, “in Christ,” figures prominently in both readings of the passage. In the first sermon, he claims that everything that Paul says in the passage “is summarized in these two little words.”<sup>32</sup> In both accounts, the divine speech-act is the basis for the creature’s relationship with God. Second, both accounts use the metaphor of Christ as the head to describe how believers are incorporated into him; both describe Christ as “enfleshed in the throng” of the congregation.<sup>33</sup> Third, Barth’s emphasis on “origins” is prominent in both interpretations. The theme of God as “the new,” as “the Begin-ner,” which is prominent in the sermons, is expressed in the exposition’s central theme, the knowledge of God is the presupposition of human existence. Likewise, in the lectures, knowledge of election means that the creature recognizes his origin, that is, the “original relationship” between creature and Creator.<sup>34</sup> Finally, the theme of restless watching and waiting for God is concludes both the first sermon and of the exposition of Ephesians 1:

Something must be set *in motion* in us if we have understood how greatly God moves all things in Christ. So the man of God must say to us: “God *waits*. You however must *hurry*.” Let what is true become true.<sup>35</sup>

A great divine *Forward!* into time, history, and humanity is emphasized. Christ is that forward. . . . So let us have peace in this Forward! so that through it, we may be allowed no peace. We can ask for the unity of peace and unrest only as long as we know neither.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Differences also exist in his treatment of this motif between the two readings. In the lectures, “in Christ” is “the formal key,” while the word play in v. 3 suggests the exposition’s central theme. The word play is not mentioned in the sermons.

<sup>33</sup> There are subtle differences. The headship language in the lectures puts the emphasis on shared identity and the claim that the congregation is a “filling of the empty form” of which Christ is the reality, distinctions which are not present in the sermons. EE, 122; S2, 122.

<sup>34</sup> EE, 115-16.

<sup>35</sup> S1, 117.

<sup>36</sup> The “waiting that hastens,” a theme appropriated from the Blumhardts, is prominent in Barth’s theology during this period. See ER, 157; 183.

The movement *from* God and *to* God permits no resting point for the creature.

Certain discrepancies between the sermons and the lectures are also evident. In the sermons, Ephesians 1 is summarized as change in human existence. Unlike the lectures, there is no mention here of “doxology” or praise at all, a striking contrast given their provenance in worship.<sup>37</sup> This different interpretive framework leads to somewhat different accounts of salvation. The lectures emphasize the eternal relationship based on the knowledge of God, while the sermons emphasize the transformation of human existence through the preaching of Christ. Because the lectures describe worship as the paradigmatic act of the believer, Barth emphasizes the creature’s eternal relationship with God. By contrast, the movement and transformation described in the sermons is not inherently personal, therefore the emphasis on the eternal relationship is less prominent. Furthermore, Barth’s concern for ethics is expressed differently in the two accounts. In the lectures, he appeals to the theology of sanctification, allowing him to address the ethical dimension of the Christian life without suggesting organic growth of the creature’s inherent qualities. By contrast, in the first sermon we hear that “a measure of our creaturely existence has already become new [through Christ], though only a very small measure as yet,” a statement suggesting quantitative or relative change.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, while the lectures describe the distinct roles played by election, forgiveness, and hope in the divine economy, the sermon does not “enter into the details of the passage.” Consequently, crucial dimensions of divine action are toned down,

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<sup>37</sup> There is one reference to the phrase, “to the praise of his glory” as a description of the life consecrated to God and not, as in the lectures, to the act of worship per se. One likely reason for this for this difference is that Barth’s interest in doxology as a theological category begins to appear only after his study of the Pauline doxologies in 1920. See Chapter Two, p. 25, n. 12.

<sup>38</sup> S1, 115. Likewise, in the lectures Barth explicitly rejects the idea of organic growth.

particularly God's action on the cross. In the following summary of Eph. 1:3-14, Calvary is in the background. The foreground is occupied by the resurrection and Christ's present speech-act:

Besides, everything he has to say is *contained* concisely, simply and succinctly in the two little words which are repeated over and over, '*in him.*' He means that the change is in him, in Christ. As soon as we look at Christ, we can no longer confuse *God* with *death*, because *we recognize him* as the Living One, the creator, the moving force. *Christ speaks* the living word and *kindles* living faith. In the fullness of time, when there was more than enough inert, funereal human existence, God himself *went into action*. *Jesus* was God's act, the son of man and the son of God, his life, death, and rising from the dead. In him, he has *blessed* us, and he intends to bless us with every spiritual blessing of the heavenly world.<sup>39</sup>

In certain respects, the passage anticipates the Christology of the lectures – the emphasis is on the creature's apprehension of grace in the present as he considers the incarnation, rather than on Christ's agency in election. However, in the lectures, Barth lingers on each circle of the doxology long enough to describe God's redemptive work in detail. In the sermon, the theme of change through faith in the living word so dominates the account that the divine choice, the blood of Christ, and the future inheritance are toned down.

In addition to these discrepancies, the role of experience is handled significantly differently in the sermons than in the lectures. The matter is important enough to deserve more detailed analysis in the following section.

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<sup>39</sup> S1, 116.

### III

#### The Role of Experience in the Knowledge of God

The most striking difference between the sermons and the lectures is the emphasis which Barth places on experience, evident in his treatment of the concepts of longing (*Sehnsucht*) and restlessness. In the sermons, longing is both a consequence of the creature's existence in this world as well as a testimony to his original relation to God. Consequently, Barth emphasizes the positive dimension to *Sehnsucht*: "The best thing about our striving and activity is our desire and the longing itself, not what we set out to accomplish or end up accomplishing."<sup>40</sup> Exposure to God's reality makes us more conscious of the "limits, fallacies, and riddles" of our existence. This observation is behind the following statement to the congregation: "All of us here are too closely associated with God's house to be content with the status quo."<sup>41</sup> Most importantly, human longing is eschatologically oriented, because the creature seeks ultimate reality, whether he knows it or not. Because we are originally related to God, we need only hear the biblical witness to be reminded that God is the ultimate meaning of all our dreams:

The *reuniting of all* things in Christ – things now scattered, broken apart, and dispersed – is the true meaning of the dreams we have for a complete life, healthy souls in healthy bodies, for an ordered and reasoned existence which can only be given to us, for the advent of heaven on earth, and the possibility of seeing earth in heaven's light. It is a matter of noticing once more that this is the real meaning of our dreams.<sup>42</sup>

In Barth's account, there is an ontological structure to the creature's search for ultimate reality, on the one hand, and to the divine question and answer, which determines the

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<sup>40</sup> S1, 112.

<sup>41</sup> S1, 110.

<sup>42</sup> S1, 114.

preaching situation on the other.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, the role of the sermon is to point to the divine promise and the eschatological hope.

Barth's interpretive approach here reflects his hermeneutical principle that self-knowledge is ingredient to exegesis. The principle is stated in the preface to *Romans II*, "If we rightly understand ourselves, our questions [should be] Paul's questions" and repeated in the sermon: "If we understood ourselves, we would understand that the kingdom of *God* is what we truly hope for." Jüngel offers an astute assessment of what he calls Barth's "hermeneutical imperative: Consider well! Consider yourself!"

For Barth, the dispute over the correct method of biblical exegesis was – then at least – identical to the dispute over what constitutes a proper self-understanding. That is why he could not accept Adolf Jülicher's description of his work as "practical biblical exegesis." Behind this he saw an inadequate theory of historical understanding, which limits self-understanding to the realm of practical theology.<sup>44</sup>

On this view, the historical study of a text does not preclude clarifying "one's own relationship to the subject matter" to which the texts refer. Barth refused to banish personal knowledge from the exegetical task. His "principle of interpretation is a hermeneutical circle between that which is understood and that which is to be understood."<sup>45</sup> The themes of restlessness and longing in the sermons confirm the importance of self-knowledge in his interpretive approach.

Although the theme of recognition is central in both readings, the role attributed to human experience in this recognition is noticeably different. In the lectures, Barth

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<sup>43</sup> "Entscheidend ist, daß die *ontologische Frage auf die Verkündigungssituation bezogen wird* und sich im Geschehen der Verkündigung spezifiziert und beantwortet. Hier wird sie aufgenommen, aber radikal transzendiert, indem eine Wirklichkeit dem Menschen begegnet, die seine Wirklichkeit und sein Fragen nach Wirklichkeit in die Krise führt und erst so durch die im Geschehen der Verkündigung sich öffnende Wirklichkeit Gottes, seines Redens, die Frage nach dem, was wirklich ist, in actu beantwortet." Friedrich Schmid, *Verkündigung und Dogmatik in der Theologie Karl Barths: Hermeneutik und Ontologie in einer Theologie des Wortes Gottes* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1964), 22.

<sup>44</sup> *Legacy*, 74-75.

<sup>45</sup> Jüngel, 77.



insists that the knowledge of God cannot be identified with experience or psychologically verifiable realities, indeed, to desire such visible manifestations is to seek a “pagan” substitute for God’s presence. By contrast, in the sermons, human experience leads to the “momentous” discovery of the living God. The experience of restlessness and longing bear witness that the world’s change is not what the creature truly seeks and lead to the discovery that everything human is, “one vast stillness.” This first discovery leads to a second – the allegedly innocuous Bible and lifeless faith turn out to be a vigorous attack on human righteousness and human society in its present form. In light of these discoveries, when the creature meets God, he recognizes that there is in fact “an about-face” of all things, including transformation of the creature’s personal existence; he recognizes that the living God is the source of this change. Barth does not clarify exactly how the creature “meets God;” the order of knowing, however, is clear – self-knowledge leads to the knowledge of God:

If we understood ourselves, we would understand that the kingdom of *God* is what we truly hope for. *We must first understand it.* As long as we do not understand it, it cannot become true. In the meantime, God is already present in our restlessness and longing, *ready*, infinitely ready, to bless us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly world.<sup>46</sup>

When describing restlessness and longing in the sermons, Barth uses the term, “*Erfahrung*” without qualification, a word which he nearly always qualifies in the lectures. This is not to suggest that he exalts experience as an independent source of revelation.<sup>47</sup> However, Barth clearly indicates that self-knowledge leads to the knowledge of God, a distinct contrast to his later insistence that creature is in Christ before discovering the unknown God.

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<sup>46</sup> S1, 115.

<sup>47</sup> I am not suggesting that Barth intends something on the order of Schleiermacher’s “feeling of absolute dependence. By 1919, the break with Schleiermacher was deliberate and conscious.

One further example demonstrates this shift of emphasis. In the second sermon, Barth asserts that the congregation's lack of knowledge is evident in observable, negative behavior:

*Do you know* the hope which you have received through God's call, the glorious riches of his inheritance, and the inestimable greatness of his power to us who believe? *If you know*, why isn't it not more evident in the Church or Chapel, either to the children of God the children of the world? Why, despite all your Christianity, are you so lukewarm, unhappy, uncertain, indecisive, ridged, and lacking trust? Why does your Christianity no longer take the lead in this dark world? And *if you do not know*, why don't you not notice? What is missing? Why do you stay in the same rut so obstinately? Why don't you allow yourselves to be taken farther? Why don't you ask more earnestly, more honestly, and with greater hunger and thirst for God himself, for that living beginning of life, the one thing which could help you today?<sup>48</sup>

Here, he argues for the necessity for knowledge by describing the congregation's behavior and experience. By contrast, in the lectures he explains that believers must pray continually for knowledge, so that what is potential may become actual.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the emphasis is on the divine promise rather than human experience.

What is the explanation for this different emphasis on experience in the event of recognition? First, the sermons reflect the theology of *Romans I*, before Barth determined to distance himself from mediating theology. This explains the absence of the sharply dialectical language which pervades the lectures, e.g., references to "the impossible possibility." The second reason is to be found in Barth's appropriation of Calvin's theology of the knowledge of God. The objective element in Calvin's theology displaces the role formerly played by experience. Whereas the sermons describe the knowledge of God in terms of a continuum, beginning with self-knowledge, the lectures reflect Barth's characteristic emphasis on the antithesis between human and divine

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<sup>48</sup> S2, 125.

<sup>49</sup> EE, 103-04.

knowing.<sup>50</sup> They were delivered at the point when he “swung in line” with the specifically Calvinist expression of Reformation theology, with its strong emphasis on the knowledge of God as the basis for the *vita christiana*.

#### IV Interpretive Moves

Consideration of Barth’s homiletical moves reveals important elements of his interpretive approach. Whereas the lectures exhibit a three part reading strategy, identified in Chapter Three, there are six common elements in sermons, arranged more or less in the same order: (1) an announcement of sermon’s theme and interpretive framework; (2) a substantial discussion of human existence in relation to the theme – longing for change, in the first sermon, God as our beginning, in the second; (3) correlation of the picture of human existence formed in the previous move with the biblical text; (4) discussion of humanity in Christ; (5) re-presentation of the theme in the form of a question; (6) a brief coda. The following analysis examines each of these stages as Barth progresses through the text.<sup>51</sup>

(1) Announcement of theme. Barth announces the theme and interpretive framework of the first sermon as follows:

The living word of God and living faith in this word bring about a *change* in human existence. We *cannot* comprehend it or express in words how fundamental, how wide reaching and how momentous this change is. We can only *discover* and acknowledge that there is a force [power] which directs, moves and carries us [bears us] whose goal and limit we cannot see.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Both the sermons and the lectures explicitly link knowledge of God with the resurrection.

<sup>51</sup> The first sermon receives more detailed treatment, because of the overlap with the lectures.

<sup>52</sup> S1, 110.

At this point, there is no explicit reference to the words of the text. Rather, divine election, redemption, and hope, described in Eph. 1: 3-14, are summarized by the concept of change through faith in the word. Furthermore, Barth introduces faith in the word as the leading theological category to be used in interpreting the passage. It should be noted that the theme of the *sermon* is not equivalent to the leading idea in the *text*. Barth states later that the *Hauptsache* of Eph. 1:1-14 is the phrase, “in Christ.” The purpose of the sermon theme is to relate the text to human existence. This point can be clarified by noting that the phrase, “living faith in the living word of God,” does not appear in Ephesians as such. Rather, it is Barth’s reconstruction of vv. 13-14: “*In him* you also heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation and were sealed with the Spirit of promise through faith in him, who is the pledge of our inheritance until at last it becomes our possession to the praise of his glory.”<sup>53</sup> His paraphrase makes two significant changes. First, he adds the word, “living,” which figures prominently later in the sermon when Barth emphasizes that *living* faith occurs when Christ speaks the word and awakens faith: “As soon as we look at Christ, we can no longer confuse *God* with *death*, because *we recognize him* as the Living One, the creator, the moving force. *Christ speaks* the living word and *kindles* living faith.”<sup>54</sup> Second, the paraphrase emphasizes the role of faith in the saving event: faith in the word “brings about a change in human existence.” Thus, Barth relates the objective work of redemption and the subjective response.<sup>55</sup> In short, this interpretive framework is designed to show how the divine movement

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<sup>53</sup> Barth’s translation, S1, 110.

<sup>54</sup> S1, 116.

<sup>55</sup> Were he emphasizing the objective dimension alone, he might have said that the cross and resurrection have irrevocably changed human existence. Here we see the same emphasis on the objective as the subjective that is prominent in the lectures. In the sermons, he makes this point by insisting that divine redemption and human recognition of this work coincide.

described in Ephesians 1 becomes movement in the believer. Barth's interpretation is "existential" in this specific sense: it follows the movement from divine action into human existence.

The theme of the second sermon is, "God lives. And God is the one who rules"<sup>56</sup> or as he rephrases it, "God is our beginning:"

*God lives. And God is the one who rules. This is not a religious assertion. It is not dogma. It is not church doctrine. This is the truth which precedes all human perception about God and life. It can neither be proved nor refuted. Whoever wishes to prove or establish a human idea about God is already supported by the truth of God itself. Whatever is true about it, is true because God lives. . . . God himself is always the beginning. . . . God himself is the origin of whatever is true and honorable in our thoughts. We cannot think apart from God. We can only progress and build upon on the foundation which is given. The honor belongs to the Begin-ner.*<sup>57</sup>

Here, as in the previous sermon, the text of Eph. 1:15-23 is decidedly in the background. The leading theological categories used to interpret the passage are first, the doctrine of God, evident in the claim that God as our "origin," and second, the knowledge of God, evident in the references to human ideas and perceptions about God. Barth uses these theological categories throughout the sermon to establish connections between the text and the congregation's existence.

This interpretive framework is evident later in the sermon, where Barth combines the emphasis on God as our beginning with the theme of knowledge. Why does Paul pray for the Spirit of knowledge and understanding when he has already praised God for their faith and love, Barth asks? Because here, Paul "begins to speak about God:"

Now, he points to something entirely new and different from their faith and love; he points to a new beginning. *The Forward!* to which he calls them is not: "Forward on your own chosen path!" He means: "Forward from God!" . . . he holds before the fact that something *can* and *must be given* to them. To receive

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<sup>56</sup> S2, 119.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

what is given to us by God, what we can only pray for – that is *what is new*. Here, Paul begins to speak about God. Their faith and love are already old. It is their own faith and love. . . . But God's goodness is new every morning [cf. Lam. 3:22f.]. He tells them not to remain where they are. God is God today. Today they must hear his voice [cf. Ps. 95:7]. *The Spirit* of the knowledge of God – that is what Paul means!<sup>58</sup>

Here, the significance of the theme, “God is our beginning,” becomes evident.

Something is lacking in the congregation, namely God himself, who *should* be present and who *promises* to be present through the Spirit of knowledge, as the congregation earnestly seeks God. Therefore, Barth continues with a description of the knowledge of God that comes from the Spirit:

*The Spirit* is divine. The Spirit is not your spirit but God's Spirit, God's own power, God's path, God's goal, and God's kingdom. We become serious about God when we move beyond what is ours. This is the case even for the most faithful and loving people, the most recently renewed. This Spirit is a *Spirit of wisdom*, because he gives us discrimination to distinguish between what is human and what comes from God. . . . God wills to be *known*, to be grasped as the one whom we have not yet grasped. . . . The eyes of our hearts must be *illuminated* through the light itself, for what are eyes without light? The light comes first, the then eyes!<sup>59</sup>

Thus, Barth connects two theological themes which, on the surface, seem unrelated – the doctrine of God as our origin and the category of the knowledge of God. On the basis of this interpretive framework, he address the congregation's eschatological existence, concluding that Paul would say the same thing in Safenwil, urging the congregation “to ask about God himself, about the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, about this new and different thing which is given to us from God, which makes our faith and our love hopeful, fruitful, and oriented to the future.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> S2, 122-23.

<sup>59</sup> S2, 123.

<sup>60</sup> S2, 124.

(2) *A Discussion of Human Existence*. For the first half of the sermon, the biblical text remains in the background. In the foreground of the first sermon is a discussion of human existence, and in particular, longing for change. Although faith in the living word brings change, we manage to distort the truth, Barth observes. We regard the creaturely realm as vital and Christian faith as outdated, outmoded, and rather tame by comparison. He deftly presents this viewpoint so that it is plausible enough for his listeners to recognize themselves yet raising doubts about its viability:

We are getting *older*. We are learning *new things* and meeting new people. We are advancing in the world. New *desires* constantly well up in us and completely or partly overcome us. New *ideas* roar through the world like a tempest and sweep us along with them hither and yon. Our situation necessarily changes slowly, so we change ourselves. We get new ideas, seek new experiences, acquire new tastes, and forge new paths.<sup>61</sup>

Likewise, he presents the false view of Bible, church, and faith accurately enough to be recognizable – even deploying the Barthian critique of religion – and yet with enough irony to signal its fallacy:

*And the word of God? And faith? How peculiar these expressions sound in the midst of life's storm! If what we consider "life" is the storm, the movement, and the change, then the word of God must be stillness, motionlessness, and inertia. Faith must be rest, a station stop, a break so to speak, where nothing happens except that we gather a little strength for further advances, for new discoveries and developments. Isn't this true? What do we think about the Bible? Isn't the primary merit of this ancient book that it leaves us in peace, because it has nothing to do with life in the present, with the things which make us so weary? What do we think about Christianity? Isn't it a safe harbor for people who are utterly weary from the hustle and bustle, at least for the time being and who long for something immobile? What do we think about the Church? Isn't it an institution for the perpetually weary, the disappointed, and the unfulfilled, a little reassurance which even the world puts up with so that it can continue more contentedly on its own way? Isn't this true? Isn't this the prevailing view, so prevalent that it is almost impossible to avoid the conclusion that life and movement are here with us, inertia and death with God?*<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> S1, 112.

<sup>62</sup> S1, 111.

The sermon is effective, in part, because the upside-down view is sufficiently true to life, even attractive in its own way, that the listener recognizes himself.

Having described this viewpoint, Barth proceeds to expose it, using two arguments corresponding to the two errors indicated above. (a) Our restlessness and longing bear witness that we are originally related to God and that the world's change is not what we truly seek: "It is simply not true that *so-called life brings the change* that we expect. It *eludes us*; we *long* for it, so we *seek* it in 1000 different ways. Our ordinary lives with their restlessness bear *witness* that this is true. We are continually *thwarted* when we seek change where we are looking now."<sup>63</sup> This longing leads to the discovery that human life, in and of itself, is essentially inert: "*Just let a person make this one discovery: the world stands still; life stands still; we stand still; all of our work, striving, thinking and struggling is a huge stillness.*"<sup>64</sup> (b) The person who seriously seeks God will discover that the Bible, the church, and faith are not inert or innocuous as they once appeared:

The person *sought rest*, and was overcome with restlessness, and with intensity which makes the world's restlessness look like child's play. He opened the *ancient Bible*, and was confronted with the newest thing of all. He wanted to *be a Christian* in a leisurely way, and Christianity became an attack . . . which disturbed him more profoundly than anything he experienced from the doubts, revolutions or innovations in the so-called real world.<sup>65</sup>

Oh no, *God is not motionless, stillness!* Such an understanding is possible only for the person who *does not yet know him* or know himself accurately. It is based on a confusion between God and death.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> S1, 112.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> S1, 113.

<sup>66</sup> S1, 115.



Although we have managed to turn things around, the recognition of our error constitutes *the reversal of our reversal*. The sermon aims to convert our perception of things. We have a distorted point of view; the sermon attempts to expose it and invite us to assume another. This move resembles the Barthian subject-object reversal discussed in Chapter Three but applied to the problem of human perception. The creature mistakenly regards the world as the source of life but discovers that God is the living subject, the source of life and the longed for transformation.

(3) *Establishing a Connection between Human Existence and the Text.*

In the second half of each sermon, Barth's depiction of human existence is placed alongside the biblical text to establish a negative correlation. The following paraphrase of Eph. 1:4-14 is carefully constructed to so that so that the divine action described in the passage stands out against the background of human longing for change. The work of redemption is described as "the great change which we constantly seek and never find," a far more radical and revolutionary change than anything found in the world:

Nothing is more turbulent than the life of a person who can say with Paul, "*By the will of God I am what I am.*" There are no stronger words than the old, seemingly simple and feeble expression, "*Grace be with you [and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ!]*." Nothing can attack and impel human life more powerfully than the knowledge that *God chose him* before the foundations of the world were established! You see, *redemption through Christ's blood*, forgiveness of sins, and the complete wisdom and insight which God gives *actually* constitute the great change which we constantly seek and never find. . . . The *reuniting of all* things in Christ – things now scattered, broken apart, and dispersed – is the true meaning of the dreams we have for a complete life, healthy souls in healthy bodies, for an ordered and reasoned existence which can only be given to us, for the advent of heaven on earth, and the possibility of seeing earth in heaven's light.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> S1, 114.

Although the biblical text is now in the foreground, Barth offers little in the way of detailed textual explanation.<sup>68</sup> Rather, the contrast between human and divine change is the interpretation. This point is clarified by the following words, which appear in the margin of Barth's manuscript at this point: "*Zeitung – Bibel!*"<sup>69</sup> This notation should be understood in light of Barth's comment to Thurneysen:

One broods alternately over the newspaper and the New Testament and actually sees fearfully little of the organic connection between the two worlds concerning which one should now be able to give a clear and powerful witness.<sup>70</sup>

Barth's hermeneutic at this stage is determined by the concern to see "an organic connection" between human existence and the world of the text. Because creaturely existence correlates negatively with the reality of God, Barth can appeal to human longing for change as a witness to the divine change. Barth later rejected such attempts to establish a correlation between human experience and the knowledge of God. Even the attempt to establish a negative correlation – the void which corresponds to the divine reality, represents an attempt make God conform to human reality.<sup>71</sup>

(4) *Discussion of humanity in Christ.* Barth claims that everything that Paul says in Eph. 1:3-14 is summarized in the "two little words," "in Christ" or "in him." This phrase, the *Hauptsache*, conveys the meaning of the entire passage; conversely, the entire passage supplies the meaning of the Pauline motif, that is "in Christ" is expanded to include election, redemption, and the future inheritance. This is partly a pragmatic move – there is not enough time to "enter into the details of the passage," he says – but it

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<sup>68</sup> Barth does not explain individual words or phrases and in fact, says very little about the text per se until he arrives at the explanation of the phrase, "in Christ."

<sup>69</sup> S1, 114.

<sup>70</sup> B-Th I, 299-300. Barth expressed this comment to Thurneysen earlier in the context of his regret over coming to the Bible so late in life: "If only we had been converted to the Bible earlier so that we would now have solid ground under our feet."

<sup>71</sup> For a good discussion, see Busch, *The Great Passion*, 25-26.

proceeds from his understanding of the nature of the text. The individual words point to the *Sache*: “Everything in the passage derives meaning from *the main thing*.”<sup>72</sup> In a related exegetical move, he links the phrase, “in Christ” with the Pauline concept of “the new man,” which occurs later in Ephesians. This move establishes a connection between the identity of Christ and the identity of the creature “in Christ.”

Barth introduces this concept of the new man in Christ at the end of the first sermon, where he describes how change through the living word becomes change in the believer: “When we hear the word of truth through him and are awakened to faith through him, *the change* in us is as thorough as it could possibly be.”<sup>73</sup> He then paraphrases Eph. 1:4-14, showing how each divine action described in the text enters human existence: “We have *a new place to stand*. . . . We are *restored*. . . . We receive a *new goal*.” All of these realities are summarized as “*the new man*.”

We live for God’s honor. To become *the new man* in him, in Christ means living for God’s honor. This new man changes everything. Apart from him, nothing is certain. The new man fears nothing and can do all things. He makes all things new in heaven and upon earth. This new man is *Christ himself*. And we also are the new man in so far as we listen to Christ and believe in him.<sup>74</sup>

Who is “the new man” in this passage? At the beginning, Barth is clearly referring to the human creature, who “become[s] *the new man*” in Christ and therefore lives for God’s glory. He then describes the new man through a series of qualities and actions, some of which are unique to Christ, others shared by the believer. The wording is deliberately ambiguous. Who, for instance, is referred to in the sentence, “The new man fears nothing and can do all things”? Paul says this about himself in Philipppians. But as we reach the end of the passage, it becomes increasingly clear that the referent is divine – “He makes

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<sup>72</sup> S1, 112.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> S1, 116-17.

all things new in heaven and upon earth” – until he is identified: “This new man is *Christ himself*.” The passage’s subtle but deliberate ambiguity emphasizes the shared identity between the creature and Christ.

Barth’s interpretation of the new man in Christ in the first sermon can be understood as an attempt to give full weight to the shared identity between the believer and Christ without appealing to concepts of participation, union with Christ, or mediating language suggestive of a static relationship between God and the creature, a “bridge from eternity” which the creature can possess or control. The passage above emphasizes the divine proclaimer, reminiscent of the lectures, only here, it is Christ rather than God the Father who preaches. The emphasis is not on a designated place but on the nature of the divine speech-act. The creature is in Christ through the speaking and hearing of divine things. Finally, Barth safeguards his interpretation from any suggestion of a static relationship by describing the new man in Christ dialectically: “We repeat these two little words: in him, in Christ, and *by them we express* what we are and are not, what we have and do not have, our wealth and our poverty, our present and our future.”<sup>75</sup>

The depiction of humanity in Christ found in the second sermon is considerably more complex. Although Barth includes the emphasis on Christ’s speech-act, he explores a variety of interpretive possibilities. The passage occurs at the end of the sermon, where Barth summarizes the meaning of the knowledge of God:

**Paul really knew Christ.** We can sense even now in his words that to know Christ is something beyond all measure. Christ is more than faith and love, *more than Christianity and progress*. Christ is *the great Forward!* from God. Christ is *the decision* for the good path. Christ is the Yes which God himself has answered to the question of whether or not the world and humanity should receive grace and blessing from him. In Christ, *the power of God is active*. God is not merely an idea or the ultimate unity; he is not behind the scenes. God is powerful. He has

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<sup>75</sup> S1, 117.

power, because he needs it. He has things to do. God has a history. God is decisive. God is not impartial about life and death; he has taken a stand. Light is greater than darkness. God is more powerful than evil. *The victory of God is in Christ*. In him, through his rising from the dead, initiation into the heavenly world has taken place; this present world of ours comes to God. In him, the power of God has conquered all opposing powers, and his conquest begins to make itself known more widely among us. Through him, sin, suffering and death have encountered a contradiction which can no longer be forgotten. Christ is *the beginning of a new humanity*. Now, we are chosen, newly created, and redeemed in him. In him, God himself has stepped in among us. He does not remain alone. He draws us into the great divine Yes and Forward! He is the head, we are the members. He desires to fill us, is able to fill us, and we shall be filled by him. We are his congregation – and not we alone but many – all. No one is outside. We can no longer say “No” to anyone now that God in Christ has said “Yes” to us.<sup>76</sup>

At the beginning of the passage, Barth emphasizes Christ’s objective work.

Christ is the great Other. He is more than progress, more than our faith and love, and he says Yes to God on our behalf, resolving the mystery of how things will “turn out between us and God.” Here, Barth rings the changes on the various possible interpretations of humanity in Christ. He appeals to a representative notion of humanity in Christ, inasmuch as he says Yes to God on our behalf. He also refers to the cosmic dimensions of Christ’s office, the initiation of humanity into the heavenly world through his resurrection and the approach of the present world to God. At the end of the passage, he uses Calvin’s favorite image to describe humanity in Christ: “He is the head, we are the members.” Finally, he suggests that the congregation is the place where we are in Christ. In a single paragraph, he refers to the objective, representative, cosmic, locative, and headship interpretations of humanity in Christ.

The passage is a kaleidoscope of images which Barth does not coordinate into a coherent concept of humanity in Christ. It is worth pointing out, however, that certain details anticipate his description of humanity in Christ in *Christ and Adam*, a similarity

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<sup>76</sup> S2, 125-26.

noted in the earlier discussion of election in the lectures. In the exposition of Romans 5, Barth explains that “in him” means that the creature “reflects Christ’s nature” and that Christ has “invaded the world of Adam” so that Adam and those he represents are free to “pass into the world of Christ.”<sup>77</sup> He uses representative language to affirm that “In Christ also, the man is in humanity and humanity is in the man.”<sup>78</sup> The Christology of the early Barth lacks this level of sophistication. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to imagine the progression from the sermon of 1919 to the mature work.

(5) *God’s Questions and Answer*. To repeat the words, “in Christ” is to express “***the great question and the great answer*** of our life,” Barth says. He describes the gospel here as God’s great answer – the affirmation that we hear and believe the risen Christ in his self-proclamation – and the corresponding question about our continued belief:

When we risk repeating these two little words after the Bible, “in him, in Christ,” we express ***the great question and the great answer*** of our life. The great *answer*, because isn’t it true that we hear, we believe? Who is prepared to say the opposite about himself? The great *question*, because every day it must be asked if we truly hear and believe what Christ has told us about God and his world, does it not.<sup>79</sup>

Re-expressing the content of the passage in the form of a question reflects a hermeneutical principle which Barth mentions frequently in his lectures during this period. We approach the text with our own questions only to discover that the Bible translates all of our questions into the question about God, giving new meaning to our

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<sup>77</sup> *Christ and Adam*, 35; 47; 49.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>79</sup> S1, 117.

search. When we say Yes to God's question, the change promised in Ephesians becomes a change in us:

By saying Yes in this way, the two little words and their contents gradually becomes *true*. Paul certainly meant that it must gradually become true in the life of Christians and in Christianity. . . . We should never *get comfortable*, however, *with* the knowledge that it becomes true in us so slowly. Knowing this must become a summons to listen more seriously and to believe more completely than before. Something must be set *in motion* in us if we have understood how greatly God moves all things in Christ. So the man of God must say to us: "God *waits*. You however must *hurry*." Let what is true become true.<sup>80</sup>

## Conclusion

The attempt to correlate questions about human existence with the word the biblical text dominates Barth's interpretive approach in the sermons. This "existential" approach is evident materially, by his emphasis on experience in the knowledge of God, and formally, by his homiletical moves; a lengthy discussion of human existence precedes his exposition of the text and is placed alongside the text as in interpretive device.<sup>81</sup> Barth's concern for human existence is also evident in the Göttingen lectures. There are noticeable differences between the sermons and the lectures, both in interpretive approach and material emphases. These can be summarized in four points.

First, the themes of longing and restlessness, which dominate the sermons, are part of the cultural background of the early years of dialectical theology. Barth's references to *Sehnsucht*, for example, bear a strong resemblance to Lothar Scheryer's description of the theme of the storm:

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<sup>80</sup> S1, 117-18.

<sup>81</sup> By "existential," Barth means something quite different from Bultmann; he displays little interest in Existentialist philosophy at this point. For the state of the conversation in 1928, see *Barth-Bultmann Letters*, 38-39.

The storm [*Der Sturm*] purifies, uproots, destroys. But it also roars through the world like the Holy Ghost. It is the never-ending transformation, the renewal from the ground up, the cipher under which the spiritual truth of the Absolute meets the frailty and hope of temporal existence.<sup>82</sup>

Likewise, Thurneysen's 1917 sermon in *Suchet Gott* expresses the spirit of Barth's first Ephesians sermon:

We have already spoken often of the great perplexity [*Ratlosigkeit*] and longing [*Sehnsucht*] by which our entire time and world has been gasped. There will scarcely be any among us who have not been touched and moved by it. We are all different from our fathers in that we are conscious of a strange unrest [*Unruhe*] in ourselves and around us which can no longer be suppressed by any means; which rather grows constantly and swells like a powerful flood. We sense simply that much, much, perhaps everything which we have thought and done up to this point no longer suffices because it does not bring us forward; does not, in any case, liberate us from the deep embarrassments, disturbances and need under which we suffer and we look longingly for a new thinking and doing which would bring us real liberation. We sense that we are at the end of our strength and wisdom and that a new beginning has to take place. We find ourselves in a deep dissatisfaction with everything hitherto [*allem Bisherigen*] and ready to hand [*Vorhandenen*]. Like an underground stream, this unrest and longing goes through the life of our day and moves humankind inwardly and shakes violently external things and relationships.<sup>83</sup>

Thurneysen suggests that the longing for change is correlated (negatively) with the reality of divine change, a central theme in Barth's sermon.

Second, in 1919, Barth speaks of the relation between divine and human action in a way that is reminiscent of Tillich's theology of correlation. To be sure, he speaks of a negative correlation. Still, at times, he *sounds* like Tillich, even though he does not embrace correlation as a theological method.<sup>84</sup> The theological explanation for this emphasis on correlation is to be found in Barth's theology of proclamation. There is an "ontological structure" to the preaching situation in Barth's account. In this crisis situation, the creature's longing for reality and questions about human existence are

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<sup>82</sup> Quoted in McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 34.

<sup>83</sup> Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen, *Suchet Gott, so werdet ihr leben!*, 133.

<sup>84</sup> Busch, *The Great Passion*, 25-26.



opened to God's reality.<sup>85</sup> There is therefore a concursus between the creature's longing and the divine reality. Barth later rejected the idea that human knowledge corresponds in some to God's reality, even negatively, on the grounds that such a claim limits God's reality to that which is imaginable by the creature. It is a form of natural theology. In the 1919 sermons, however, he accords a significantly greater role to human experience in the knowledge of God. In this regard, they are closer to the theology of *Romans I* than to the sharply dialectical theology of *Romans II*.

Third, we can see a development in Barth's understanding of the nature of "existential interpretation" between the sermons and the lectures. In both cases, he is concerned to address the meaning of the text to human existence. However, the emphasis on theological objectivity means that, by the time of the lectures, "existential" also means "objective." What makes an interpretation "existential" according to Barth, is reference to the object, the *Sache*, rather than to feelings or other psychologically verifiable realities. What matters is that we are called to the subject by the ever recurring phrase, "in Christ." When God addresses the creature, he addresses human existence. It is the movement from God to the creature, expressed in the divine speech-act, which constitutes existential interpretation rather than attempts to correlate human existence with divine reality.

Finally, between 1919 and 1921-1922, Barth appropriated Calvin's theology of the knowledge of God. From that point, the role formerly assigned to experience is played by the knowledge of God.

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<sup>85</sup> Schmid, *Verkündigung und Dogmatik*, 22.

## A Translation of Barth's Sermons on Ephesians 1

### *Predigten 1919*

Safenwil, Sunday May 4, 1919

Ephesians 1:1-14

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus and the believers in Christ Jesus. Grace be with you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>86</sup>

Praised be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing of the heavenly world in *Christ*.

*In him* he chose us before the foundations of the world were laid that we might be holy and blameless in him.<sup>87</sup> *In love* he chose us so that we might be his children through Jesus Christ according to his good pleasure<sup>88</sup> to the praise of the glory of his grace<sup>89</sup> which he lavished upon us<sup>90</sup> in his beloved.

*In him* we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the abundance of his grace, which is amply given to us as complete wisdom and insight. He has let us know the mystery of his will, to carry out according to his good pleasure<sup>91</sup> the reuniting of all things<sup>92</sup> in Christ in the fullness of time as he planned, things heavenly and things earthly in him.

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<sup>86</sup> *Predigten 1919*, 173-88. The editor's annotations are in brackets. Italics, used to indicate emphasis in Barth's delivery, are the editor's.

<sup>87</sup> Beginning the verse with "In him" produces a clumsy sentence in English, but the translation conveys an important feature of Barth's handling of the Greek text. He makes a point of beginning each verse with this prepositional construction (except v. 15), emphasized by italics: "*In ihm . . . In ihm* hat er uns erwählt . . . *In Liebe* hat her er uns anesehen . . . *In ihm* haben wir die Erlösung durch sein Blut . . . *In ihm* sind wir Erben . . . *In ihm* seid auch ihr. . ."

<sup>88</sup> "nach dem Wohlgefallen seines Willens," literally: "according to the good pleasure of his will."

<sup>89</sup> "zum Lob der Herrlichkeit seiner Gnade," more idiomatically: "to the praise of his glorious grace."

<sup>90</sup> ". . . seiner Gnade, mit der er uns begnadigt hat in seinem Geliebten," alternately: "the grace, in which he pardoned us in his beloved."

<sup>91</sup> "das Geheimnis seines Willens, nach seinem Wohlgefallen," the same use of "Willen" and "Wohlgefallen" as in v. 5.

<sup>92</sup> "alle Dinge in Christo wieder zusammenzufassen,"

*In him* we have become heirs and were chosen for this according to the purpose of the one who accomplishes everything according to the intention of his will, so that we might be the first to hope in Christ to the praise of his glory.

*In him* you also heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation and were sealed with the Spirit of promise through faith in him, who<sup>93</sup> is the pledge of our inheritance until at last it becomes our possession<sup>94</sup> to the praise of his glory.

## I

The living word of God and living faith in this word bring about a *change* in human existence. *We can neither* comprehend nor express how fundamental, extensive, and portentous this change is. We can only *discover* and acknowledge that there is a force which directs, moves and carries us, even though we cannot see where it is taking us; we cannot see our final destination. We can only be *amazed* and grateful that all of us are being carried by this force and *lament* that we are not carried by it more willingly, joyfully, and completely. We can only *state the fact* that all human ideas, ventures, thoughts and revolutions – no matter how great and radical they may seem – are quite insignificant and modest compared to the change produced by this force.]

What a complete reversal from the way we *normally view* life! *All of us truly long for* a change in our existence. We see its *limits*, fallacies, and riddles far too clearly. All of us here are too closely associated *with God's* house to be content with the status quo. But it is foolish, short-sighted, and superficial to seek or *expect this change* where there is no change and can be no change. We are getting *older*. We are learning *new things* and meeting new people. We are advancing in the world. New *desires* constantly well up in us and completely or partly overcome us. New *ideas* roar through the world

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<sup>93</sup> The pronoun refers to “the Spirit of promise.”

<sup>94</sup> “zur schließlichen Einlösung unseres Eigentums.”

like a tempest and sweep us along with them hither and yon. Our situation necessarily changes slowly, so we change ourselves. We get new ideas, seek new experiences, acquire new tastes, and forge new paths. Life is a storm, driven and impelled by a thousand rushing waves, and we swim along, often with enthusiasm, often laboriously. But where have we come from, and *where are we headed?* *Is this* life, this constant rushing, being driven by various urges<sup>95</sup> from the cradle to the grave? *Is this* the change we long for? *And the word of God?* And faith? How peculiar these expressions sound in the midst of life's storm! If what we consider "life" is the *storm*, the movement, and the change, then the word of God must be *stillness*, motionlessness, and inertia. Faith must be *rest*, a station stop, a break so to speak, where nothing happens except that we gather a little strength for further advances, for new discoveries and developments. Isn't this true?|

What do we think about the *Bible*? Isn't the primary merit of this ancient book that it leaves us in peace, because it has nothing to do with life in the present, with the things which make us so weary? What do we think about *Christianity*? Isn't it a safe harbor<sup>96</sup> for people who are utterly weary from the hustle and bustle, at least for the time being<sup>97</sup> and who long for something immobile? What do we think about the *Church*? Isn't it an institution for the perpetually weary, the disappointed, and the unfulfilled, a little reassurance which even the world puts up with so that it can continue more contentedly on its own way? *Isn't this true?* Isn't this the prevailing view, so prevalent that it is almost impossible to avoid the conclusion that life and movement are here *with*

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<sup>95</sup> "dieses Eilen und Fließen und Drängen und Sich-Vorschieben [?]"

<sup>96</sup> "Ein Ruhehafen [?]"

<sup>97</sup> "die des Treibens ganz oder vorläufig müde . . ." [Cf. J. W. von Goethe, "Wanderes Nachtlied:" "Ach, ich bin des Treibens müde . . ."].

us, inertia and death with God? Isn't this how it turns out with the people who conscientiously *practice* their religion? And is it any surprise if the liveliest people have *no time*, no desire, and no interest in the Bible, Christianity, or the Church? "We are not weary yet," they say. "We still believe in life. Maybe later. But then again, maybe not"! *Who* can blame them? Are they wrong?

***How truly odd*** that humanity has managed to turn things so completely upside down! It is simply not true that *so-called life brings the change* that we expect. It *eludes us*; we *long* for it, so we *seek* it in 1000 different ways. Our ordinary lives with their restlessness bear *witness* that this is true. We are continually *thwarted* when we seek change where we are looking now. Getting *older* does not mean that we change. *New experiences* do not add up to new life. *Making progress* does not mean that we are moving beyond the here and now. Having *different ideas* is not the same as becoming different people. *A better situation* is not necessarily a healthy, happy or just situation. *The world* is a big place, and the homeland we seek is far away. We can only take a few *steps* in this world, and our alleged progress in the world is nearly always a matter of going around in circles. *The best* thing about our striving and activity is our desire and the longing itself, not what we set out to accomplish or end up accomplishing. *Just let a person make this one discovery:*<sup>98</sup> the world *stands still*; life stands still; we stand still; all of our work, striving, thinking<sup>99</sup> and struggling is a huge stillness. It is always *the same* with me, with you, in good times and bad, with the course of the world and of our lives;

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<sup>98</sup> Barth begins a thought here which is completed at the beginning of the paragraph. The train of thought is as follows: "Anyone who has made one discovery (i.e., seen through one illusion and discovered that it is actually the world which stands still, etc.) . . . . Yes, anyone who has discovered that our great restlessness is only the rest of impotence . . . . Whoever has discovered *that* has discovered something truly significant . . . . Because he also sees through the second illusion, the idea that divine reality is motionless."

<sup>99</sup> "Denken [?]"

today, tomorrow, like yesterday and like 10 or 1000 years ago, unless something else, something *different* actually brings change. This is the reality of life and its movement, in and of itself.

Yes, a person who has made the one discovery – that our great restlessness is only the rest that comes from *impotence*; our lack of peace is the peace of the *graveyard*; our supposed life is *death* if *the Other* does not appear; that we continually seek but never find, because we are looking in the wrong place – a person who has discovered *that* has made a huge discovery. Because he also recognizes the second error, the idea that the *divine* is *motionless*, stillness, the resting point we return to when there is absolutely *nowhere else* to go and we have *grown tired* of everything else. Yes, routinely we mistake God's word and faith for something sluggish; we confuse it with death, or at least we try to. However, *we* never entirely succeed, as long as we manage to find something in the world that is alive and that we long for. Many a person has *already experienced* the disadvantages that come with the earnest search for God. The person *sought rest*, and was overcome with restlessness, and with intensity which makes the world's restlessness look like child's play. He opened the *ancient Bible*, and was confronted with the newest thing of all. He wanted to *be a Christian* in a leisurely way, and Christianity became an attack, not only against him but against human society as it is presently constituted – against righteousness, as it is currently understood; against what is currently considered peace. It became an attack which disturbed him more profoundly than anything he experienced from the doubts, revolutions or innovations in the so-called real world. He had already *come to terms with* the fact that things are always the same and always will be; that this life is enervating rather than enlivening. He had come to terms with sin and

with human suffering, with himself, and with death. So when he met God, it became completely clear for the first time: No, things do not remain the same. There is progress, renewal, and an about-face of all things. Most importantly, there a change in the person himself – so profound that even our most extravagant hopes and expectations fall short of it.

This is *the second, even greater discovery*, which follows the first: *the world* stands still, but Christianity is a bold and triumphant advance. *Life* out there in the work day world makes a person quiet, calm, and dull. But here in the Church, what moves us – if it moves us – is fire, storm, and earthquake. Newspaper – Bible.<sup>100</sup> Nothing is more turbulent than the life of a person who can say with Paul, “*By the will of God I am what I am.*” There are no stronger words than the old, seemingly simple and feeble expression, “*Grace be with you [and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ!].*” Nothing can attack and impel human life more powerfully than the knowledge that *God chose him* before the foundations of the world were established! You see, *redemption through Christ’s blood*, forgiveness of sins, and the complete wisdom and insight which God gives *actually* constitute the great change which we constantly seek and never find. We simply had to notice this again. The *reuniting of all* things in Christ – things now scattered, broken apart, and dispersed – is the true meaning of the dreams we have for a complete life, healthy souls in healthy bodies, for an ordered and reasoned existence which can only be given to us, for the advent of heaven on earth, and the possibility of seeing earth in heaven’s light.<sup>101</sup> It is a matter of noticing once more that this is the real meaning of our dreams. We are *to inherit a renewed world*, and we have already

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<sup>100</sup> The editor notes that Barth wrote these two words in the margin.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. the following from Seneca: “mens sana in corpore sano” (Büchmann, p. 581).

experienced a deposit, the Holy Ghost who guarantees our inheritance. Through him, a measure of our creaturely existence has already become new, though only a very small measure as yet. It precisely because we have such a hope and such a deposit that we must seek so urgently and restlessly in our time for a better future – despite all of our doubts, reservations, failures and errors.]

If we understood ourselves, we would understand that the kingdom of *God* is what we truly hope for. *We must first understand it.* As long as we do not understand it, it cannot become true. In the meantime, God is already present in our restlessness and longing, *ready*, infinitely ready, to bless us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly world. The spiritual blessing is the *new life* which we shall be granted. The heavenly world is the *new world* which is to appear in our midst. Oh no, *God* is not *motionless*, *stillness!* Such an understanding is possible only for the person who *does not yet know him* or know himself accurately. It is based on a confusion between God and death. But the power has been removed from death [cf. 2 Tim. 1.10] where God finds the word grasped through faith. Everything which proceeds from God is *in flux* and in motion. God is the *creator*; always and unto eternity. God is the one who speaks, always and unto eternity: “Look! – I make all things new!” [Rev. 21.5]; and “What is born of God *overcomes* the world” [1 John 5.4]. His kingdom does not stand, it *comes* [cf. Mtt. 6.10 par.].

## II

Change through the living word of God and through living faith – *that is the Gospel.* We have heard from our text how Paul could not say enough about *this* change and *expounded upon* it by attempting to illuminate it from every side. When we reflect



upon the text, we can see that there is not a *single extraneous word*. Everything in the passage derives meaning from *the main thing*. We can never say too much about this main thing. We do not have time now to enter into the details of the passage. Besides, everything he has to say is *contained* concisely, simply and succinctly in the two little words which are repeated over and over, “*in him*.” He means that the change is in him, in Christ. As soon as we look at Christ, we can no longer confuse *God* with *death*, because *we recognize him* as the Living One, the creator, the moving force. *Christ speaks* the living word and *kindles* living faith. In the fullness of time, when there was more than enough inert, funereal human existence, God himself *went into action*. *Jesus* was God’s act, the son of man and the son of God, his life, death, and rising from the dead. In him, he has *blessed* us, and he intends to bless us with every spiritual blessing of the heavenly world.]

When we hear the word of truth through him and are awakened to faith through him, *the change* in us is as thorough as it could possibly be. We have *a new place to stand*. We are not merely the sum of what we make of our life. Other people cannot hold sway over us. Our situation cannot determine who we are. This present world subsides and our arrogance and anxiety along with it. God alone remains. He alone is the one who chooses us freely, according to his good pleasure, who calls us and makes us what we are. We are *restored*. We do not belong to ourselves; we are consecrated to God. We cannot understand the world according to our own ideas; God gives us wisdom and insight to direct us. We cannot attain assurance or certainty ourselves; God seals us with his Spirit so that we are in a covenant with him. We receive *a new goal*. The world is not here for us to improve. People are not here for us to serve and to help. Our purpose

in life cannot be ourselves, not even our justification or our blessedness. Everything which happens to us and through us happens for the praise of his glory. We live for God's honor. To become *the new man* in him, in Christ means living for God's honor. This new man changes everything. Apart from him, nothing is certain. The new man fears nothing and can do all things. He makes all things new in heaven and upon earth. This new man is *Christ himself*. And we also are the new man in so far as we listen to Christ and believe in him. |

When we risk repeating these two little words after the Bible, "in him, in Christ," we express *the great question and the great answer* of our life. The great *answer*, because isn't it true that we hear, we believe? Who is prepared to say the opposite about himself? The great *question*, because every day it must be asked if we truly hear and believe what Christ has told us about God and his world, doesn't it? We repeat these two little words, "in him . . . in Christ," and *with them we express* what we are and are not, what we have and what we lack, our wealth and our poverty, our present and our future. We can certainly do *nothing better* than to repeat these two little words, "in him" thankfully and humbly and to reflect attentively and honestly about everything which they entail, always with the desire and the longing to say Yes – Yes to the new man *in him* – even as *we also* are new people in him. And *through* the new people in him and in us, the entire blessing of the heavenly world enters our life! By saying Yes in this way, the two little words and their contents gradually becomes *true*. Paul certainly meant that it must gradually become true in the life of Christians and in Christianity.

We should never *get comfortable*, however, *with* the knowledge that it becomes true in us so slowly. Knowing this must become a summons to listen more seriously and

to believe more completely than before. Something must be set *in motion* in us if we have understood how greatly God moves all things in Christ. So the man of God must say to us: “God *waits*. You however must *hurry*.” Let what is true become true.

Safenwil, Sunday, May 11, 1919

### Ephesians 1:15-23

Therefore, since I learned about the faith which exists among you in the Lord Jesus and about your love for all the saints, I have not ceased to give thanks for you and to remember you in my prayers, that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of God, the illumination of the eyes of your heart, that you may know how great the hope is that is given you through his call, the abundance of the glory of his inheritance for his saints, and the inestimable greatness of his power for us who believe in the exercise of the power of his strength.

He exercised this [power] upon Christ when he raised him from the dead and placed him at his right hand in the heavenly world over all origins and authorities and powers and dominions and over everything which can be named, not only in this world but also in the world to come; and he placed everything at his feet and made him the head of everything in the Church, for whose filling he fills all in all.

### I

*God lives.* And God is the one who rules.<sup>102</sup> This is *not a religious assertion*. It is not dogma. It is not church doctrine. This is the truth which precedes all human perception about God and life. It can neither be proved nor refuted. Whoever wishes to prove or establish a human idea about God is already supported by the truth of God itself. Whatever is true about it, is true because God lives. There is no true believing apart from

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<sup>102</sup> “Gott ist’s, der regiert” von S. Wolf (1752-1810) nach Psalm 97 (GERS [1891] 22; GERS [1952] 24).

God himself. Whoever who intends [?] to *refute* and demolish a human thought about God, something which is often necessary, is also supported by God's truth. He contends with what is untrue, because God himself lives. There is not even honest unbelief apart from God himself. God himself is always the *beginning*. When we notice that, we become *calm* and confident in the face of the diversity of human thoughts. They pose no threat to God. They would not event exist apart from God. We also become *humble* and attentive. God is always greater than the truest thing that we can think about him. God himself is the origin of whatever is true and honorable in our thoughts. We cannot think apart from God. We can only progress and build upon on the foundation which is given. The honor belongs to the Begin-ner.<sup>103</sup>

## II

The world *has no life of its own*, apart from God, separated from God. It is always our own *error*, inattention, and incompetence when God and the world *become separated*,<sup>104</sup> when we *no longer understand* God as the creator and redeemer of the world, but only as a distant, transcendent essence or idea; when we *explain* the world without speaking about God, using various lifeless concepts such as “Nature,” “Fate,” “History,” or “Life,” without acknowledging that there are not many names but only one name above all names. The **world exists through God** and in God, comes from God and belongs to God [cf. Rom: 11:36]. He is the life of our life, the power of our powers, the

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<sup>103</sup> “Dem Anfänger allein gebührt die Ehre.” Throughout the sermon, Barth refers to God as the “Anfänger,” the beginning and origin. Because the normal meaning of the term is “amateur” or “novice,” it is being used ironically here. The translation “Begin-ner” is an attempt to convey the double meaning.

<sup>104</sup> “auseinanderfällt.”

ground of our grounds.<sup>105</sup> Whatever else we say, we can say only because we *have spoken about God first*.<sup>106</sup> We always speak about God first, whether we know it or not, whether we intend to or not. When we proceed differently, when we regard the world and life as if God did not exist, live, and rule, we *have a false understanding of ourselves* and become untrue to ourselves. Then, we must live with **the consequences**, and they are bitter and painful indeed. But this does not invalidate the truth, which stands at the beginning, and in no way removes it – it is truth without us. *Paganism*, idolatry and godlessness are terrible darkness, but even the darkness witnesses to the light. Apart from light, there could be no darkness. *Sin* is apostasy [*Abfall*], and it is alarming,<sup>107</sup> but it is true that in big ways and small, we continually fall away from truth into lies, from power into weakness, from life into indifference. But by apostasy from life, we witness to our original standing in life. Life's *suffering* makes us acutely aware that our situation is altered. But when we suffer, sigh, and cry out that we cannot and will not be resigned to it, we recognize that something remains unchanged, that suffering is not our beginning, but a harmful consequence, a form of disorder. *Death*, a huge negation at the end of our lives, is dark and unfathomable, because only life, meaning and eternity are clear and can be clear. On the basis of our beginning, [*von Haus aus*] we have no concept or way of understanding negation or annihilation. It is only with greatest difficulty can we get used to the idea that one day, it will all be over for us.<sup>108</sup> We will never manage to be completely reconciled to the idea. We have always spoken about God in the beginning.]

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<sup>105</sup> Barth uses this paradoxical expression frequently to mean that we have a basis for our life, our decisions, etc., but God is the ground, the foundation of our foundation.

<sup>106</sup> Lit., "We always say "God" first." Barth means that God is encompassed in, or the presupposition of everything we speak about. Anything we say perforce assumes the reality of God.

<sup>107</sup> Ed. schaurig [?]

<sup>108</sup> "daß es wirklich aus sein soll mit uns."

**The mystery of life** is not the question of whether there is a God greater than the world and humankind. That question is *settled* before it is raised. God himself is *not mysterious*, hidden, or enigmatic. “In him we *live* and move and have our being“ [Acts 17:28]. What is mysterious is the question about how we *are with God*, how we *proceed* from our beginning, whether we say *Yes or No* to God. “No” means infidelity, sin, suffering and ultimately death. “Yes” means truth, freedom, joy and eternal life. With God, it is *already* decided. It is *always* up to God to decide.<sup>109</sup> The mystery is *how* it shall be decided, *what* we will understand about God and experience from God.

### III

However, it is *not we who choose* God, but **he who chooses us** unto truth and unto life. It is *not he who enters* our chosen path, but we who must enter upon his path. Certainty about the right path does not depend on us but on him. *We cannot* make our way along this path, we can only be guided by him. *We exist* only because God exists. *We live* only because we live in him. We can only *say Yes* to his rule. He is always the *First*, not once but continually. *Our own* existence, being, and direction constitute the error and ruin of humanity. We become untrue to ourselves and have a false understanding of ourselves precisely in the attempt to *make something of ourselves* rather than to speak first about God. It is impossible to take this too seriously: *God is our beginning*. When God is *no longer new* for us; when we already have our own assurance that we are in God's presence and get used to the idea that he is in us; when we are certain

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<sup>109</sup> “An Gott entscheidet es sich immer.”

that, "I know already," "I am already," "I have already," then we are mistaken about God and change the truth into untruth [cf. Rom. 1:18].|

**Here is the strange thing in our text:** Paul writes that *he thanks* God continually for their faith and love. But then he goes on to say that he remembers them in his prayers, that the Father of glory may *give them* the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. It is as if their faith and love *were nothing*, as if, along with the great and beautiful things which they already have, they must receive something entirely new and *different*. And in fact, that is precisely what he means. Paul *means God*, to be precise. These days, a *pastor* would probably have said that their faith and love must mature; that they must have more faith, proceed even farther on the good path, become even more fervent, enthusiastic, earnest, and active! That is what we are accustomed to hear from thousands of sermons and devotional books. We hear the same thing outside of the Church: We must take our responsibilities more seriously, endure suffering with greater patience, become more enlightened, and make more and more progress.|

Paul rejoices over the godliness which exists already among his friends. But then he places all that to one side and speaks about it no longer. Instead, he changes the emphasis and speaks about God, *the Father* [of glory], as if he had said not a word about the good Christians in Ephesus. Now, he points to something entirely new and different from their faith and love; he points to a new beginning. *The Forward!* to which he calls them is not: "Forward on your own chosen path!" He means: "Forward from God!" He does not admonish them about their Christianity, as we always do, preferring to be admonished about what we are in ourselves, what we think about and emphasize about ourselves. He tells them that he gives thanks for them in his prayer and *prays* for what

only God himself can do for them. He does not tell them to think about anything or to do anything! Rather, he holds before the fact that something *can* and *must be given* to them. To receive what is given to us by God, what we can only pray for – that is *what is new*. Here, Paul begins to speak about God. Their faith and love are already old. It is their own faith and love. Certainly, they have God's goodness to thank for what is theirs. But God's goodness is new every morning [cf. Lam. 3:22f.]. He tells them not to remain where they are. God is God today. Today they must hear his voice [cf. Ps. 95:7]. *The Spirit* of the knowledge of God – that is what Paul means!

*The Spirit* is divine. The Spirit is not your spirit but God's Spirit, God's own power, God's path, God's goal, and God's kingdom. We become serious about God when we move beyond what is ours. This is the case even for the most faithful and loving people, the most recently renewed. This Spirit is a *Spirit of wisdom*, because he gives us discrimination to distinguish between what is human and what comes from God. He is a *Spirit of revelation*, because he gives us confidence and a mind open to the divine, which appears all the time in the creaturely realm. God wills to be *known*, to be grasped as the one whom we have not yet grasped. He wills that a step be taken from him to us and continually new steps. The eyes of our hearts must be *illuminated* through the light itself, for what are eyes without light? The light comes first, then eyes! So Paul places God himself in the foreground – his election, creation, greatness, and mercy. What we already understand, believe and know, do and think, are and have are not yet God; today, they are no longer God. God is the one who says to us each morning: "*I, I alone*, not you!" What we are flows from this, "I alone!" What we will become must flow again from this source.



Paul would not speak any differently to us **even in the present**. And honestly, we find nothing in the Bible other than this urgent pointing to God himself. I do *not* believe that Paul *would find much to object to* in our faith and love. He would probably see much more that is authentic, beautiful, effective, and lively than we ourselves can see. He would thank God as he did previously. He would probably say to us that our *Christianity*, our Church, our piety, our *behavior* in other areas, our morality, and our progressive convictions are exactly right. Our *sermons*, school system, welfare system, *associations*, our Salvation Army, our *cooperatives*, and our socialism – all of that would be recognized clearly in the light of God, who requires nothing more from anyone than what he is and can give. In everything, there is really much that is serious and good. God be praised!!

Paul would certainly be *against* us, however, in that we are so content to *remain* where we are instead of looking and moving beyond it. He would *find fault* with us that we still labor under the illusion that we need only *proceed* a little further on the basis of yesterday's human resources. He would *ask us* if we have noticed that God is God *today*, if we understand that yesterday's faith and love – if they remains only that – *must end* in world war, revolution, and peace treaties which would be better called “un-peace treaties;” he would ask if we are clear that the noblest intentions and greatest human progress *cannot remain on the right path* apart from the enlightenment of the eyes of our heart, which comes from beyond us, from God himself. Paul would be *astonished* that we do not have greater need, freedom, or desire to ask about God himself, about the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, about this new and different thing which is given to us from God, which makes our faith and our love hopeful, fruitful, and oriented to the

future. He would ask: *Do you know* the hope which you have received through God's call, the glorious riches of his inheritance, and the inestimable greatness of his power to us who believe? *If you know*, why isn't it not more evident in the Church or Chapel, either to the children of God the children of the world? Why, despite all your Christianity, are you so lukewarm, unhappy, uncertain, indecisive, rigid, and lacking trust? Why does your Christianity no longer take the lead in this dark world? And *if you do not know*, why don't you not notice? What is missing? Why do you stay in the same rut so obstinately? Why don't you allow yourselves to be taken farther? Why don't you ask more earnestly, more honestly, and with greater hunger and thirst for God himself, for that living beginning of life, the one thing<sup>110</sup> which could help you today? Paul would pray for us as he did for them, for *knowledge*. Now as then, it must come from God himself if God himself is to be understood.

#### IV

Fundamentally, there is *also no mystery* about whether God shall decide Yes or No, for life or death, for the world and for men, whether God's rule among us should turn out to be blessing or curse, grace or law. The question can become *veiled in darkness* for ever so many people; but we can receive eyes so that it is answered. The good path can become lost by individual people a million times, but the way is open and passable for humanity as a whole. *Otherwise, Paul could not have prayed* for knowledge for his friends. We certainly cannot pray for others to receive what we ourselves do not know. |

**Paul really knew Christ.** We can sense even now in his words that to know Christ is something beyond all measure. Christ is more than faith and love, *more than*

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<sup>110</sup> "Einzig" [?]

*Christianity and progress.* Christ is *the great Forward!* from God. Christ is *the decision* for the good path. Christ is the Yes which God himself has answered to the question of whether or not the world and humanity should receive grace and blessing from him. In Christ, *the power of God is active.* God is not merely an idea or the ultimate unity; he is not behind the scenes. God is powerful. He has power, because he needs it. He has things to do. God has a history. God is decisive. God is not impartial about life and death; he has taken a stand. Light is greater than darkness. God is more powerful than evil. *The victory of God is in Christ.* In him, through his rising from the dead, initiation into the heavenly world has taken place; this present world of ours comes to God. In him, the power of God has conquered all opposing powers, and his conquest begins to make itself known more widely among us. Through him, sin, suffering and death have encountered a contradiction which can no longer be forgotten. Christ is *the beginning of a new humanity.* Now, we are chosen, newly created, and redeemed in him. In him, God himself has stepped in among us. He does not remain alone. He draws us into the great divine Yes and Forward! He is the head, we are the members. He desires to fill us, is able to fill us, and we shall be filled by him. We are his congregation – and not we alone but many – all. No one is outside. We can no longer say “No” to anyone now that God in Christ has said “Yes” to us.|

This is the **truth of our life.** Hidden, yet not hidden. The knowledge which we lack, without lacking it entirely, is the *knowledge of salvation.* As long as it is not completely absent from us, we must join Paul and help each other *by praying* for one another. Insofar as we lack knowledge, we must at least *remain open* to the possibility that the prayer of Another for us might not be in vain. In the knowledge of God, it is a

matter of Christians carrying and being carried. If we are faithful in that, it cannot be in vain.

## **Conclusion**

What is the significance of the Academic Lectures on Ephesians for Barth scholarship? What can we learn from Barth about theological exegesis? This study's primary conclusions can be summarized by answering these two questions. The first section discusses the exposition's central theme and its significance for Barth's larger theological project. In the second section, I discuss the element of concreteness of Barth's exegesis in order to bring his approach to biblical interpretation into conversation with current constructive work in theological exegesis.

### **I Barth's Central Discovery in the Ephesians Exposition**

Barth made a material discovery in his study Ephesians that fundamentally shaped his subsequent theology. In Eph. 1:3-14, he observes "a train of thought" which witnesses to God's action to the creature in Christ and the creature's subsequent movement to God. The exposition traces the trajectory of this twofold movement. According to Barth, the divine movement to the creature follows a particular course: the action of grace proceeds *from* God, encloses the creature *in* Christ, and finally returns *to* God, leaving the creature transformed in its wake. Barth depicts this movement as "a self-enclosed circle:"

It is thus a self-enclosed circle that Paul has in view: God's intention for us proceeds *from* the mystery of his own counsel and will and *goes forth to* us known, perceptible human creatures, who are utterly finite; as soon as it does, it

also goes beyond us and *returns to* the mystery itself. We, his children, should be holy and blameless before him so that the glory of his grace might be praised.<sup>1</sup>

This divine action in Christ creates a corresponding movement in the creature. God's action is "a force which directs, moves, and carries us." Something is "set in motion in us" once we understand the change wrought by God in Christ.<sup>2</sup> Like the divine action, this creaturely movement also has a particular trajectory. We come *from* God, who has chosen us in eternal election; we are moving *toward* the glory of God, who is our end. The creature is therefore moving "*von Gott her. . . auf Gott hin,*" or *from* God . . . *to* God, to use the exposition's signature phrase. God is our wherefore and our whither. Barth asserts that all of the action described in the doxology takes place between two poles – divine grace, which is our beginning, and divine glory, which is our end. Human existence is located in the force field created by these two poles. Thus, the believer is sanctified and reoriented to the "the praise of [God's] glory."

This two-dimensional movement is reflected in the exposition's structure. Barth outlines the doxology (Ephesians 1:3-14) as three "enclosed circles," which describe in turn election, forgiveness, and hope. He notes that each circle in the text begins with a description of God's action to the creature in Christ and ends with the phrase, "to the praise of his glory." Therefore, the doxology describes the same movement three times, using three different "truth forms" [*Wahrheitsgestalten*] and three temporal frameworks – past, present, and future. Moreover, the movement which dominates *each individual circle* is also evident in *the doxology as a whole*. In other words, the doxology describes the divine economy as a progression from eternal election to the forgiveness of sins and

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<sup>1</sup> EE, 59-60; my emphasis.

<sup>2</sup> S1, 114.

culminating in a future inheritance. Barth's exposition is a sustained attempt to trace this movement.

This configuration of divine and human action leads to the exposition's central theme: "The knowledge of God is the presupposition and the knowledge of God is the end of all human being, doing, and having, as well as the speaking and hearing of divine things."<sup>3</sup> In other words, God's being and action constitute the basis of creaturely existence. God's freedom becomes our freedom. Because Jesus Christ has entered the world as the "great divine *Forward!* into time, history, and humanity," we have received our marching orders God: "Forward!"<sup>4</sup> Consequently, Barth insists, we cannot remain motionless in the "graveyard" peace of life in this world. Rather, we are shaken, disturbed, and set in motion: "So let us have peace in this Forward! so that through it, we may be allowed no peace."<sup>5</sup> Barth states this theme succinctly in the last sentence of his sermon on Eph. 1:1-14: "God *waits.*' You, however, must *hurry.*"<sup>6</sup>

In order to express the movement which he observes in Eph. 1:3-14, Barth organizes the exposition around the phrase, "*von Gott her . . . auf Gott hin.*" The divine movement from election to future inheritance propels the creature *from* God . . . *to* God.

This exegetical move has four important ramifications for the exposition's theological content. First, it spotlights the activity of grace in the creaturely realm. Because God has entered human time and history, Barth reasons, human existence is now the stage for the divine action. The consequence of the Incarnation is that "we encounter [God] in Christ . . . in the crisis of everything human. . . Open your eyes and your ears:

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<sup>3</sup> EE, 35.

<sup>4</sup> EE, 116.

<sup>5</sup> The "waiting that hastens" is a theme from Blumhardt. See ER, 157, 183.

<sup>6</sup> S1, 114.

our salvation is here; see and hear the good news of grace that is announced precisely here.”<sup>7</sup> Barth affirms the penultimate reality of life in the world without toning down the thoroughgoing eschatology of the New Testament. In this regard, the Ephesians exposition is noticeably different from *Romans II*, where the action of grace in the creaturely realm tends to be overshadowed by Barth’s sharply dialectical interpretation of the grace-law antithesis. By contrast, the primary themes in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians – humanity in Christ and the unification of all things in him – permit Barth to speak more fully about human existence as the stage for the divine action.

Second, this exegetical logic provides the framework for a fully developed theological anthropology. Barth’s exposition follows a consistent logic: statements about God’s being and action are followed by corresponding statements about human existence. For example, the divine blessing in Christ evokes a corresponding act of blessing or praise, which Barth describes as “an echo of what God has done first.” Likewise, there is “a direct line” from the Incarnation of the Son of God to the offices of apostle and pastor, which are “variations . . . at a lower level.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, God is present in human form, first in Jesus’ Incarnation, then by means of the church’s service of the divine word. This exegetical logic is expressed formulaically in the lectures as follows: “When we speak about this God, we are speaking about *ourselves*, our fundamental *existence*.”<sup>9</sup> This dimension of the exposition is particularly significant in light of the frequent criticisms of Barth’s theological anthropology. Marquardt, for example, alleges that Barth’s early theology successfully describes the movement of the creature *auf Got hin*, the result of his concern for ethics, but fails to demonstrate the grounds of this movement

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<sup>7</sup> EE, 67.

<sup>8</sup> EE, 10.

<sup>9</sup> EE, 31.



*von Gott her*, that is, he fails to ground praxis in *theoria*. Conversely, critics of the *Römerbrief* complained that Barth's sharply dialectical theology leaves the creature "hanging in the air" with no place to stand, that he makes no room for creaturely existence "*auf Gott hin*." In both cases, the point at issue is Barth's alleged failure to relate divine objectivity to human subjectivity or to establish an adequate basis for human agency. This study shows, however, that Barth discovered the exegetical groundwork for the creature's movement "*von Gott her . . . auf Gott hin*" in the Ephesians lectures and with it, the foundation for a robust theological anthropology.

A brief comparison between Barth and Bultmann on the subject of theological anthropology will clarify what is at stake in this claim. According to most accounts, Bultmann is credited with the discovery of the anthropological implications of Pauline theology in contrast to Barth's theology, which exalts the divine objectivity at the expense of an adequate account of humanity.<sup>10</sup> This study, however, presents a different account. In the Ephesians lectures, Barth, like Bultmann, claims that "to speak about God is to speak about man."<sup>11</sup> The difference between them is that Bultmann also asserts the converse: to speak about man is to speak about God. For Barth, on the other hand, such a statement is impossible because of the infinite diastasis between creator and creature. However, far from negating the divine-human relationship, this infinite qualitative distinction actually constitutes the basis for a genuine encounter: "There is an objective [*sachgemäß*] relationship between God and the human creature, because the infinite distance between the creator and the creature is acknowledged; and precisely

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<sup>10</sup> For Käsemann's account, see *New Testament Questions Today*, chapter 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

because it is acknowledged, the distance is ultimately proximity.”<sup>12</sup> In short, Barth’s theological anthropology is far more developed than generally acknowledged.

Third, Barth’s mapping of divine and human action leads to an emphasis on ethics. The divine action in Christ produces a “seismic tremor” which transforms the creature’s entire existence, including the ethical and moral realms.<sup>13</sup> For Barth, “talk of divine action” leads necessarily to “talk of the human ethical realm.”<sup>14</sup> He rejected the “careful distinction” which we normally make between “the religious and the ethical,” on the grounds that there is “only one sphere of God’s reality.”<sup>15</sup> The persistent claim that the early Barth displays no interest in human agency, therefore, is demonstrably false. On the contrary, his concern for ethics should be seen as a continuous development, beginning with his early emphasis on the kingdom of God, to the eschatologically informed ethics appropriated from the Blumhardts in 1915, to the *Romans* II period. Two new developments appear in the Ephesians exposition: he deploys Calvin’s theology of sanctification and grounds ethics in the doctrine of God.

Fourth, Barth’s exegetical logic leads to an emphasis on theological objectivity. The exposition depicts God as the one who has entered the creaturely realm in order to make himself an object of human cognition; therefore he can be known through human media in the interpretive event, while remaining the speaking subject. Consequently, Barth describes the eternal relationship between God and the creature as a “*schöpferische*” relationship. That is, the truth of God in Christ “can only be truly understood and received in time, through various relations, in human language with all its

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<sup>12</sup> EE, 28.

<sup>13</sup> At this point, the Ephesians exposition bears a strong resemblance to Barth’s explication of Romans 12 in the *Römerbrief*.

<sup>14</sup> EE, 34; Webster, *Barth’s Moral Theology*, 19.

<sup>15</sup> EE, 59-60.

various expressions, and certainly in human life with its various levels of knowledge and experience.”<sup>16</sup> For Barth, theological objectivity is closely related to ethics, discussed above. Knowledge of God is essential, because the *vita christiana* occurs in the world. The Christian glorifies God in the world by living according to the word of God, he explains.<sup>17</sup> This coalescence of three concerns – ethics, theological objectivity, and the doctrine of the knowledge of God – anticipates the central thesis of the Calvin lectures. Calvin and the Reformed represent the “second turn” of the Reformation, because of their concern to live in the world, according to the word of God: “If the Reformed effort is ventured, then the special importance of holy scripture arises out of the quest for a norm by which to regulate the relations, the quest for a rule of faith and life, of knowledge and action.”<sup>18</sup> The fundamental trajectory which Barth traces in the exposition, God’s entrance into the creaturely realm, is the exegetical basis for the theological objectivity which defines Barth’s Göttingen period.

The configuration of divine and human action which dominates the Ephesians lectures forms part of the deep structure of Barth’s thought. Although Barth’s theology is not reducible to a single *Denkform* or concept, this material theme is therefore constitutive of his larger theological project. Its significance can be shown by demonstrating how the same configuration appears in three works following the Ephesians lectures – *The Theology of the Reformed Confessions*, the 1943 homiletical

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<sup>16</sup> EE, 37-38.

<sup>17</sup> In the lectures on the Reformed confessions, we find this summary of the Reformed position: “Similarly, when Calvin came to Geneva in 1536 under the influence of lesser spirits such as Farel, Froment, Viret, and others, it was already clearly decided that they wanted to ‘live according to the Gospel’ [vivre selon l’évangile] or ‘live according to the Word of God’ [vivre selon la parole de Dieu]. The Reformed confession was already contained in that ‘according to’ [selon].” RC, 44.

<sup>18</sup> *The Theology of John Calvin*, 387.

lectures,<sup>19</sup> and the Doctrine of Reconciliation in the *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1 and IV/2 – three different genres of Barth’s oeuvre, stretching from the early Göttingen lectures to his mature dogmatics.

In *The Theology of the Reformed Confessions*, Barth refers to the movement described in the Ephesians exposition to explain the Reformed emphasis on ethics. The objectivity of the Calvinist faith, he observes, “leads beyond itself to the other, which is also *from* God and *toward* God, to life, to the world, to one’s fellow human,” a variation of the signature phrase from the Ephesians lectures [“führt der calvinische Glaube über sich selbst hinaus zum Anderen, was *auch von* Gott and zu Gott hin ist, zum Leben, zur Welt, zum Mitmenschen, und wird zum Gehorsam”].<sup>20</sup> Moreover, this trajectory of divine and human action is materially important to Barth’s thesis. Calvin’s theology, he asserts, traces the action of God not only *vertically* from above, as does Luther, but also *horizontally*, into the world and therefore represents “the second turn of the Reformation.”<sup>21</sup> The correlation of divine and human action in the *Epheserbrief* converges with his alignment with Reformed theology in 1921-1922, one of the defining moments in his early theological development.

In his 1934 lectures on homiletics, this two-dimensional movement from God to the creature and the creature to God forms the basis for Barth’s definition of preaching. This definition consists of two parallel statements, which describe (1) the divine movement from the top down and (2) from the bottom up:

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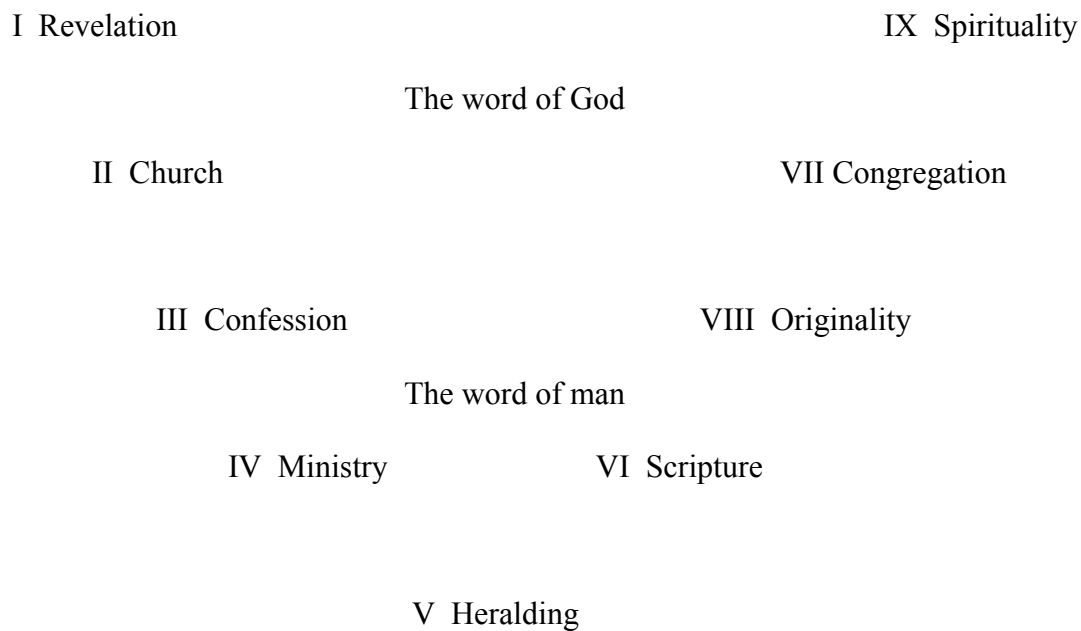
<sup>19</sup> *Homiletics*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Donald E. Daniels (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991).

<sup>20</sup> RC, 100; RB, 157; his emphasis. Compare “hinführen“ used with the phrase, „von Gott zu Gott“ (the Calvin lectures) with “*von Gott her. . . auf Gott hin.*”

<sup>21</sup> See *The Theology of John Calvin*, 70-90, and especially, 80-83 for the language of vertical and horizontal to contrast Luther and Calvin.

- 1 Preaching is the Word of God which he himself speaks, claiming for the purpose the exposition of a biblical text in free human words that are relevant to contemporaries by those who are called to do this in the church that is obedient to its commission.
- 2 Preaching is the attempt enjoined upon the church to serve God's own Word, through the one who is called thereto, by expounding a biblical text in human words and making it relevant to contemporaries in intimation of what they have to hear from God himself.<sup>22</sup>

Using dogmatic categories, Barth identifies nine constitutive elements in a sermon and plots the movement of divine revelation along these nine elements, evident in the following diagram:<sup>23</sup>



<sup>22</sup> Barth, *Homiletics*, 44.

<sup>23</sup> This movement is described by Hartmut Genest, *Karl Barth und die Predigt: Darstellung und Deutung von Predigtwerk und Presigtlehre Karl Barths* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Nerkirchener: 1995), 153.

In the first five elements (I-V), the movement is from the top down, that is, from the Incarnation, to God's originating revelation in the early Church, then to the creeds, and finally in the continuation of this revelation in the preaching of the word of God by a qualified minister of the word. In the second five elements (V-IX), the movement proceeds from the bottom up. It begins with Scripture, as the preacher uses his own words first to interpret Scripture, then to address the congregation, and culminates as he lifts the congregation to God in prayer. Here, as in the Ephesians exposition, Barth describes this movement as a "closed circle:" "The totality forms a closed circle which begins with God and ends with him."<sup>24</sup> The first part of the definition describes God's movement from the top down, from the originating event of revelation to its continuation in the preaching event. The second part describes the corresponding movement from the bottom up, as God's revelatory action commandeers human action to lift the congregation to God.

This trajectory is even clearer in the *Church Dogmatics*, when Barth describes Christ's downward and upward movement in the work of reconciliation, described as "The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country" followed by "The Homecoming of the Son of Man."<sup>25</sup> Here, Barth offers a dogmatic depiction of God's movement "from above downwards" in the action of the Incarnation and the subsequent movement "from below upwards" in the events of Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and session.<sup>26</sup> The similarity between the *Epheserbrief* and the later dogmatic account is evident Barth's description of the "radical downward trend" of the Son of God and the consequences for the creature. The Son of God "descends so deep down to man in order to life him up so

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<sup>24</sup> Barth, *Homiletics*, 44.

<sup>25</sup> CD IV/1, 157-210; IV/2, 20-154.

<sup>26</sup> CD IV/3/1, p. 4.

high. It is He who goes into the far country in order that man may return home.”<sup>27</sup> Using language strongly reminiscent of the Ephesians lectures, Barth depicts Jesus Christ as the presupposition of human existence: “His existence became and is also the existence of a man.”<sup>28</sup>

It should be noted that Barth refers to Philippians 2:5-11 rather than to Ephesians to supply exegetical evidence for Christ’s downward and upward movement.<sup>29</sup> The Christ hymn, he explains, depicts the “radical downward trend” which distinguishes the New Testament descriptions of “the lowliness of the Son of Man.” His preference for Philippians passage can be explained by its more uniformly Christocentric focus, which accords with Barth’s later Christological concentration. Nevertheless, he notes that everything which he describes dogmatically takes place within the dual movement identified in Ephesians “from above downwards, from God to man . . . and from below upwards, from man to God.” In his dogmatic account, this twofold movement expresses, on the one hand, God’s opposition to sin and triumph over human resistance, and on the one hand; and the “omnipotent mercy of God accomplished in Jesus Christ.” The one expresses the reality of justification, the other, of sanctification.<sup>30</sup> Ephesians does appear, however, when Barth describes Christ as the fulfillment of God’s covenant purposes: “the covenant will of God executed and accomplished in Jesus Christ, concerning God’s institution of the covenant as the first and basic divine act continued

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<sup>27</sup> CD IV/2, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>29</sup> See for example IV/1, 489 where he speaks of the “radical downward trend” in the New Testament descriptions of “the lowliness of the Son of Man.”

<sup>30</sup> CD IV/2, 44.

and completed in the action fulfilled in Jesus Christ.”<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, everything said in “The Covenant as the Presupposition of Reconciliation” is merely an attempt to “paraphrase and give the sense of Eph 1: 4-6.”<sup>32</sup> In Christ, “humanity is exalted humanity, just as God head is humiliated Godhead.”<sup>33</sup>

However, in the *Church Dogmatics*, the full significance of Barth’s discoveries in Ephesians becomes apparent only when he demonstrates the Christological grounding of election. Barth broke new ground in this doctrine with the observation that Jesus Christ is both the object as well as the subject of election. Furthermore, the cornerstone of his reconstruction of the doctrine is his juxtaposition of the phrase, ἐν αὐτῷ from Eph. 1:3-4, with the αὐτοῦ of John 1:1-2. On the basis of this exegetical move, he demonstrates that Jesus Christ is the content of the doctrine of election, the “Electing” and the “Elected.”<sup>34</sup> Although previous studies have identified the importance of Eph. 1:3-4 in Barth’s mature doctrine of election, they do not explain the exegetical logic behind this interpretive move. Consequently, they explain this move by appeal to literary theory, emphasizing Barth’s creative juxtaposition of the two texts.<sup>35</sup> As this study shows, however, Barth’s groundbreaking move must be described theologically and exegetically. His

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<sup>31</sup> The theme of the covenant does not appear in the Göttingen exposition as a central concern. In fact, he is surprisingly silent on it, given the importance of the theme of Jew and Gentile as one new race in Jesus Christ.

<sup>32</sup> CD IV/2, 44.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>34</sup> CD, II/2, 102-03. He cites Ephesians 3:9, 1:10, and 1:23 to interpret the αὐτοῦ of John 1:1-2.

<sup>35</sup> Cunningham, for example, correctly identifies Barth’s distinctive use of Eph. 1:4 in the doctrine of election but attributes this move to a creative juxtaposing of texts rather than to careful exegesis, suggesting certain arbitrariness. His juxtaposition of Eph. 1:4 with John 1, however, is the consequence of careful grammatical-philological work, including use of historical-critical tools. Barth’s breakthrough therefore, cannot be explained on the basis of literary theory, as Cunningham suggests, but is achieved exegetically.



identification of Jesus Christ as both the object and the subject of election cannot be understood apart from the lectures on Ephesians.<sup>36</sup>

To sum up: this study identifies a material theme in the deep structure of Barth's early theology, the creature's movement "*von Gott her. . . auf Gott hin.*" We have come *from* God, who has chosen us in eternal election, and we are moving *toward* God, who is our end. Barth made a material discovery in his study of Eph. 1:3-14 that fundamentally shaped his subsequent theology.

### **The Element of Concreteness in Barth's Exegesis**

Turning from material to formal matters, Barth's exegesis of Ephesians is notable for its concreteness. He moves from description of the text to its contemporary meaning, without lapsing into theological abstraction. To be sure, he frequently uses highly conceptual dogmatic and philosophical language, but always for the purpose of addressing the contemporary situation on the basis of the biblical text. His characteristic exegetical move is from observation of the passage to direct address, from the third person pronoun, "he" to the second person, "we" and "us," as in the question: "But what are we really saying?"

This concreteness is achieved theologically. That is, it is grounded in Barth's theological account of the interpretive situation, or more simply, in what happens when

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<sup>36</sup> In the *Göttingen Dogmatics*, he appeals to Eph. 1:4 to defend Supralapsarianism, which is central to his early formulation of the doctrine of election, GD, 467. By locating election within the context of God's choice "before the world was created," theology guards against the idea of a neutral, unknown, second god whose will can be discovered outside of the reality of judgment and grace. This observation is consistent with the Ephesians exposition, and it is materially significant in CD II/2, 127-45. In CD, the argument is considerably more complex and directed against a variety of positions, but the train of thought is similar where he argues against impersonal, philosophically influenced ideas of fate.

we read the Bible. According to Barth, biblical interpretation occurs within a field of divine action that includes the text, the activity of the interpreter, and preeminently, the divine speech act. The specifically theological component of his exegesis is found in this dogmatic account of the interpretative situation and not, as frequently claimed, in an arbitrary imposition of dogmatic concepts on the biblical text.

Central to this account is Barth's understanding of the relation of the text to the *Sache*, or subject matter of the Bible. The words of text refer to the *Sache*. Moreover, they "fitly render" the subject matter to which they point. For example, Barth asserts that the reader of Ephesians is constantly "called to the subject" or *Sache* through the constantly recurring phrase, "in Christ." The text therefore is an active medium or instrument of divine communication. In contrast to Bultmann, Barth rejects the idea that the interpreter must engage in a *Sachkritik* in order to demarcate "the real theological *Sache* of the text from its contingent historical form." For Barth, "the *Sache* of the text is not as it were one textual element among many, but an act of divine revelation, to which the text is a testimony and which is present both to the text's originating content and to the contemporary theological interpreter."<sup>37</sup> This understanding of the relation of the text to the *Sache* contributes to the concreteness of his exegesis. He maintains traction with the text on the grounds that, "To interpret the text is to interpret the *Sache*."<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, he is emphatic that the text's capacity to refer is not an inherent quality of the biblical words. Rather, the words must be related to the Word, as the interpreter attends to the meaning and grammatical details of the text. In the end, however, God alone can relate the words to the *Sache* in the action of revelation.

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<sup>37</sup> Webster, BET, 135, note 80.

<sup>38</sup> Geense, *Auferstehung und Offenbarung*, 14.

Equally important is Barth's account of the interpreter's relation to the *Sache*. Barth maintains that in Christ, the reader of the Bible has an ontological relationship with the subject matter. His exegesis is designed to clarify the reader's relationship with the *Sache*, something which is impossible by means of the historical-critical method alone. As Bonhoeffer pointed out, once it has done its descriptive work, its task is done. It is only on the basis of revelation that the text can become a contemporary word and exegesis can become concrete. Barth's understanding of the interpreter's relation to the *Sache*, therefore, also contributes to the element of concreteness in his biblical interpretation.

By mapping out the relation of the text and the interpreter the *Sache*, Barth posits an ontology of the interpretive situation. Central to this ontology is an understanding that biblical text is unified because of its relation to the *Sache*. Consequently, each individual part of the text reflects the whole of the biblical witness. Moreover, Barth suggests that a kind of *concursum* exists between the contemporary reader and the biblical text, so that the reader's thoughts can conform to those of the writer through a process of "thinking after" the biblical author.

According to Barth, concreteness in biblical interpretation is inseparably bound with knowledge, and ultimately, with our relation to God. In a debate with Emmanuel Hirsch, which occurred shortly after the conclusion of the Ephesians course, Barth argues that concreteness is not possible on basis of human knowledge alone, because we are incapable of recognizing our concrete situation. Rather, concreteness is defined by our relationship to God. For this knowledge, no interpretive act on its own is sufficient.

What matters is that God views us “in the concrete situation of our life.”<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, our ability to appropriate the content of the Bible is not based on our ability to see an analogy between the biblical situation and our own. On its own, the Bible is ambiguous; it obscures rather than clarifies. If there is appropriation (*aneigen*) of the Bible as norm, it will not be “on the basis of any possible analogy of the concrete historical situation but rather *horrible dictu* of the eternal, the sacred-historical one.” In other words, we are addressed by the word, not because we establish analogies between it and us but because God himself creates hearers of the word. For Barth, concreteness is possible only on the basis of our relationship with God on the basis of revelation:

. . . the appropriation of the divine Word depends in no way on the concrete analogy of my situation to the biblical one but rather, whether such a one is present or not, upon the analogy of our concrete situation to that of which it is the analogy, upon the analogy of time and eternity, man and God, which at any rate is the revealed meaning, the meaning for faith of each biblical situation the *sacred* history in the midst of the *profane* religious history.<sup>40</sup>

In short, God alone establishes a living relationship between the Bible and the contemporary reader.

The problem of abstraction in biblical interpretation is commonly acknowledged by interpreters across the theological spectrum and attributed to the hermeneutical poverty of the historical-critical method. In contrast to Barth, current proposals to achieve concreteness are frequently non-theological, or at least, they rely on disciplines which are not explicitly theological. Two of the best known are the use of the imagination (Green and Long) and the role of the community, which brings its experience to bear on the interpretation of the text. (Carr). Furthermore, Barth’s approach is widely rejected on the grounds that he attempts to identify a single subject matter for the Bible,

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<sup>39</sup> RT, 84-85.

<sup>40</sup> RT, 85.

namely Jesus Christ, and that such an approach precludes the reading of discrete portions of the Bible, particularly, the Old Testament.

As this debate indicates, the question of how to identify the Bible's subject matter and the relation of this subject to the Bible is one of the important unresolved issues in current biblical interpretation. According to Bonhoeffer, each generation must rediscover the relation of the text to the *Sache*, the words in the Word. Childs echoes this claim, noting that biblical theology is possibility only on the basis of "theological reflection of the nature of the text in relation to the *Sache*." The value of Barth's Ephesians lectures for current work is that Barth gives us a worked example of how theological hermeneutic enables concreteness. In the current situation, several issues have become more pressing, indicating new areas of work. We are aware now more than Barth of the importance and the difficulty of doing justice to the discrete witness of all of Scripture, particularly the Old Testament. Moreover, most are unprepared to accept Barth's ontology wholesale. The new work will need to rethink ontology of scripture in light of new realities; in particular, we need to find Trinitarian language which reflects the nature of the Trinity as persons.

Likewise, the distinctiveness of Barth's approach can be seen by comparing it to current theological exegesis, where dogmatics is part of the interpretive discourse. Here, too, the problem of abstraction of distance plagues many current attempts at theological exegesis. As R. R. Reno points out: Theology is seen as an alien language which is imposed on the text. Therefore, it arches away from the text. By contrast, Barth redescribes text using Trinitarian language and operative language about God.

The reader trained in the historical-critical method will likely find Barth's expositions disconcerting at first. For Barth, the boundaries between exegesis and dogmatics and preaching are far more porous than normal canons allow. Nevertheless, the contemporary reader of the Ephesians lectures may also be drawn into Barth's "process of discovering the *Sache*," of the New Testament, to which he tirelessly points.<sup>41</sup> The current study demonstrates the importance of this first expository course for our understanding of Barth's early theology as well as his approach to theological exegesis. Moreover, it provides strong evidence that important discoveries lie hidden in the remaining unpublished works. Barth studies stands at a point similar to Calvin studies the early 1990s when work on his commentaries led to a new appreciation of Calvin's merits as an expositor of Scripture. It is too early to tell if future work on Barth's unpublished expositions will lead to a similar reevaluation of Barth. Childs' judgment about the negligible impact of Barth's theological exegesis may turn out to be premature. In any event, this study proves that much work remains to be done, and that research on Barth's expository courses on Scripture is still in the early stages.

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<sup>41</sup> Webster, BET, 127.

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